



Education Authority Document
Malawi 2020

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to delineate some of the key procedures in place for Operation Wallacea trips to Malawi. When creating the document, reference has been made to the National Guidance produced by the OEAP (Outdoor Education Advisory Panel – see <http://oeapng.info>) in the United Kingdom in addition to guidelines from the Expedition Provider’s Association and BS8848 (the British Standard for organising and managing visits, fieldwork, expeditions and adventurous activities outside the UK). Additional guidance has been sought from bodies including but not limited to the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) DfE (Department for Education), AALA, and numerous UK Acts of Parliament.

This document may be useful for a number of parties interested in the expeditions, in particular but not limited to: The Educational Visits Coordinator (or equivalent) appointed by the school or college; the senior teacher(s) accompanying the trip (the group leader); parents or guardians of the students on the trip; students or other participants on the trip.

Operation Wallacea are members of the Expedition Providers Association (EPA) and hold a Learning Outside the Classroom quality badge (LOtC).

2. Objectives and structure of the expedition

Objectives

The objectives of the expeditions in Malawi can be broken down into four areas:

Research

To assist a team of researchers collecting data in Lilongwe and it’s surrounding areas to assess biodiversity and human-wildlife interactions. Research will also be conducted in Lake Malawi to gain a better understanding of its diversity and ecology.

Cultural Exchange

To take part in environmental education with a school or community group in Lilongwe.

Skills training

To complete training on the survey techniques needed for the above research projects, to participate in the Malawi Conservation course, and to complete SCUBA training to PADI Open Water level (if not already trained to this standard or higher).

Wildlife Experience

To see some of the charismatic fauna for which Eastern Africa is famed.

Structure

Students will spend two weeks in Malawi. These expeditions are designed for multiple groups and the groups will fly into Lilongwe International Airport and be taken to Lilongwe Research Centre. They will spend their first five days here undertaking terrestrial biodiversity monitoring and environmental education in

Lilongwe and its surroundings. Students will also be completing the Malawi Conservation lecture series here. From Lilongwe they will be transferred by bus to Nkhata Bay and spend the next six nights there. At this site they will complete a PADI Open water dive training course in Lake Malawi or, if already qualified or wishing only to snorkel, will help with fish survey transects and monitoring of water quality and, time allowing, fish landings. At the end of their time in Nkhata Bay, students will transfer by bus to Liwonde National Park to gain a safari experience. At the end of the expedition the groups will be transferred to Lilongwe airport to catch their international flights home. The camp locations are as follows:

Terrestrial camp

Kusamala Camp c/o Kumbali Lodge
Area 44, Lilongwe, Malawi

Lake camp

Nkhakar Lodge
Nkhata Bay, Malawi

Liwonde camp

Kutchire Camp
Liwonde National Park, Malawi

Start and finish of the expeditions

There are weekly start dates for the expeditions. Groups need to arrange international flights to arrive into Lilongwe anytime on the Tuesday. The first activities begin on the Wednesday morning. Return flights can be arranged anytime after 14:00hrs on the Tuesday after the end of the expedition. Operation Wallacea will be responsible for the safety and welfare of the groups from their arrival in Lilongwe to their departure from this airport at the end of the expedition. The only exception to this is if the group decides to organize their own excursions or accommodation independently – if this were the case, Operation Wallacea would liaise with the school to agree suitable start and finish times and locations, and would be responsible for the safety and welfare of the group between those designated points.

Travel arrangements

Operation Wallacea will book international flights for the group from their country of origin through Malawi unless it is specified by the group leader that the group wish to organize their own flights. Operation Wallacea will then arrange transport to and from the expedition sites at the start and finish of the expedition. Most groups will fly in on a Tuesday and depart on a Tuesday and as such their schedule will be as follows:

- **Tuesday:** land in Lilongwe and overnight at Lilongwe Research Centre.
- **Wednesday to Sunday:** working with the terrestrial biodiversity research teams.
- **Monday:** transfer by bus to Nkhata Bay (7hrs).
- **Tuesday to Saturday:** dive training or helping with the fish surveys and monitoring fish landings
- **Sunday:** transfer by bus to Liwonde National Park (approx. 4hrs)
- **Monday:** boat and vehicle-based safaris in Liwonde National Park
- **Tuesday:** transfer by bus from Liwonde to Lilongwe airport (8hrs) to catch international flights home after 1400hrs.

3. Booking Process

School and college students have the option to either book as a group, where there is a contract between the school and Operation Wallacea, or as individuals, where the contract is between Operation Wallacea and the participant (and their parent or guardian, if the participant is under the age of 18 at the time of booking the expedition). Once a school group has demonstrated interest in the expeditions, they are given a full presentation about the site where students, parents and teachers have the opportunity to ask any questions they feel are necessary. Following from this the school, or collection of individuals, are given an agreed amount of time to secure their places on the trip with a deposit. Operation Wallacea's terms and conditions are made available prior to booking, and acceptance of those terms and conditions is necessary before the booking can be confirmed.

4. Inclusion

In line with the UK Equality Act (2010) Operation Wallacea's policy is to make all reasonable adjustments to enable students of all physical and mental ability levels to participate in the programme. Likewise, participants will not be discriminated against on the basis of any protected characteristic (e.g. gender, race or religion). Any specific needs (such as requirements due to religious customs, or those arising from a physical disability) are discussed with the school shortly after the booking has been made. If it is not possible to make suitable adjustments without substantially jeopardising the quality or safety of the programme for the remainder of the participants, then those students unable to participate would be offered a full refund of any monies paid.

5. Risk Management

Prior to the expedition

A thorough assessment of all research sites and activities are completed before the start of each expedition and reviewed throughout via in-house audits. Risk assessment and management instructions are put in place for general activities (such as trekking), for specific activities (such as the fish surveys) and specific sites (such as Liwonde National Park). The risk assessments are published on the Operation Wallacea website and hard copies are available on request, free of charge.

During the expedition

The risk management policies are dynamic and can be amended by the senior Opwall staff on-site should new or unforeseen risks present themselves. All medical incidents and near misses are recorded throughout the season, in addition to the completion of in-house audits. Any major incident (e.g. requiring emergency evacuation or significant deviation from the planned expedition activities) results in an incident report being written by the senior Opwall staff member on-site and statements being taken from parties involved as appropriate. Additionally, the Operation Wallacea Senior Management Team is informed of any major incidents immediately, in case the in-country team should require any further support.

6. Training before the expedition

Operation Wallacea staff work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils are ready and prepared for the expedition abroad. Various joint meetings take place with the Operation Wallacea schools team and the teachers regarding facilities on site and skills required. A training package is sent to each of the schools including the following:

Details of the level of fitness required from the pupils

The level of fitness required by students is outlined in detail in the training presentation. For those students that have limited outdoors experience professional UK based outdoor adventure companies can be recommended to provide this additional training. Furthermore, bleep tests can be sent to the school to be carried out by teaching staff if this is deemed necessary or helpful.

Information on the itinerary

Any changes to the expected itinerary or the expected accommodation, facilities, routes used for transfers are detailed in a short presentation.

Kit list and ID guides

Additionally, participants are given a kit list (which is also available on the Opwall website) and some identification guides for the local fauna and flora.

Additional information

The Operation Wallacea staff are always available to talk to any student, parent, or teacher, who has any questions about any aspects of the expeditions, and the preparation required. In addition there is a student handbook downloadable from the Operation Wallacea website which contains all of the above information.

7. Roles and competencies of designated leaders

Qualifications, licensing and technical competency

Operation Wallacea is not eligible for a license through AALA (Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority) as we do not conduct licensable activities and because we operate outside of the UK. Many of the activities organised by Operation Wallacea are research focussed and so no formal qualifications exist. Wherever possible though, the procedures for ensuring technical competency of key staff are in line with AALA recommendations. Where new staff are recruited (i.e. those who have not worked for us before) the selection process includes a review of the CV or resume, a telephone interview, and obtaining at least two positive relevant references from previous employers. The qualifications or experience levels necessary for the various activities are described below, in addition to the roles and responsibilities of the key staff.

Role of the teachers

The teachers accompanying the students are responsible for ensuring the safety of the group during their travel from their country of origin to Malawi. Flights can be purchased by the teachers or by Operation Wallacea, depending on the school's requirements.

Once the groups are met in Malawi by Operation Wallacea staff or partners, the teachers will be travelling with the group and are responsible for pastoral care issues, and for helping to organise their group. At the end of the expeditions the teachers and the group are returned to the airport and the teachers are responsible for accompanying the group back to their country of origin. During the expedition the responsibility for the safe provision of activities, and organising the full itinerary, rests with Operation Wallacea rather than the teachers accompanying a group, as the teachers are not expected to have specific technical expertise in activities such as SCUBA diving. However, the teachers should, prior to the trip, have familiarised themselves with the activities to be carried out. They also should have ensured that the Educational Visits Coordinator (or equivalent in their area) is aware of the trip and has been sent the relevant Operation Wallacea documents (e.g. risk assessments and this document) and that the trip has the approval of the senior management team at the school.

Role of Operation Wallacea staff

Venture Leader

The Venture Leader is responsible for the overall running of the project. The 2020 venture leader will be Dr Heather Gilbert. Heather is the African Regional Manager and has significant experience in leading and managing groups over the past six years.

She will ensure that in each of the locations the correct level of leadership is provided for each of the survey groups and that the various risk amelioration measures are being adhered to, in addition to ensuring that the overall objectives of the project are being met.

Heather will also ensure that the agreed protocols for the different activities are being adhered to, either directly or through site managers, and that volunteers and staff alike are properly briefed with regard to suitable conduct within their role whilst on the expedition.

Site management – terrestrial site

The site will have a designated site manager, which may be provided by either Operation Wallacea or our partners Conservation Research Africa (CRA) depending upon the local needs. The site manager will have received training from both organisations to ensure efficient and safe running of the site and will be responsible for performing procedural audits. In the case where the site manager is provided by CRA, an Operation Wallacea representative will also be on site to ensure our standards are maintained. The terrestrial operations are overseen by the Venture Leader, Heather Gilbert, and the CRA Programmes Manager Brennan PetersonWood.

Survey leaders – terrestrial surveys

All surveys will be led by a survey leader at a maximum ratio of 1 staff member to 8 students. The survey leader will have, as a minimum, and undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline and experience in leading young people or students in an outdoor education setting. All survey leaders will receive on-site training in protocols for leading small groups.

Site management – Marine site

At Nkhata Bay the site manager will be Justin Kraus, with additional support from Stephanie Blair. Justin has run a dive centre on Lake Malawi for the last seven years and has worked with volunteers on lake survey

projects during that period. Stephanie has significant experience in leading and managing groups as he has been working with Operation Wallacea site since 2014.

In-water activity leaders

In water scuba activities will be led by a PADI Dive Instructor or PADI Divemaster. Dive training will be conducted in groups no larger than 8 students to 1 Dive Instructor and 1 Divemaster. Qualified divers will be supervised in the water at a ratio no greater than 6 divers to 1 Divemaster. Snorkel activities will also be supervised at a ratio no greater than 6 snorkelers to 1 Divemaster or Rescue Diver. The dive operations in Malawi will be overseen by Justin Kraus.

Leadership in Liwonde National Park

The leadership for this section of the expedition will be by an appointed Operation Wallacea representative. This representative will be based at Nkhata Bay and will travel down with the groups to Liwonde National Park, supervise their time on site in the Park and then travel with them on to Lilongwe for their return home.

Leadership during vehicle transfers

Bus transfers

The bus transfers will be organised by the Venture Leader using a well-established local company previously vetted by CRA. All transfers by bus will be accompanied by an Opwall staff member whose role is to ensure that the buses are roadworthy and in particular that they are driven well slowly and carefully at all times.

8. Medical Procedures

This section summarises the medical and evacuation procedures report which has a much more detailed description of the staffing, First Aid facilities and procedures to be followed.

Information and records

All participants will be required to enter their medical details onto the Operation Wallacea data portal. Details of how to log on are sent out upon receiving the booking from the participant. The data is stored securely and is initially only available to certain Operation Wallacea staff members, and, for groups of school students, the teacher leading the group. All medical forms are assessed by Operation Wallacea. The venture leader may seek to contact the participant to gather further information, which they would then enter on to the portal.

Operation Wallacea has purchased Medical and Repatriation insurance cover to a value of £1 million for all volunteers and staff. Once collected, the medical details of any participants who have described current or past health concerns, or are taking any current medication, will be passed on to Operation Wallacea's insurers. They may then want to talk directly to the participant if they have any further questions, and in some cases may choose to request a premium payment in order to provide cover for any pre-existing conditions.

All medical problems, illnesses, injuries and near misses are recorded at each of the sites. At the end of the season, these data are collated and a health and safety report is completed and published on the

website. This report classifies incidents into 7 categories and allows comparison between the expeditions and other activities. The policy of publication of the accidents and illnesses recorded on the expedition is a unique aspect of the Operation Wallacea expeditions and helps ensure the procedures on site are followed fully.

Medical facilities

A medical kit is provided at each site, the content of which is agreed prior to the season in consultation with professional medics. These kits are designed to deal with as many non-emergency medical eventualities as reasonably possible onsite, and also to support emergency incidents and stabilize a casualty for transfer to more extensive medical facilities where needed. At all times there will be a minimum of one first aid trained staff member with the groups.

9. Emergency Procedures

A document describing the medical and evacuation procedures in full is available on the health and safety pages of the Operation Wallacea website.

Carefully planned evacuation protocols are in place and all staff will have training on the evacuation procedures and protocols.

Because of the high variability of influential factors such as weather conditions and nature of potential injuries, a number of different evacuation scenarios must be prepared for prior to the season. All staff are fully briefed in these scenarios.

Once a major incident or emergency is identified the Venture Leader will advise Operation Wallacea HQ in the United Kingdom. The Venture Leader will take overall control as Incident Coordinator in conjunction with other senior staff if they are in a position to assist. Operation Wallacea's medical and evacuation plans are designed so that, in a serious incident, Operation Wallacea are able to be self-sufficient (and not reliant on a third party such as an insurer or medical assistance company) in terms of getting prompt and effective care to a patient, or moving that patient to care.

10. Insurance

Operation Wallacea has purchased a comprehensive travel insurance policy on behalf of all of its participants which includes personal property, cancellation, curtailment and rearrangement cover as well as unlimited overseas medical and repatriation expenses. Operation Wallacea prepare detailed evacuation plans which are passed to insurers so that any Medivac planes and hospitals likely to be used during an evacuation can be contracted in advance and if there is a need for an evacuation then there are no delays. In addition to this, Operation Wallacea have comprehensive combined liability insurance with up to £10,000,000 for public/product liability.

11. Safeguarding and Child Protection

We endeavour to ensure that all school students participating in our activities are safe in accordance with the UK Protection of Children Act (1989 and 2004). This is done a number of ways as outlined below. It is important to note that it is not possible, practical, and in many cases useful, to obtain government supported vetting checks (such as Disclosure and Barring Service) for all staff that students will come into contact

with during their time on the expedition. As such Operation Wallacea adopts the following policies where vetting service checks are included where appropriate amongst other safeguarding methods, but are not the sole precaution taken.

Supervision and accompanying adults

Operation Wallacea offer a free teacher place with every 8 students thus giving an automatic ratio of at least 1 to 8. For each activity provided by Operation Wallacea in the field a ratio of 1 staff member to 8 students applies.

These ratios do not include other supervisory staff such as guides or cooks. Overall there is a level of at least 1 to 4 adult staff to students on site providing a very high level of supervision. Teachers are asked to accompany students on as many activities as possible.

Sleeping and accommodation arrangements

Separate male and female sleeping facilities are available at all the sites. Accommodation for staff members and teachers accompanying the groups is also separate. Bathroom facilities are shared, but toilets are always private and lockable from the inside, as are the shower facilities. The details of the accommodation are sent out to participants prior to the expedition so that the school has plenty of time to consider any pastoral issues that may arise as a result of the sleeping arrangements.

Minimum number of students

No activities are planned which will involve a single pupil being accompanied or supervised by a single staff member or adult, without another pupil or adult being present. There may be occasions where a one-on-one situation is unavoidable (e.g. a student is struggling with one of the skills required to pass their SCUBA course, and the instructor spends some extra time with them working on that skill). These occasions though are rare and all staff members are fully briefed on how to conduct themselves when in these situations.

Vetting and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

Staff who work for Operation Wallacea in the UK, and then lead the various expeditions around the World, are subject to an enhanced DBS check. All locations where students are sleeping have a DBS checked staff member in attendance. DBS and other vetting service checks are included where applicable amongst other staff team members. The teachers accompanying these school groups will, at the responsibility of their employer, be vetted through the DBS (or national equivalent system if one is available), and whilst on expedition will stay with the students overnight at each location.

Codes of Practice

All Operation Wallacea staff in the field are required to sign a code of conduct before they are employed. The Code of Conduct commits each staff member to not entering into relationships with school volunteers as well as conformity to restrictions on alcohol use and a complete ban on drug abuse. Operation Wallacea will dismiss staff that do not follow the code of conduct.

Training

All staff are, in addition to their code of conduct, given specific training on suitable conduct with young people. They are made aware of their position of trust and are given examples of how to behave in certain situations. Staff who do not speak English are read the code of conduct in their own language, and any staff employed by third party providers or partners are subject to the same code of conduct.

Complaints procedure

Any complaint by a school pupil about inappropriate behaviour from any staff member or other student will be treated as a formal complaint and documented. The accompanying teacher will be informed immediately and together with the senior Operation Wallacea staff member on site will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is upheld then any individuals involved will be dismissed from the expedition and a police file created if a criminal offence has occurred.

12. Communications

Mobile phone coverage is comprehensive in Malawi, covering almost all the sites visited. Students will always be accompanied by a staff member with a mobile phone at all times whilst on the expedition.

13. Transport

All transport arrangements conducted by Operation Wallacea in the field are subject to stringent protocols. Road transport used to move pupils from various sites will be assessed by the Opwall staff member accompanying the transfers and checked for road worthiness including condition of the tyres and visibility through the windshield. The main duty of the accompanying staff members for each bus transfer is to ensure that the buses are being driven safely and slowly at all times.

14. Accommodation and Camp Security

Students are never allocated accommodation on their own and are always as close to staff members as is practical. Accommodation will be in single sex dormitories in Lilongwe Research Camp, in single sex dormitories at Nkhata Bay and in large single sex dormitories in the Liwonde National Park. The safety and hygiene levels at the camp sites are the responsibility of the Venture Leader. All of the sites are public, so there may be small numbers of tourists present. Upon arriving volunteers will receive a full briefing detailing safety precautions to take. There will always be Opwall staff members in the camp sites so that if there are any problems the students will know who to talk to. The participants are given a full health and safety briefing upon arrival in each camp and will only be able to leave the camp site if in a group as per the above operations protocols.

15. Integrity and Cultural Aspects of the Expedition

In addition to the drive to collect data for purposes of biodiversity monitoring and specific research projects, Operation Wallacea also attempts to ensure that local organisations and individuals are empowered and supported by the projects. We offer training and knowledge exchanges with personnel from the in-country partner organisations. Furthermore, there are occasional opportunities for visits from local schools which can not only benefit the local students in that they can learn about biodiversity, but are also a cultural exchange opportunity for students on the trip as they are able to meet and interact with students from Malawi as part of the environmental education project.