

June 2005 Penthouse

Hi Everyone,

It's June 12, 2005 and I'm sorry that it's been so long since my last email. I promise that this one will have lots of photos and not so much text (well at least I'll try). There is so much happening and I was hoping that I would get settled down, have some quiet time and be able to have definite news about a job etc to give all of you but my life is unfolding at a rapid pace and I'm trying to make sure that I just focus on breathing every day. My last email was in February and much has happened, Trevor returned to the States on Easter Sunday – we are still in email and phone contact but I have learned that I am not meant to live with anyone. I am much happier being alone and free. I am still volunteering with ZAPHA+ and there are some changes – ARVs (anti-retroviral drugs) are now available for free in Zanzibar, thanks to the Clinton Foundation. We have 25 members on them although some of them died before they could benefit from them but there are many staying alive because they have access to the drugs. I am going to become part of a local NGO – ZEDO – Zanzibar Enterprise Development Organization. There are three Zanzibaris involved and the NGO has been dormant since 1999. They will get me a work permit (like gold here) and I will then be able to work as a consultant for anyone who wishes to hire me and I can also receive money to fund any projects that I think are worthwhile and may be successful. That is very exciting and will take time for me to get it up and running but I'm looking forward to it.

I have been following my plan which was to come to Africa and spend a year getting to know the people, understanding the culture and finding out what businesses are existing and successful. I am also realizing what some of the greatest needs are here and I'm hoping to be able to address that with some of the development community. One of the biggest problems is that development agencies put on "training sessions" for one or a few days. They will hold a "seminar" at a local hotel and pay the participants \$5.00 per day (so everyone wants to go because that's a lot of money here and they usually also get lunch). They train them on leadership, advocacy, entrepreneurship etc and then expect the participants to go back and lobby the government for better conditions or start a business or something like that. There is no follow up and of course the people have no clue what to do next so then the development agencies consider it a "failure" and blame the Africans. The sad thing is that within the development "industry" this is one of the biggest ways that they fund projects so they can't stop doing it. I would like to set up a system whereby I find a group doing something they like (like making soap let's say), then I can send them on a one day training to a group of Zanzibaris who already have a successful soap making business to get trained (rather than having foreigners lecture to them in a different language). I would then have someone meet with the group once a week for 3 to 5 hours to monitor them, answer their questions, guide them to the next step and MOST importantly tell them what they're doing RIGHT. These people are always told that they're not good enough – not smart enough – etc etc and I get depressed listening to it. So that's one of my ideas – we'll see what happens.

In the meantime – I'm living the life of a queen and now I promise that I'll start with the photos. I moved into a rooftop penthouse on April 1 and I'm almost finished furnishing it – I was going to wait until I was done to send this email but I'm afraid it would take too long so here goes. The penthouse has three bedrooms, a kitchen, an outside sitting area and an outside dining area. There are two wings – one wing has a large guest room with a sitting area and a private bath and then a small guest room – both have doors leading out to the balcony. And then there's my wing which has a HUGE sitting room that I'm furnishing with Arabian cushions (the only room not finished yet) and my HUGE bedroom which has a private bath and a sitting area also. I also have two roofs on top and an open courtyard between the two wings. I can watch the sunrise in the morning and the sunset at night and then sit out and look at the moon and the stars. I am just starting to buy plants and will have a veritable jungle up here by the time I'm finished. They have lovely exotic flowering plants and trees and I'm excited to spend time setting that up. My plumber fundi hooked up a hose for me the other day so I don't have to fill up buckets all the time. I'm living a life of complete decadence by Zanzibari standards (and by many Western standards) and I'm happy as a clam.

Let me take you on a tour of my beautiful home:



This is my lovely building and I'm on the roof – my wing is on the right and the kitchen and guest wing on the left and I also have the upper roofs. My flat costs \$500 per month and the electric bill runs about \$20 per month if I'm not using the A/C (which I don't need most of the time). And here's Bettina, my housegirl, standing outside and grating coconut. Coconut is a staple here for all cooking – even in plain rice!!!! She comes three days a week and cleans, does my laundry, goes shopping and cooks if I want her to and I pay her \$30 a month (which is a very good wage here). She's in her late 30's (I think) and has 4 children – her oldest is 20. Many of the women here have children by the time they're 14. Bettina is from the Makonde tribe and her grandparents were from Mozambique originally. She doesn't speak any English so I'm forced to speak Swahili which is good – we get along really well and I'm fortunate to have her.



This is my outside dining and sitting area and there's a view from the upper roof looking down into it. The only problem I've had is sometimes during the heavy rains the water has come in but we are going to fix it. The fundis (workmen) here are wonderful and helpful. I haven't decorated the walls yet – I'm collecting artwork and carvings and will eventually have the walls covered. It's interesting because I have the structure in the center of the courtyard and that has wall space that I can also cover but I'm not sure what I'm going to do with it just yet. All of the furniture is hand made – there are no stores here where you can go and choose things – makes life very interesting and I'm becoming quite creative. The dining room table and chairs are made out of coconut wood. The side table in the sitting area is a typical Zanzibari table and I bought the fabric for the pillows at the kitenge market in Dar es Salaam.



This is the large guest room bed that I had made – it's a copy of an antique and cost me \$250. Here's the sitting area in the large guest room – I had the couch and chair made and the "open" closet which is also out of coconut wood. There is too much humidity to have a closet that is closed up because all of your clothes turn moldy – yuck!!! And here is the antique bed in the small guest room – that cost me \$150 – amazing isn't it???



Here is my kitchen – I love making tea in the morning watching the sunrise. This is TOTALLY different than any kitchen you will find here in Zanzibar. Most flats and homes are dark and dank and don't have much to the kitchen. I live in a VERY unusual place because I have sunlight in all of my rooms. And here is a view of the rooftops of Stonetown – god I love living here!!!!



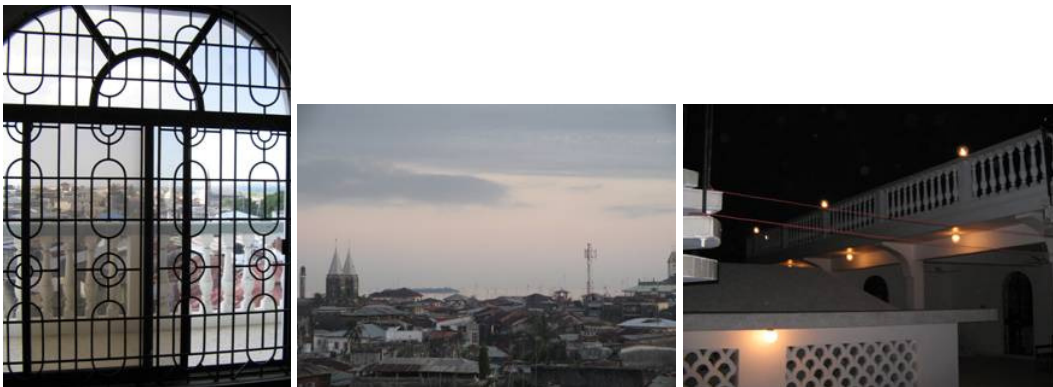
Here is the door to my wing – I'm going to buy vases today for my plants – that's a jasmine tree outside the door – I can't wait until it blooms!!! I'm going to have the vases painted by tinga-tinga painters who do fabulous work that is indigenous to Zanzibar. Here are my Arabian cushions – I'm having more cushions delivered next week and I will be having a long large table made – I'm designing it and having fun doing that. We had a movie viewing night last week – a bunch of my women friends came over – it was wonderful!!!! And if you sit on the cushions you see my bookcase (I just had a simple one made) and the windows overlooking the rooftops of Stonetown. I'm also having a Zanzibari "daybed" made that will go on the wall to the right of the bookcase – the room is too large to get all of it in one photo.



Here is my bed – I had this made and chose the designs for the different glass inserts – the artist is wonderful!!! And the bedspread is batik – there is a great fundi in town that does tremendous work. There is my sitting area – I’m actually standing by my bed taking the photo – the room is L shaped and behind the couch is the courtyard on the west side.



Here is my open closet and this gorgeous Zanzibari chest that was made for me – Amour, the fundi, gave me the antique lock as a gift. It says “Empire 4Ever” on it. Much of the antiques are from when the British were here in the 1800’s. And this is the view of my “office” from the sitting area – I love sitting at my computer looking out over the rooftops – such heaven!!!!



Here is the view from my bed – it’s the first thing that I see every morning and there’s a view of Stonetown looking out towards the harbor. And here’s the courtyard and outside sitting area at night – okay guys – I live in a movie set – this is so incredible you can’t believe it!!!!



This is one of the greatest sunsets that I've gotten – every single night there's a different painting for my own personal viewing. In the center are my friends, Heidi and Helen. I have met lots of wonderfully strong women and sometimes I feel like I'm living on a college campus with everyone coming and going. It's too expensive to talk on the phone and people don't go home and watch TV – they usually spend most evenings socializing with people so I have friends over all the time. And here's a rainbow that I saw one morning – the other end went right into the Indian Ocean!!!



Here are my two main fundis – Saidi, on the left, is the electrician and Salum is the plumber. They work here and at two other buildings owned by my landlord but they spend most of their time here. Said can speak some English – so he speaks English to me and I speak Swahili to him. They are really sweet guys and it's great for me because I miss my boys so much. Salum is 28 and married with no children just like Keith and Saidi is 24 and single just like JD. We have some very interesting discussions about dating and marriage etc. They are both Muslim so they usually work from 8:00 am to 12:00 then go to afternoon prayers and that's basically it for the day. So I've learned to get them early in the morning. I also have a driver that I call whenever I need him – his name is Senga and he spent 7 years in London and speaks English with a beautiful accent. It only takes me 10 minutes (1-1/2 hours in reality because I always run into people) to walk across town so I don't have a car but I sometimes need to go out of town like today to buy more plants and vases. And there is a view of the west side of the courtyard – that's often where I watch the sunsets drinking my coffee after an early dinner.



This is Amour's shop – he made my beds and the chest. This is what most of the “stores” look like - although the ones in the “tourist” section are fancier – but I don't shop there usually. Every day Amour and his friends can be found across the street sitting and reading the paper. Amour is in the shorts and he's a famous soccer star here – he played for Oman for a number of years and it's very interesting walking through the market with him – the young boys especially love him. Here's the inside of his shop – can you believe this? We've been discussing business strategy and he's cleaning out the large room he has in the back and is going to open a “showroom”. His is one of the few shops that actually has furniture in it and I told him that the wazungus (white people) like to be able to see the furniture rather than have to draw a picture of what they want. So he's been buying some stuff and it usually sells within three or four days – he is a pretty good businessman.



And here we are playing golf – it was after sunset so it's dark – but this is my friend Emerson's backyard in the middle of Stonetown. He has 9 holes and the course is filled with stones and ruts and it's hysterical to try to play. You get extra points if you hit someone on a bicycle (you never know who will be riding through). It's a grove of banana trees and he has a “golf game” every two weeks or so.

Okay – has everybody had enough??? I have tons more stuff to tell all of you but that will be another email – I will try to send more of them and try to make them shorter. I really want to send one about the HIV/AIDS situation here and the wonderful miracles that are occurring. I hope that you all enjoyed this – everyone morning I wake up and say “nashukuru” which means I am grateful. And then I repeat it numerous times during the day. I am living in paradise and enjoying every single moment of it.

I am hoping that you will come to visit me – this is a beautiful island – my goodness – I haven't even started to tell you about the wonderful things to do here like snorkeling around the coral reefs etc. Please know that this is an open invitation for any of you to come to Zanzibar – and I even have a great company where you can get inexpensive flights. Our “high season” is June to

September –that’s our winter. It’s usually sunny, breezy and in the 80’s every day. During our summer which is December through May it can be hot, humid and rainy but even that’s not too bad in my penthouse because I seem to have a breeze no matter what.

I am coming to the States in September for a visit and hope to see all of you.

Relax and Enjoy

Kathryn