



IAESTE Internship in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania July 17 - September 22, 2023

During my 10-week IAESTE internship in Tanzania, I had the opportunity to work closely with an experienced professor of astronomy at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT).

Application and Planning

During the application process, it was not completely clear to me what exact tasks would come my way. The only clues were that the internship would be in the field of astronomy and could possibly include educational aspects. Therefore, I started my journey with the anticipation of being surprised by the tasks.

About six weeks passed from my application to the acceptance by Tanzania. At the beginning of May, I received the confirmation for my internship, which was to start on July 17. This gave me about two months time for preparations.

Upon inquiry with IAESTE Tanzania, I received valuable assistance with the visa application, which can be applied for online at visa.immigration.go.tz. The visa approval came after about three weeks. I was also assured that my accommodation would be taken care of, and an airport transfer would be organized. However, the exact nature of my accommodation remained a surprise until my arrival.

I arrived three days before the start of the internship to have some time to settle in. Initially, I was accommodated with an elderly lady, but she lived quite far away from the OUT with no public transport connection. Therefore, I was relocated during my first week of internship. For the rest of my stay, I lived with a young mother with two young daughters and shared a room with an intern from Tunisia who was also working at the OUT. From here, I was able to walk to the OUT within 20 minutes. The entire OUT community was extremely helpful and always eager to solve our concerns.

The internship

The Open University of Tanzania is a university that conducts its teaching primarily online but has several campuses in different cities in Tanzania. During my internship, I was assigned to an accomplished professor of astronomy who was both a lecturer and researcher at the university and the founder of the Astronomy and Space Science Association of Tanzania (ASSAT). His goal was to excite interest in science among the Tanzanian people. In a country where the school education system still has gaps and is culturally characterized by a hesitation to question things, he works to

introduce young people to science through astronomy activities. During my internship, I had the privilege to participate in some of these events.

A special highlight was our visit to the SEGA Girls School in Morogoro. This school, founded and funded by Americans, offers secondary education to girls from Tanzania. As part of a STEM program, we organized an astronomy day there, aimed at helping young girls gain access to science. My task was to talk about my interests and my educational background so far and to answer all kinds of questions the girls had, be it about my physics studies, general questions about astronomy or my sources of inspiration. I was impressed by the curiosity and openness of the students. The school teaches entirely in English, and it amazed me how confidently the girls communicated in English. My accompanying professor made a valuable contribution by explaining exciting content about sky observation and general mechanisms in the solar system.

In addition, we conducted hands-on activities such as building small telescopes, building models of our solar system, and viewing the night sky through a real telescope. I was happy to see the girl's joy and interest in astronomy and the activities.

Another highlight of my internship was participating in a training for astronomy teachers that took place at one of OUT's other sites in Tanga. This training day had the aim to further educate teachers from different school classes and universities and to address possible difficulties in teaching. I myself was able to share my knowledge about the formation of planets during one lecture. During my time in this internship, I learned how organizational challenges slow down the education system in Tanzania.

In addition, we organized several stargazing events to give university staff the opportunity to observe astronomical phenomena through a telescope. Another part of my internship was to prepare for measurements at a potential site for a future telescope on Kilimanjaro.



Life in Dar es Salaam

Dar es Salaam, as the most important commercial city in the country and with a population of over 5 million people, pulsates with activity. When I first arrived here, I had to get used to the hustle and bustle. The road traffic is quite chaotic, and it seems that many drivers drive according to their own rules.

Apart from the chaotic roads, life here is very relaxed and very much in the spirit of "Hakuna Matata". People are friendly and laid back, and there is no need to rush. Most of the population is religious, mainly Muslim, or Christian. It is recommended to dress appropriately, usually wearing long pants or dresses and covered shoulders. People are welcoming and hospitable, and you will often be greeted on the street or happily engaged in conversation. Tanzania is generally considered a safe country, which is consistent with my own experience. However, it is important to use common sense: not to be out in empty areas at night and to watch your valuables, especially in crowded markets and other busy places.

There are several ways to get around in Dar es Salaam. The easiest and most comfortable way is to use the Bolt app to book a "Bajaji" (Tuk Tuk) or a "Boda Boda" (scooter) to be driven comfortably to the desired destination. A 20-minute ride on a Bajaji costs less than 2 Euros. Alternatively, there are also public buses. The high-quality "Blue Busses" can take you to various parts of the city for about 30 Cents. These are usually fast, as they use their own lanes, but do not serve all parts of the city. There are also smaller buses that share traffic with cars and are often crowded. Here, a ride costs about 20 Cents, and they provide greater coverage of the city. In general, there is no set schedule; buses run when they run.

The streets of Dar es Salaam offer an abundance of food options. On almost every corner you will find small street stalls selling all kinds of different food at a low price. Rice with beans, vegetables or meat is a very popular food in Tanzania and you can find it everywhere. Boiled or fried bananas are also very popular here and I can only recommend everyone to try them. In general, the diet is very meat and fish heavy, but even as a vegetarian or vegan there are enough alternatives.

The climate during my stay was quite changeable. Although the temperatures were usually around 30 degrees, it felt even warmer due to the high humidity. The weather in Dar es Salaam is unpredictable. Despite constantly sunny weather reports, it is possible for a heavy downpour to begin within minutes, but it disappears just as quickly as it began.

Since Dar es Salaam is a coastal city, there are opportunities for swimming. Especially on weekends, many families come to the beach to swim or simply relax. On the weekends, we often went on excursions to surrounding places, both with OUT staff and other IAESTE interns. Together we visited the historic city of Bagamoyo, the Saadani National Park, and the Mikumi National Park. After my internship, I had planned two more weeks to explore Zanzibar and the north of Tanzania, which I highly recommend to everyone.

Conclusion

All in all, I very much enjoy looking back on the memories and experiences of my time in Tanzania. Through this internship, I was not only able to gain valuable insights for my studies, but it also allowed me to experience the culture of the country in a much deeper way than would have been possible through a simple trip. I made new friends and established contacts that I will certainly be able to benefit from in the future.

