



Situated only 25 kilometers from Arusha and 20 kilometers from Kilimanjaro Airport, Imbaseni is a quiet rural Meru village that is largely undisturbed by the thriving safari and trekking tourist industry in the area.

The first group of Meru residents settled here named their village, Imbaseni, a plant that filled up the land in the area. These pioneers built their farms, family bomas and opened the first road between Arusha and Mount Kilimanjaro. They called the river around “Maji Ya Chai” (black tea) due to the dark brown color of the water. Today, “Maji Ya Chai” becomes the name of the ward including five neighboring villages.

In Imbaseni, you can see

- sky scrapping fig trees shadowing endless green banana, coffee and maize fields
- remains of century old colonial mansions coexisting with traditional mud huts and modern brick houses.
- old mamas quietly watching groups of grand children playing in the increasingly crowded family bomas
- colorfully dressed ladies and girls fetching water and preparing morning tea to fill up husbands and brothers’ gourd bottles



- uniformed children hiking up the hill and studying in outdoor classrooms at the local primary school
- kind-hearted traditional healer sharing the secrets of the local herbs and her plan to pass on the talent
- cheerful locals brewing banana beer and welcoming you to a taste of the season

and much more...

### PROGRAMS

#### **Half Day Program: 3.5 hours**

*(Ideal for guests arriving at Kilimanjaro airport before noon or passing Imbaseni on the way to Arusha, Mount Kilimanjaro and Ngorongoro)*

Guide tour starts at the local church, covering German soldier’s house, ancient well, Meru family compound and cultural center, local drink and food tasting, woman’s bead jewelry workshop, Imbaseni primary school, first path to Mount Kilimanjaro, drinking water spring, banana, coffee and maize plantation, traditional healer’s house and finally, the fig tree worship site.

**Price\*:** \$15 each (more than four people group), \$20 each (three or less than three people group), \$30 each (individual guest)

#### **Full Day Program: 6 – 7 hours**

*(Ideal for guests with an extra day in Arusha or nearby location to adjust and explore local culture before or after their trek or safari)*

- **Option One - Meru Culture Experience**

Complete half day tour schedule, plus 1) fetching water and making milk tea the traditional way, 2) cooking and sharing local lunch with mamas at the family compound, 3) brewing and tasting own banana beer, 4) making your own bead jewelry **and** 5) working at the plantation or feeding the family cows

**Price\*:** \$30 each (more than four people group), \$40 each (three or less than three people group), \$60 each (individual guest)

- **Option Two – Community Volunteering**

Complete half day tour schedule, have lunch at the Imbaseni Primary School or the family compound, plus 1) teaching a class and spending time with students at Imbaseni Primary School, 2) helping the head teacher on school administrative projects, **or** 3) helping village chairman or local NGOs on other community projects

**Price\*:** \$20 each (More than four people group), \$25 each (Three or less than three people group), \$35 each (individual guest)

- **Option Three – Hiking and trekking**

Complete half day tour schedule, have lunch box and take a four wheel drive to the Maji Ya Chai River and then to the foot of the Mount Sakila. Follow the tracks of village elderly who prayed for rain during droughts to hike up to the top and get a breathtaking view of the villages and the nearby region.

**Price\*:** \$40 each (more than four people group), \$45 each (three or less than three people group), \$70 each (individual guest)

*\* All prices quoted above do not include the transportation to the starting point of the tour. Imbaseni village does not offer pick up service since many visitors come with their own vehicles. However, we can recommend transportation arrangement with favorable rate upon request.*

### BACKGROUNDS

Our program is initiated and managed by the Imbaseni village community. The investment to start the program was generated by the community and the incomes will be used to support local government schools and other community projects. All the guides and hosting groups are community members who were trained by volunteer professionals from the tourist industry.

Our hiking routes are selected and designed to ensure the visitors’ comforts and safety. All local foods and drinks offered in the program are prepared with strict hygiene standard. The Imbaseni cultural tourism program is supported and authorized by the Tanzania Tourism Board (TTB).



**Water spring:** The spring used to be the only drinking water source in the village. Women walked hours to wash and fetch water here and carry the water back home on their head.



**Traditional healer:** Mrs. Alfato is picking her herbs. She does not take money for treatment from fellow villagers since it will go against god's will to give her talent to help people.



**Imbaseni Primary School:** The 11 classroom school is the only one for the 900+ kids in the village. Despite taking classes outdoors and lacking electricity, the students have outstanding academic track records in the national exams.



**Coffee, banana and maize plantation:** 80% of the villagers are farmers. They guard their own plantation with the saint Isale trees. In the harvest seasons, you can see various type of balance and are welcomed to lend a hand in the field



**Fig tree:** Before church and school got established in the school, the villagers used to pray and the kids come to learn under the ancient old Fig tree. Young men will also gather here to make wishes for finding beautiful wives and happy unions.



**God's bridge at Maji Ya Chai River:** At the edge of the village, a large rock laid naturally across the tea colored water of Maji Ya Chai river, forming a natural bridge that is named "God's bridge"



**German soldier's house:** This houses that was at least 100 years old belong to a German soldier who decided to stay after his army left. His daughter also lived her whole life in the village and got buried here



**The oldest path from Arusha to Mt. Kilimanjaro:** Before highway was built, this was the only path to get to Mt. Kilimanjaro. Horses and animals were the major means of transportation

**From the village chairman of Imbaseni**

"Welcome to Imbaseni. We are pleased to introduce you to our beautiful village where we and our ancestor live. We wish you enjoy learning about our traditional culture here. Our cultural tourism program is a community project. 100% of the incomes after costs will be used to support our schools and other development efforts. By visiting us, you make contributions to the future of Imbaseni.

Thank you and enjoy your visit!



**HOW TO BOOK**

Option 1: **Book directly with the village on line** at [www.imbaseni.org](http://www.imbaseni.org) , email [sariannko@gmail.com](mailto:sariannko@gmail.com) or contact Mr. Massawe at (+255 755 455101)

Option 2: **Book through TTB office** (Boma Road, Arusha) or email: [culturaltourism@habari.co.tz](mailto:culturaltourism@habari.co.tz) (+255 27 2050025)

If you use a safari company to organize your trip, please feel free to have them to contact [sariannko@gmail.com](mailto:sariannko@gmail.com) and [Kmajenia@yahoo.com](mailto:Kmajenia@yahoo.com) (+255 784 473434). We will work with your safari organizer to fit the tour into your program.



**Meru family boma:** A large Meru family usually live in their own compound. The husband's house is in the middle and his wives and kids will stay in houses around him. Grown-up sons and grandsons will build their own houses in surrounding land



**A typical Meru family in transition:** Meet the three surviving wives of a prestigious local chief in their family compound. The three sons of the youngest mother are obviously embracing modern lives with their new clothing style. Meanwhile, a lovely cute grandson is playing at the well groomed grave of their respected grandfather.



**Still, a traditional way of life:** Women still patch their houses with cow dung and mud every year. Milk tea is made every morning for the sons and brothers. Lamp lighted up the small rooms in the evening when electricity grids are far away. Traditional roshero is made in the family pots and kept fresh for the family members in their respective bottle gourds. Banana beer still beats modern bottled beer in popularity. Chewing mint leaves is still the preferred and convenient way to fix a bad stomach. Peacefully and beautifully, a traditional way of living is enjoyed by people in imbaseni.