

# **Things to Know Before You Go to Equatorial Guinea**

Embarking on a semester to Equatorial Guinea is the trip of a lifetime and we are thrilled that you have chosen to study abroad with us! In order to make that experience possible *and* enjoyable, you'll need to read the following document carefully. However, it is important that you think of this document as a guide, not as a bible. The situation in Equatorial Guinea can change rapidly, and you should be actively soliciting advice from the experienced Drexel staff (in Equatorial Guinea and at Drexel) as well as with previous participants in the months leading up your departure.

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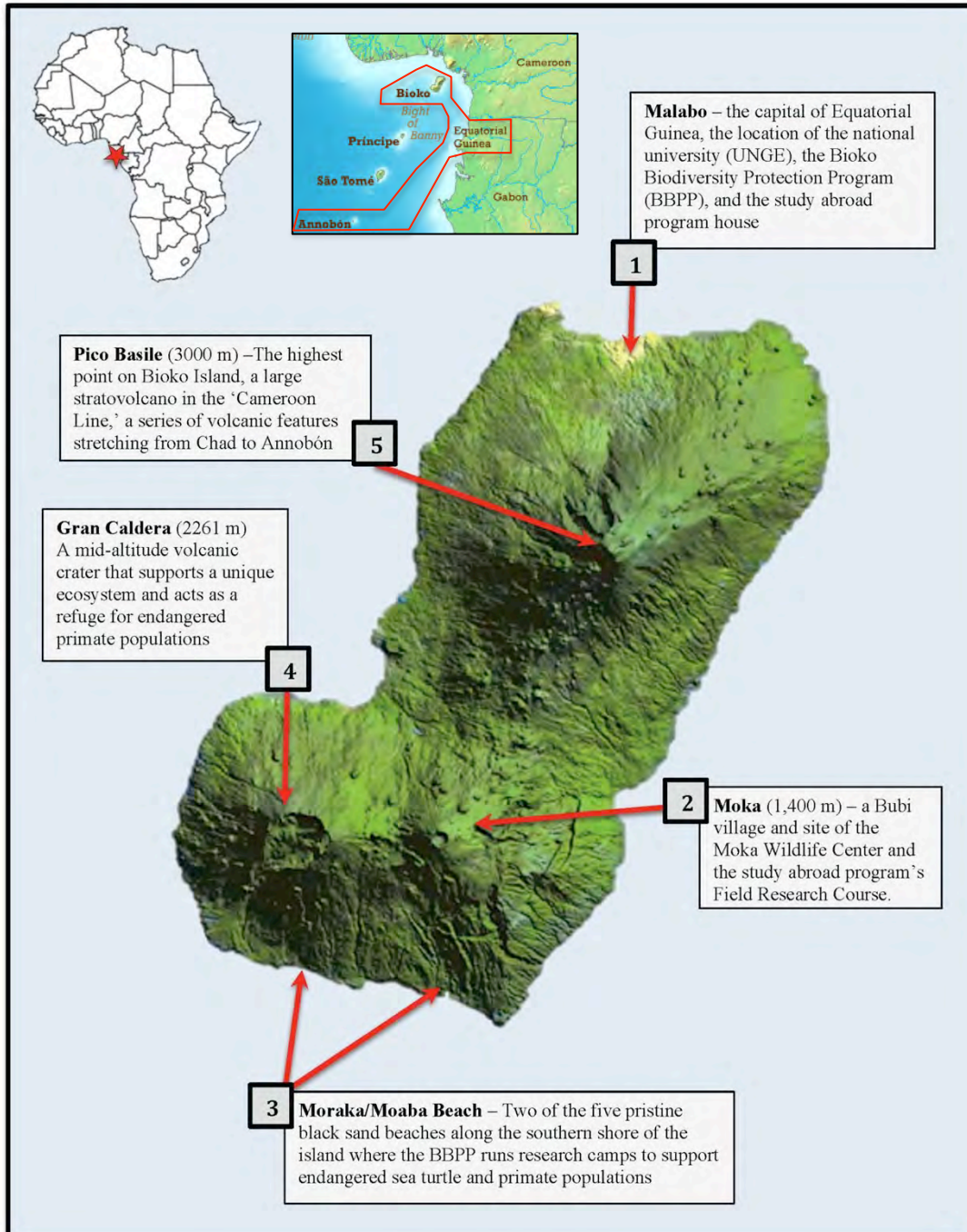


In collaboration with:



# ORIENTATION TO BIOKO ISLAND

Each semester begins with an in country orientation after arriving in Equatorial Guinea. Familiarization and informational sessions will help acquaint you with the issues and concerns of which you need to be aware in order to have a successful and safe stay in Equatorial Guinea. Throughout your time in Equatorial Guinea, you will take part in a full schedule of field study trips, local events and lectures - all designed to enhance your understanding of Equatorial Guinea and the historical and modern influences that impact its culture and people. What follows is a brief introduction to the three primary 'base-camps' of the course: Malabo, Moka, and the Southern Beaches.







Numbers in the upper left-hand corner of each mosaic of images corresponds the numbers in the annotated map on the previous page. 1) Malabo, 2) Moka, 3) Southern Beaches, 4) Gran Caldera, 5) Pico Basile.



# MALABO



## The Drexel Study Abroad House

The Drexel Student House, and its seemingly basic amenities, is a true luxury in light of the Malabo experience. Electricity, running water, full bathrooms, refrigerator, air conditioning, and washer and dryer make the living situation extremely pleasant. We found that the house quickly became a home away from home, so long as we kept it neat! Located more or less right in the middle of Malabo, we were never more than a quick taxi ride from anywhere we ever wanted to go. There are also games, movies, and books scattered throughout the house.

Step outside the gate and dogs and chickens roam free. It's certainly not uncommon to be awakened by barking or crowing on an otherwise sleepy Sunday morning. When on the street, whistles, clicks, or other forms of acknowledgement are all part of the game for girls. We took the liberty to correct them when they would shout out "Chinos!" We learned to look where we walked because the sidewalks are torn up, and the streets are dirty. We had to weave through trash, sewers, and the construction that pops up everywhere. Cars did not stop for us. Sometimes it seemed like the streets were for walking and sidewalks for parking. We kept an eye out for warm banana fritters or homemade donuts on the street and didn't pass up the opportunity to have hard-boiled egg on bread for 250 FCFA. It was always worthwhile to stop in for a cafe con leche caipirinhas at the French Cultural Center despite the fact that service in Malabo is truly terrible.

Malabo is a city of strange opportunities but that doesn't always make it easy. It's all about deciding what you want to get out of your time and going after it. Enjoy it all - it's a country of contradictions, it's a little backwards, and a little messy - but Malabo is the experience of a lifetime and different from anywhere else in the world.

**The house is in a small compound of it's own and a watchhouse, manned 24 hours a day by a family from Mali (pictured below, left). The father, Adama, has been working for Drexel in Malabo for 5 years now. The house features a living room and kitchen, an office for BBPP staff and students, three student bedrooms with bunks, a bedroom for the R.D. and several bathrooms.**



*"The taxis have kind of their own language with how they honk. They are just always honking and they have several meanings to them...for example...there is a honk saying "hey I'm a taxi," then there is one for "yes get in," and one for "don't cross I'm not stopping," among others. It is interesting and very, very annoying."*

-Lindsey Kummerer, Winter 2013



Walking maps of Malabo inside the DSA house with major landmarks indicated and place-markers for restaurants and points of interest made by R.D. David Montgomery in the Spring of 2012. The student house can be made out on the image right (red arrow). Getting around is easily accomplished by walking, sharing cabs, or in university busses.



# MOKA



## The Moka Wildlife Center



The capstone course of the semester is 'Field Research in Tropical Ecology', taught for two weeks at the Moka Wildlife Center near the village of Moka. The environment immediately around the wildlife center is largely agricultural, but there are many mountainous forest trails within a short walk of the center. Students will camp on the property in tents provided by the program. Basic food is prepared by women from the village. Moka is at an altitude of 1400 meters above sea-level and therefore has a temperate climate. The weather can shift between hot and sunny to cold and damp within a matter of minutes. It is important to come prepared for cold temperatures at night!





# THE SOUTHERN BEACHES



## Wilderness Camping

During both the spring and fall terms students will spend (at least) a week camping in the Southern Scientific Reserve of Bioko Island. While these expeditions are fully supported with food and tents provided, it is not luxury camping and students are responsible for bringing their own personal supplies. The campsites are in remote locations. Please review the packing list carefully to make sure you are prepared for this amazing experience!



# **TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

## **Passport**

You will need a passport to travel to Equatorial Guinea. Please visit the [U.S. State Department travel pages](#) the most up-to-date information regarding passport application and fees. Passports are valid for ten years unless you applied for one before age 18 in which case it is valid for only five years. If you already have a passport, it must remain valid for the full length of your stay abroad. Immigration officials will deny you entry to Equatorial Guinea if your passport will expire before the end of your program. It is not possible to renew an expired passport while overseas; therefore, your passport must be valid for the duration of your stay. You will not be allowed to leave the US with a passport that will expire before your program end date. We recommend that your passport be valid 3-6 months after the end of the program.

Allow plenty of time to apply for your passport, particularly in the busy summer months. Processing can take as long as six weeks. We recommend you apply as early as possible so that you're not caught at the last minute. For up-to-the-minute information to help plan your trip abroad and further information about applying for a passport, you can visit the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs worldwide web site. "Passports the Easy Way"

Evidence of a yellow fever vaccination is also required to enter Equatorial Guinea. **(See the Immunization Cost Estimates section of this document for further details.)**

## **Do I need a visa?**

Nationality	Passport Required?	Visa Required?	Return Ticket Required?
USA	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
British	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Australian	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Canadian	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Other EU	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Japanese	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>

## **Visas and Certification of Student Status**

If you are not a U.S. citizen, it is your responsibility to obtain visas and/or special entry papers or documentation required. For further information, please contact:

The Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea  
2020 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
Tel. (202) 518-5700, Fax. (202) 518-5252



# HEALTH AND SAFETY

## **Immunizations**

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for immunization requirements. Click on Travelers' Health, then click on Destinations, and then click on Africa, Central.

You should begin the immunization process now by contacting your primary care doctor. They can advise you on immunization centers in your area. Depending on your type of insurance coverage, some shots may be covered. See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

*The CDC recommends the following when studying in Central Africa:*

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment. **A good idea.**
- Meningococcal (meningitis), if you plan to visit Central African Republic, Chad, and Sudan from December through June. **Also a good idea.**
- Yellow fever, if you plan to travel anywhere outside cities. **A requirement.**
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region. E.G. is definitely a developing country and so this is **highly recommended.**
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a **one-time dose of polio vaccine** for adults. Equatorial Guinea is currently suffering a polio outbreak, so this is important.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who did not receive the series as infants.
- Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites. Travelers to Central Africa should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: doxycycline or Malarone™. We do NOT suggest that you take Lariam or its generic form.

## **Immunization Cost Estimate**

Below are sample costs for the above mentioned vaccines from Drexel's student health center. ( 3201 Arch Street) Most student health clinics will have the same vaccines for similar costs. The Drexel Student health center charges a \$5 office visit fee. You must have a current Drexel ID in order to use the service.

Please check with your doctor as you may find that you have already received some of these vaccines as a pre-requisite for enrollment at Drexel .

*Hepatitis A - \$60*

*Hepatitis B - 3\*\$70 = \$210 series of three: one shot now, one shot one month later, final shot 6 months later, most likely upon return from time abroad*

*Meningitis - \$125*

*Tetanus-Diphtheria - \$40*

*MMR booster - \$55*

*Polio - \$40*

**Students must also get the following vaccines which are NOT available at the Drexel Student Health Center but are available at Drexel University College of Medicine, Travel Health Center** There is a \$35 office visit fee for Drexel students.

**Travel Health Center**  
**219 North Broad Street**  
**8th Floor**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19107**  
**Phone: 215-762-6655**  
**Fax: 215-762-3031**

Yellow Fever - \$100  
Typhoid - \$70

### **Insurance**

Students should check with their health insurance provider to understand how they will be covered while they are in Equatorial Guinea. Will you need to pay for your healthcare out of pocket? How will you be reimbursed? Do you need to take your reimbursement forms with you? How will your health care needs be handled if you break your leg while overseas or if you need to go the emergency room?

Drexel students are further required to purchase OnCall medical evacuation and repatriation insurance. At the time that this handbook was created, May 2013, the cost of this insurance was \$66 for the entire year. More information can be found on the study abroad website: [www.drexel.edu/studyabroad](http://www.drexel.edu/studyabroad) or directly on the Drexel OnCall site. <https://www.aetnastudenthealth.com/students/student-connection.aspx?GroupID=812834>

### **Travel/Personal Property Insurance**

We strongly encourage you to obtain insurance against theft and/or damage to your personal effects for the period of time you will be abroad. Drexel University does not provide insurance for your possessions.

### **Special Medical Needs**

If you have any medical or psychological condition that may require attention overseas from a physician or psychiatrist, please tell us about it. Because some conditions may be exacerbated or reactivated by the experience of living in a new country, you may want to report earlier conditions for which you have been treated successfully. If you have any doubt about these matters, check with your physician/psychiatrist.

Be sure to have your physician/psychiatrist prepare an adequate summary of the details of your condition so you can be properly treated by a physician/psychiatrist overseas. List all medications you regularly use, and be sure to have adequate supplies of special items. Brand names and dosages differ, and you may have difficulty tracking down the specific medication you want. Be sure all prescriptions you take with you are labeled with your name, the name of your physician and the generic name of the medication. We want you to provide us with any information that would help us assist you in an emergency.

This information will be treated confidentially and remain in our files only until you complete your Drexel University program. We encourage students with a medical condition which might affect emergency treatment to wear a MedicAlert bracelet or pendant.

### **Physical and Learning Disabilities and other Special Needs**

Drexel encourages students with disabilities to consider study abroad and we are committed to working with each student to find a program that suits his or her individual needs. Please keep us informed of any special needs, including dietary restrictions/preferences, physical concerns or learning disabilities, allergies and strict religious observances. Providing this information will not jeopardize your place in the program. It is much easier for us to help you if we know about your special needs ahead of time.

### **Health and Safety in Flight**

For safety and comfort, wear loose-fitting, natural-fiber clothing during flight. Do not wear snug-fitting or



heeled footwear! It is helpful to do seat exercises or to walk in the aisles in order to maintain good circulation.

It is always advisable to sleep during long flights. You should avoid alcoholic beverages in flight because they cause dehydration. The recycled air in a plane also has a drying effect, so you should drink non-alcoholic beverages regularly. If you require a special diet, notify the airline at least 24 hours before departure. If you suffer from the effects of jet lag, inquire about methods to combat this problem.

## **General Safety Tips**

We list the following guidelines as precautionary measures, rather than to alarm you. All of the destinations we offer are located in areas that are, statistically, less crime-prone than the average American urban area. Still, it is important to protect yourself and use common sense.

Americans are easy targets. We dress differently, speak loudly, carry backpacks and have a distinct accent. Thus, the people you meet may see you with stereotypical eyes – as rich as someone on television – and an occasion may arise where someone may want to become friends with you in order to obtain in one form or another your money or your passport. This has happened in the past and is a serious problem.

- Don't stand out as a group or individual. Try to blend with your surroundings.
- Do not participate in political activities, angry groups, or demonstrations.
- Do not give out information carelessly about students or events. Do not share your address with strangers.
- Always be in contact with your site director and contact our in-country or Philadelphia office for help anytime. Keep emergency numbers handy.
- Know basic help phrases in the native language.
- Be careful of persons wanting to make your acquaintance very quickly, as they may have an ulterior motive. Meet people in public places during the day, preferably with a friend or two of yours.
- Avoid travel to any sensitive political areas.
- Remain alert and never leave your bags unattended.

## **Special Considerations for Women**

A woman traveling on her own may encounter more difficulties than a man by himself. Some of the best ways to avoid hassle are to fit in and try to understand the roles of the sexes in the culture in which you are traveling. Flexibility means observing how the host country's women dress and behave, and following their example. What may be appropriate or friendly behavior in the US may bring you unwanted, even dangerous, attention in another culture.

Try not to take offense at whistles and other gestures of appreciation, regardless of whether they are compliments, invitations, or insults. Realize that, in many countries, these gestures are as much a part of the culture as is the food, history and language.

But if a situation is dangerous – if you are made to feel uncomfortable – then act as if it is. Be extra careful when giving your trust. This applies generally, but is especially important when traveling alone. Avoid being out alone at night in unfamiliar territory — on the street, in parks, in taxis.

## **AIDS, Safe Sex and Relationships**

If you are sexually active, take care of yourself and practice safe sex. Be aware that any type of relationship, whether heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, entails the risk of a sexually-transmitted disease. Entering into a relationship overseas should, therefore, be approached with the same precautions you would use at home. The charm of a once-in-a-lifetime romance in another country may

be tempting, but consider any relationship carefully and remember that you are only in your host country for a short time. There are different cultural values regarding dating and relationships.

When traveling abroad, be aware that some countries may require HIV antibody tests. Travelers should also know that some countries may not have the resources to screen blood adequately or provide sterile needles or medical facilities. While health care is generally at a high standard, we recommend that you take normal, everyday precautions to avoid putting yourself at risk. Do not use intravenous drugs. Practice safe sex. Think carefully about administration of CPR if you are trained to do so. Do not share personal care items, such as razors, with others.

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## **TAKING CARE OF THINGS AT HOME**

### **Home Campus Arrangements**

You should notify your study abroad advisor that you are planning to take part in a Drexel University program and be sure to take care of any necessary paperwork before you leave campus. Remember to cancel housing and meal contracts for the time you'll be away and make arrangements to reactivate them when you return.

If registration for next year's courses on your home campus will take place while you are abroad, make sure that you have made appropriate arrangements so that you will receive your registration materials in a timely fashion.

If you have been accepted to a on term program but want to leave yourself the possibility of staying for the full year, consult your study abroad advisor about what you must do now to facilitate continuing your stay for a full year should you decide to do this.

### **Will my credits transfer back home?**

It is the responsibility of the student to check with their home school and understand how the credit transfer process will work. Upon conclusion of the program Drexel will send one official transcript to the student's home school.

Drexel students—this is a Drexel sponsored program and you will be earning Drexel credits and Drexel grades. You will be registered for courses as if you were in Philadelphia. There is no transferring of courses. What you should find out is what requirements your courses in EG will fulfill.

### **Should I make copies of the papers I do for classes?**

Yes. Many home colleges want to review the work you completed overseas before final credit is awarded. Unless you make specific arrangements with your professors prior to departure, final exams and/or papers will not be returned to students. It is important to keep copies, therefore, of your papers, reading lists and syllabi from all of your courses.

### **How soon after the program concludes will I receive my Drexel University transcript?**

We will send one official copy of your Drexel transcript to your home school. Transcripts for fall program students are usually issued by the end of February. Transcripts for the January program are usually issued by the end of May. Your transcript will be withheld by Drexel University if you have an outstanding balance on your account resulting from nonpayment of the program fee (in whole or in part) or special course surcharges, any late fees or returned check fees, damage charges, library fines, or other unmet financial obligations as deemed appropriate by Drexel University.



### **Should I take my computer?**

**Yes**, take your laptop. There is a wifi router at the program house in Malabo, but don't expect 24/7 access. Electricity in Equatorial Guinea is 220/240 volts AC, and you will need a transformer (for the electricity) and an adapter (for the wall outlet). If your computer's battery doesn't hold charge, consider replacing the battery before arriving. There is a printer available for academic use at the program house. Make steps to insure your equipment before arriving, as electronics have a bad habit of breaking in Equatorial Guinea.

### **Voting by Absentee Ballot**

It's easy, but you have to plan in advance! <http://www.fvap.gov/>

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## **INTERNATIONAL CALLING**

You will be provided with a simple Nokia phone. This does not include the charges for making calls, which are approximately 100 cfa per text and 150 cfa per minute. Most students keep in touch with family via the internet and services like Skype, Google Voice, or WhatsApp. While the internet is usually fast enough to have a normal conversation, the webcam can interfere with the call, and the speed of the internet at the program house can vary dramatically. Fast internet can be found during the day at several hotels and restaurants scattered around Malabo, although you may have to buy a drink to use it. Family members and friends will be able to call your cell phone directly by calling from the U.S. by calling 00240 (the country code for Equatorial Guinea) followed immediately by your 9 digit Equatoguinean cell phone number you will receive upon arriving. You can, for example, set up a call forwarding service on Skype so that contacts will be able to reach you at all times via their Skype accounts in the U.S. As of May 2014, the cost for calling an Equatoguinean cell phone via Skype with Skype credit is 22 cents/minute or 8 cents for a text. 800 can be called from Equatorial Guinea free of charge.

### **Time Change**

You'll need to make a note of the time change so you don't call home in the middle of the night. Equatorial Guinea is six hours ahead of our Eastern Standard Time for most of the year. EG does not recognize Daylight Savings Time, so between April and October, Equatorial Guinea is only five hours ahead of E.S.T. (Add one, two or three hours to these figures in the Central, Rocky Mountain or Pacific time zones, respectively.)

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# WHAT TO PACK?

## **What's the weather like?**

The climate in Equatorial Guinea is tropical year round. Rainfall is common for most of the year, decreasing dramatically in the capital of Malabo between December and February. During this time Malabo can be very dusty from the Harmattan winds that come from the Sahara Desert. Recommended clothing includes lightweight cottons, Coolmax, and other lightweight fabrics. Protection against rain and tropical disease is necessary. (See What to Pack section of this document for more details).

No packing list can ever be complete, as every individual will find different things useful to everyday life. Cut down where you can... you're going to Africa. *Whatever* you bring, you'll still have more than most around you. Please pay attention to the camping list for the field.

## STUDENT PACKING LIST

*Originally compiled by the Winter 2014 Group*

CONGRATULATIONS! You are getting ready to embark on a really amazing adventure (we know because we are just finishing up ours). It can be equal parts exciting and nerve-racking to go out on your own to a new place. Because of this you will want to give yourself all the advantages you can. And we are here to help with the following document.

This document shouldn't be read as a shopping list (i.e. you don't need every single thing on here in the quantity we specify). Rather, this is a list of stuff we found useful or would have found useful during our trip. Read the list and descriptions so you can decide what you think you will need to be comfortable and healthy for this trip.

You should start getting your equipment as soon as you have confirmed your trip so you can get the best deals. Online shopping, thrift stores, army surplus stores, and dollar stores are all great resources for getting good deals on some of this equipment. Asking family and friends to borrow equipment can be a good option as well. Your advisor and resident director in Bioko are also good resources when trying to find some of the stuff you need to buy. If you are prepared, then you are well on your way to having an experience as fantastic as ours was.

## **Tips for Packing For Bioko**

Carry your most important things with you on the plane. Make sure your carry-on isn't so big that they are going to have to check it. Wear at least one set of field clothes including your boots on the plane. Carry all electronics and valuables with you. Also, don't forget to pack all of your anti-malarial pills in that bag.

Out of the four of us that came we had one person whose luggage got misplaced. She got it back before the expedition so it wasn't really a problem, but if it took a week or more then she would have had only what she had in her carry-on. Another student had to have her carry on checked because it was considered too big. Luckily it made it to the gate with us, but she could have also had a similar problem if it was lost. If you make it to the airport with enough time to confirm your bags' final destination you should be fine (3+ hours, the girl who lost her luggage was rushing to get everything checked minutes before the plane was fully loaded and arrived 2 hours before departure time). However, when prioritizing what to pack in which bag it's always a good idea to keep important stuff with you. Also, it may be a good idea to divide your remaining belongings between your two checked bags (you are allowed to check two). That way, if one of them gets lost, you'll still have a little bit of everything (clothes, toiletries, supplies, etc).



One of your checked bags will probably be a field pack. It is good to put this bag in a contractor bag or large duffle bag, so nothing falls out or gets undone during flight. If you do just check the bag make sure nothing is hanging off the bag. One of the students just checked the bag and had his sleeping bag attached on the outside. For one reason or another the sleeping bag didn't make it to the turnstile. As long as your bag is securely in another bag then you have nothing to worry about.

## Stuff for Malabo

While in Malabo you will be living in the student house, and going to classes at UNGE. The house has basically all the amenities you would have in your apartment. You will not be "roughing it" like in the other two sites, so you should pack whatever you need for spending about 6 weeks in a city. Below are our recommendations.

### **Clothing:**

- Men
  - While the weather is sometimes very hot, you will be required to wear pants in a variety of settings in Malabo, including classes at the university. Bring a variety of light short-sleeved shirts (t-shirts, button down, polo), slacks for class and nicer outings, and shorts for beach days/around the house. You should also bring a couple nicer outfits (at least one outfit for a night on the town and one professional outfit).
- Women
  - Since the weather is hot and humid, light, loose-fitting clothing works great. Plan on **not** being able to wear tank tops to class. Skirts must be longer than knee-length at UNGE. Button-down shirts are good options. T-shirts, spaghetti straps, and shorts and capris made of thinner fabric are nice (jeans can get a bit hot) for other settings. Bring lots of dresses and skirts, they work great in this climate, but be mindful that you will attract attention just by being a "Blanco." Also bring clothes for going out (dinner, parties, etc.), and a professional outfit. Flats, sandals and flip-flops are great for looking nice and staying comfortable in the heat. Heels are not recommended as we do a lot of walking and the pavement is often uneven. Maybe bring a pair for your professional outfit.
- There are some cool places to work-out in the city so if you plan on doing anything athletic definitely make sure to bring comfortable running shoes, socks, shorts and shirts. Also maybe look into getting a light bag or fanny pack that is comfortable to run with. You need to keep certain items with you at all times (phone, money, passport copy, ID) and running pants don't always have the best pockets (one of the students found that out the hard way.)
- Outside shoes are not allowed inside the student house, so bring a pair of flip-flops or slippers to wear indoors if you don't like walking around barefoot (the floors get dirty quickly).
- There are no wardrobes, closets or anything like that in the student rooms. We strung parachute cord across the bunk beds to hang cloths on hangers (there should be plenty of hangers in Malabo). If you would rather not live out of your suitcase you might want to look into something to organize your clothes.

### **Classes:**

Supplies needed for classes are minimal. Other than the textbooks and your computer there are really only a few things you might need.

- Notebooks, pencils, pens, etc.
- Spanish-English Dictionary (Book or Computer Program)
  - If you aren't fluent in Spanish this can be invaluable for communication with UNGE students who don't necessarily speak much English.
- Flash Cards or sticky notes

- Helpful for studying, especially Spanish.
- Putting names in Spanish on objects in the house can help you learn them quickly

## **Around the House:**

- Wallet
  - You will be required to carry a copy of your passport, UNGE ID, and some emergency money whenever you leave the house. Make sure you have something you can conveniently carry all that around in.
- Camping Hammock
  - Definitely optional...Our RD mentioned this to us. The house has a small yard, and if you are interested in bringing a hammock you would have a nice place to sit outside.
- Bath Towel
  - Bring a second towel in addition to your field towel. While at the student house you will have a bathroom, and will probably want a towel that's nicer than the one used in the field. Can also double as a beach towel.
- Toiletries
  - Bring whatever you think you'll need for your stay in the city (shampoos, soap, conditioner, razors, moisturizers etc). You can get most things in the city, but it will probably be more expensive, and not necessarily the brands you have in the States. If you are unsure about what to bring or how much, your RD is a good resource.
- Beach Towel
  - Optional...There are a few beaches on the island and you will definitely visit one at some point. It's nice to have something to put your stuff on (see above about bath towel).

## **Advice About Electronics:**

Here are a few tips from our experiences.

- This country uses a higher voltage (240v) than we do in the States
  - If your electronics are from the States then you can seriously damage them if you plug them directly into an outlet here. You will want to have a travel voltage converter so you can plug in your devices. Keep in mind that many devices (like computer chargers and camera chargers) may already have transformers built in, and can be used with a regular converter. Check the labels on any devices you plan to plug in to see if the input goes up to 240v. If it only goes up to 100 or 120v, you need a transformer.
  - Even if you don't need a transformer, getting a converter with a surge protector is a good idea, as there may be power surges that can damage your electronics. Better safe than sorry.
- Bring a lot of media (E-Books, Music, Movies and Games)
  - As you probably know there is Internet at the student house as well as in Moka and a few other places you will be visiting. While the Internet is relatively consistent for things like surfing the web, checking emails and maybe downloading the occasional PDF, things like streaming music and movies or downloading anything else isn't possible.
  - All of the media you and your roommates bring is basically all you are going to be able to use for the trip. Download all the media you think you might want for the trip. An external hard drive full of movies is invaluable. There is a projector that you can use to project movies (Macs need the VGA converter, computers need VGA slot).
  - Make sure you have all the programs you want on your computer, and everything is up to date (especially virus protection) before coming here because the less you need to download the better.
- Extra electronics

- If you lose/break something here it can be expensive/difficult to replace it. At least 2 sets of headphones and an extra laptop charger are good to invest in. If you can bring an extra laptop battery that might be a good idea as well.
- Flash Drive and Hard Drive
  - Flash drives are invaluable for sharing documents and handing in assignments. Hard drives are good for backing up your files and organizing your media.
- Switching Sim cards
  - When you arrive, you are given a phone that you must keep with you at all times. Any phone you bring with you will not be able to handle calls and texts, but you can still use it to listen to music, surf the web if you have wifi, etc. However, if you bring an unlocked phone you can switch the Sim card from the phone you're given to that phone, which may be more convenient.

## **Foods:**

The food situation in Malabo varies group to group. There are plenty of restaurant options, your group can hire a cook relatively inexpensively, or you can cook food yourselves. It's something you and your RD will work out when you get to the city. However, there are some snacks and other things that you might want to bring from the States if you have room. (This list is kind of similar to the one for the Expedition list, but with a few additions).

- Peanut Butter
  - It's kind of a cliché how expensive PB is here. If everyone brings a jar (large jar), and you use it sparingly you can make it last the duration of your stay.
- Trail Mix
  - All nut products are expensive here, and there are some that are hard to find. These are always great to have.
- Dried Fruit
  - Local fruit is cheap and plentiful, but if you want something specific then look into getting it before you leave.
- Candy
  - They have candy here, but none of it is like what you would find in the States. A pack of your favorite candy might help remind you of home.
- Jerky
  - Some people can't live without it. It's a good field trip snack, and it's high in energy. It's also not available here, so whatever you bring is your supply for three months.
- Drink Mix (A large container for the house)
  - In Malabo your drink choices are limited. Bringing some lemonade or Kool-Aid can break up the monotony a bit.
- Gum
  - Some people really like gum. You can get gum here, but from what we understand it's not that great. If you have a favorite brand a few packs might be a good idea.
- Spices and other cooking supplies
  - Malabo is a city with supermarkets and specialty stores. There isn't much that you won't be able to find. However, if you have a specific spice, flavoring, cooking item you like, you might want to bring it. It's probably cheaper in the states and there's always a chance you won't be able to find it here. As an example: we had a girl in our group who loved cooking. She wanted to make brownies from scratch. She was able to find all the ingredients except cocoa powder. If you are into cooking and are worried about not being able to find something ask your RD.



# Stuff for the Field

## Clothing

All outerwear must be drab-colored (black, green, brown, tan, gray or dark blue). You are looking for fabrics that are light-weight and dry quickly. Just because it "wicks" doesn't mean it will dry quickly. Sometimes there are photos and videos that are taken on the expedition that get distributed in one way or another. Try not to bring items with logos from institution not associated with the expedition. 3 cycles of clothing (Wearing, Drying, In Reserve.) Nothing Really dries quickly because of the humidity. Quick drying stuff takes up to 24 hours; regular stuff takes more and if it rains it will take even longer. One of the students lost some clothes on the expedition so plan to bring more clothes than you think you'll need for your cycle.

- 3-4 pairs light-weight, quick-drying pants (shorts and long pants):
  - YES BRING. Thick pants can dry extremely slowly in the Caldera because of the humidity. Bring some light, breathable long pants (for census trails) and some shorts (walking on the beach and in camp). One student was happy with two pairs of field pants. Personal choice.
- 3-4 T-shirts (lightweight cotton OK, Coolmax better) shorts sleeves and maybe one long sleeved shirt.
  - YES comfortable after a day of census, easy to clean and pack, light is better you can always layer.
- 1-2 button down, light-weight long-sleeved shirt.
  - Long sleeves are good to keep bugs off, and prevent plant material from scraping your arms; if they are loose and quick dry it won't bother you to have long sleeves, you can always roll up the sleeves.
- At least 3-4 sets/prs underwear. Cotton dries slowly; nylon or Coolmax better.
  - See above about the 3 cycles. You can never bring too much underwear; the lighter and thinner the material the quicker it dries and the more comfortable you'll be. They don't take up too much room so more is better.
- 3-5 pr thicker crew "hiking" socks (long enough to pull over pant legs) **that dry quickly**.
  - This varies based on personal preference and the type of boots you wear. You will always want socks that are long enough to tuck your pants into, and cover your ankles so your boots don't chafe. Rain boots and boots with little padding will require thicker socks; boots that fit well and have good padding will work better with thin, quick-drying socks. Socks can get dirty and wet fast on the beach so 5 pairs of socks, or even more, is probably better than 3 pairs.
- 1 pr Wellingtons or sturdy hiking boots (break them in before the trip).
  - Your boots are your best friends
  - They need to reach above your ankles for support (after walking for a while you'll thank them). They should also have a thick sole. The terrain of the trails in the Caldera consists almost entirely of rocks (see volcanic mountain) and after a while your feet will start to feel it.
- 1 pr sturdy waterproof sandals, water shoes or Crocs
  - One of these is necessary. Some of the rivers along the beach are a bit large and impossible to cross in boots without getting wet and keep in mind that the riverbed consists of wet and slippery rocks. These also come in handy in slippery bathing areas. You need something more than flip-flops. Some of the water shoes and sandals are pretty expensive, but at the very least bring crocs (always fashionable in the wilderness).
- 1 pr. Camp shoes
  - This is whatever you will wear around camp (flip-flops, sneakers, crocs, sandals). It can be the same shoes as above, but make sure they are comfortable! You don't want to walk around barefoot, but after a day of hiking you will feel like you want to.
- 1 pr. Gaiters (worn with running shoes or hiking boots as protection against brush and snakes)

- Good to have, but can be really expensive. None of us really used these. High boots and long pants are decent enough protection. If you get them make sure they won't just get ripped off (one student lost them both less than 1 km into the walk the first time he used them). Liberty Mountain gaiters are good.
- 1 fleece or sweatshirt with hood (Northern end of the Caldera is cold at night)
  - Again, good to have even if you don't need it. The only time you will probably use it on the Expedition would be if you go to North Camp (the highest of the camps).
- 1 bathing suit
  - Not necessary if you're ok with swimming in your skivvies. Moraka playa is good for swimming. You'll want a bathing suit for Malabo even if you don't use it on the expedition. Keep in mind bathing suits don't always dry well so may remain wet.
- 1 poncho (perfectly adequate), windbreaker (light), or rain suit (Goretex is nice, but expensive).
  - Rain jackets like windbreakers that are light, but not so light that a branch will rip them, are good. It will rain, and you will be stuck in a tent or outside so prepare yourself.
- Bandanas, and hats.
  - Make sure you have something to keep the sweat from your face. If you like hats, wear a hat, if you like bandanas wear that. Either way, bring extra bandanas (you can never have too many). They are cheap and have tons of uses.

## Equipment:

- 1 large field pack to carry your stuff between camps.
  - Durable, waterproof and big enough to fit all your stuff, including sleeping bag and mat (backpacks with straps on the outside work well for this). You will most likely not be carrying these (porters carry stuff between camps). These can be pretty expensive, so borrowing one can be an option. If you don't have one, a duffle bag can work.
- 1 daypack to carry stuff when you go out on census.
  - Your daypack should have well-padded shoulder straps. Lumbar packs and small, waterproof backpacks work as well. It must be a drab color. Weatherproof is the best since you might get caught out in the rain. Make sure it's big enough to carry anything you would want on a census walk (including 1-2 bottles of water), but still comfortable.
- 1 lightweight sleeping bag or sleep sack
  - For expedition volunteers, nothing below 50° is particularly useful as you won't want to sleep inside anything that warm on the expedition. It stays pretty warm at the Moraka playa and Hormigas camps, but gets chilly at night in North camp. Your hooded sweatshirt can provide warmth. We didn't have to deal with the cold weather too much. You might spend most of the expedition laying on your sleeping bag instead of in it. A sleeping bag that is light and takes up little room is useful. Down sleeping bags work great for those reasons. Just keep in mind that you'll also need a sleeping bag in Moka where it does get cold at night, so for DSA students something around 50° or even a little warmer works best. One student's was 40° and she was very happy with it.
- Camp pillow
  - One that's waterproof on one side might be a good idea. Inflatable pillows take up little room and can be much more comfortable than going without. What kind of pillow you decide to bring really depends on preferences and head sensitivity.
- 1 Thermarest pad
  - Preference here...some use them, some don't. We're in the field for a long time though and sleep is important. Our consensus was inflatable over foam. Sometimes you have a rock or root under your tent, so it can be the difference between an uncomfortable night and a good night's sleep, although a few of you might be so tired from the hikes that what you sleep on won't matter.
- Other sleeping stuff (Preference here...)
  - A sleeping bag liner can make you slightly warmer (if used with your sleeping bag) or cooler (if used by itself) and takes up little room

- Earplugs - bring these. They are cheap and don't take up any room. Wildlife can be pretty loud (especially the hyrax!), as can some of your fellow campers. It's rough to find out you can't sleep well after a day of hiking because of noise.
  - Sleeping Mask - personal preference here. None of us used one.
- Dry Bags
  - These things are great for 2 reasons. They keep your stuff dry and they also keep things like clothes and sleeping gear compacted. We would recommend at least 2 medium-sized dry bags (one for clothes and one for sleeping stuff). Some students also used smaller ones for electronics, spare batteries, etc.
- 1 sport or camp towel
  - Being able to bath every day is extremely refreshing, so bring a towel that will be dry by the next day, and not too fluffy. Fluffy towels might be great on your skin, but even the slightest bit of dirt essentially ruins them. One student brought a fluffy towel and was forced to use other people's towels.
- Shammy towels and some rags/handtowels
  - These are not expensive, they don't take up too much room and are cheap. Stuff gets wet outside so having something you can wipe off water with is important. Also rags are good for bathing. Your feet and legs get very wet and sandy in Moraka Playa and you need something to wipe the grime off before climbing in your tent, or you risk a night's rest in a pile of wet sand. As one student put it, "That stuff's gold!"
- 5 heavy-weight big strong trash bags
  - Contractor bags are great and you can pick them up at any hardware store. When you go over to the beach on a boat it is good to have your field bag covered in case it gets wet. They are strong, reusable and have a ton of uses.
- 20 assorted size Ziplock plastic bags to keep everything from clothing to cameras dry.
  - NEED THESE. Ziplocs are invaluable... There are normally some at the student house so you might want to ask your RD if you need some or what sizes you could use. Someone on the expedition might need some if you have extras. Any unused bags also become welcome donations to the house collection.
- 1 package parachute cord for hanging clothes to dry
  - Definitely bring this. You can get this cheap and it has so many uses. Other rope or string works just as well, but parachute cord is more durable.
- 1 Swiss army knife or a Leatherman, Gerber Tool, etc.
  - General wilderness survival. There's no reason not to have this. Remember this needs to be packed in your checked luggage—it will be confiscated if it is in your carry-on.
- 1 headlamp with red light function
  - One is the barest minimum. We would recommend two as well as enough extra batteries for a few recharges. You may also want to bring a regular small flashlight (with batteries) in case your headlamp fails. You will need these for getting around camp at night, as there are no other sources of light. Red light function is good if you want to go on sea turtle census (and why wouldn't you?), as regular lights are not used for that. Also there are some headlamps that come with external chargers, these work great, until they don't. They last a really long time which is great but get stuck without power or get it wet a little and it becomes an expensive paperweight.
- Lots of extra batteries
  - The amount varies for electronics you have, but whatever batteries you bring is what you have basically for the whole trip. You can always bring back or donate what you don't use...but you are stuck with what you bring, so bring more than you think you'll need, especially for those products you use often (camera, headlamp, flashlight; extra batteries for watch and phone, if using, may also be a good idea). There may be some batteries at the student house, so check with your RD beforehand.
  - We'd recommend that most of your stuff run on batteries. There are generators at most of the camps, so you can charge electronics. However, they can break and are not always available for personal use. If you have something that needs charging bring the charger, but use sparingly.



- 2 water bottles (1L Nalgene best)
  - Water purification is something you need to take into consideration. Some purification techniques take a while. Having two bottles is handy because you can have one purifying while you use the other. Also clean your bottles when you have a chance. Choose Nalgene (or a similar shape) because there are some really cool filters and uv lights that only work if the lip of the bottle is just so. They are also super sturdy, can be carabineered to your bag, and hold water well.
- Water treatment techniques. There are pretty much two schools of thoughts for making water safe to drink. You can filter it or purify it. DO your research to see which is best for you.
  - Filtering is pulling the water through a pump or gravity filter so only the water goes through. Filters work great and don't require power, but can be bulky, expensive and have a bunch of parts that can break.
  - The other way is purifying. This means putting spring water in your bottle and using tablets or uv light to clean it. The tablets are almost always the cheapest way, but it can take a while (iodine 30 min, chlorine up to 4 hours). They also might leave a bad taste in the water so bring drink mixes/flavoring if possible. UV lights (stirry pens, etc.) are quick but need to be charged and can cost a lot. Another thing about this method is you can get particulates in the water. The water is still good to drink, but it's sometimes a bit unsettling. For tablets, iodine is best. One student brought 4 hour chlorine tablets and rarely ever used them, but relied on volunteers and other students for iodine tablets. No one wants to wait four hours to drink water after a long, tough hike.
  - It is worth mentioning that though pumps and UV filters are expensive, they will provide you with COLD clean water. You might not think it's a big deal now but after 12 km hike cold water sure beat the hell out of warm, strange tasting water. Though iodine and chlorine do clean the water, after 30 minutes the water becomes warm and less refreshing.
  - The consensus in our group was that the best option is a Swiss pump filter. There was a great filter which one volunteer used (he had it for ~10 years and the filter was still good) that was easy to clean, didn't take much room, didn't need to be recharged, and as long as the lip of your bottle was the right size you could have clean water as fast as you could pump it. However, it's expensive and maybe not practical for someone that doesn't plan on using it after this expedition.
- 100 iodine tablets (2 bottles) for treating drinking water
  - Again basic wilderness survival. These are cheap so have at least one bottle as backup even if you have another purifier/filter.
- 1 camera
  - No reason not to bring a camera. You're in Africa on a volcanic island surrounded by unique creatures! One of the students never had a camera before, so he got a Nikon point-and-shoot that wasn't too expensive but had a good enough zoom for wildlife photos. He still managed to get some good pictures even with lack of experience. You'll want a camera for Malabo and Moka as well.
  - If you're bringing a camera that you care at all about, make sure you also have a dry bag to keep it safe in the forest. A bag with a strap that you can have at your side is ideal if you like taking lots of photos. Also, humidity will cause your lens to fog up, so a good lens pen or cleaning cloth is invaluable. Bring plenty of batteries, especially if they are rechargeable, as you may not always have access to a generator. If you're a shutterbug, also make sure you have a decent sized memory stick (2 memory sticks is even better).
- 1 pr binoculars
  - REQUIRED Buy whatever you're comfortable with using. If you think you'll use them in the future invest in some good, durable ones, or borrow one from a friend if you are never going to use them again. Waterproof or at least weatherproof is your best bet. 10 x magnification is best. You'll want to get practice with these before you get to the field if you've never used them before! Monkeys are not easy to see, so you'll want to be familiar with how to use them before you go (a little suburban bird watching is a great way to start).
- 1 pr sunglasses

- Personal Preference...Take a pair you're not emotionally attached to (dollar store pair). They are useful on the beach and on the boat ride, but in the forest they are never necessary. If you never wear sunglasses in the states, you probably won't wear them on Bioko.
- 1 waterproof sport watch
  - SUPER REQUIRED. All plastic, no leather. Invest more than six dollars on one (one of the student's \$6 watch broke less than a week in). However, don't break the bank (another student's \$12 watch works to this day). A nice comfortable digital watch with an alarm is great. If it has the date as well it's useful for journal writing and data entry.
  - For those of you that like to keep track of your activity, we recommend a watch with a pedometer. One student brought a Nike Fuel Band and got to see how much activity he did while on the expedition.
- 3 small spiral-bound field notebooks, preferably waterproof
  - Rite in the Rain products are awesome! Any size is fine. Ordering them online in a pack is normally a great way to save money (maybe go in on a pack with a few students). Bring more than what you think you'll need since you can't really purchase more once you are there. They are required for census.
- 1 Journal
  - This could be a hardbound book, another Rite in the Rain notebook, or whatever you want to document your experience. This is an once-in-a-lifetime experience, and a good journal could be the best souvenir you take back with you.
- 10 ballpoint pens and lead pencils
  - All weather pens are normally expensive. For Rite products mechanical pencils work well and they won't ever wash off. Pens are also fine. 10 is just a ball park. Bring more than you think you'll need.
- Sharpie
  - Good for labeling equipment, or marking trails.
- 1 sewing kit with thread, needles, safety pins, scissors.
  - If you can sew it's not a bad idea. The student that brought one ended up repairing a few things. Having one person in your group who can use a sewing kit is extremely helpful.
- A container of DEET-containing insect repellent. Note, 100% Deet is meant for clothing application only!
  - Preference...None of us really used any bug spray. During the dry season there are not many bugs besides sweat bees and ants. This is another product that you want to ask your RD about.
- Space Blanket
  - Normally a staple for preparedness, but in this environment not very important.
- Cigarette lighter
  - Theoretically to start fire, but that's difficult to do when everything is so wet... Just like a whistle better to have and not need than the alternative.
- Carabineers
  - 1001 uses! Having a few is never a bad thing.
- Compass
  - Never go on a hike in general without this.
- Snorkel Gear
  - EXTREMELY optional, but can be cool to have if you have some extra room in your bag. On the beach there are a few cool places to snorkel. Our RD brought some gear, but not enough for all of us to try. It can be a really awesome experience.
- Duct Tape
  - Good for waterproofing, fixing, labeling your stuff. Just all around useful to have.
- Book
  - If it's raining or a slow afternoon it's always good to have a something to pass the time. Pick a small light paperback for space reasons. (Also there is a great chance it will get wet and maybe a bit ruined.)

- If you are planning to bring a Kindle/tablet to the field, a couple words of caution. A student brought a tablet and though it worked really well and he took care of it (ie. No water damage) the second he got back to Malabo, the humidity had taken its toll. Luckily he revived the tablet in rice. Keeping your tablet in a humidity + water proof case is great, although when all else fails, ZIPLOCK. This advice is also good for other electronics.

## Toiletries: (Keep it simple)

- 2 medium bottles of camp soap
  - Any brand will do (our camp leader swears by Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Soap). It's better to have bottles with screw-on caps rather than snap-tops (spills in the bag are no good). Even if you shower and wash your stuff every day an economical person can get by on one bottle for the whole trip. However, we had people lose their bottles, so extra is never bad.
- Toothbrush and toothpaste are important; Dental floss as well. Mouthwash makes for a convenient way to freshen up.
- Deodorant
  - Something you should bring, but since animals might notice, fragrance-free is best. A student used scentless Dry Idea and it worked great. In Drew Cronin's words: Better to be a little "foresty."
- Miscellaneous
  - The camp has plenty of toilet paper (make sure to put some squares in a Ziploc bag in your day pack in case you need it during a census)
  - Add your own items (contact lens equipment, feminine supplies, etc.) to this basic list but no fancy items. You will not need make-up, moisturizers.
  - For hair care bring a brush or comb if needed. Camp soap worked good for the guys' and some of the girls' hair, but some wanted their own shampoo. Little shampoo bottles don't take up much room. Personal preference....
  - Razors: None of the guys on the expedition used a razor as far as we knew (everyone has a beard so it's not a problem). Some of the girls used their razors once or twice. Make sure to keep it dry to prevent rust.

## Other

- Sun screen
  - Need for the beach and the boat, not the rainforest. Check with RD to see if there's enough at the house.
- Hand sanitizer and/or Sanitary Wipes
  - It's nice to clean your hands before you eat and after using the latrine; also good for disinfecting. You can use sanitary wipes for your tush as well.
- Animal and/or plant ID books
  - If you want your own reference material for wildlife there are publications on basically anything you'd want: mammals, birds, herps, etc. Some books are also available at the student house. It's not required for census since you will be trained here.
- Various medications, including:
  - **Anti-malarial meds (important to bring):** If you take the daily pills it's a good idea to bring pill organizers (the thing with the different days of the week on it). You can also put your vitamin supplements in it. It takes a lot of the guesswork out of taking your pills. Just make sure to keep it dry.
  - Ibuprofen, Pepto Bismol, Immodium, Afterbite, Tylenol PM, etc....make up your own list. (It's Africa, there is an extremely high chance you will have some small bug at one point. Again better to have and not need...). There are some first aid kits that come with an assortment of over the counter drugs that may come in handy.



- Multivitamins – We all had them. Personal preference, but since our diet were pretty basic (see field food) it definitely can help keep you healthy. Don't bring gummy vitamins...they melt, as one of the students found out.
- Vaseline or baby powder. We are all adults so we know what happens after long walks, now picture that in a humid hot environment. These are the best tools against chafing.
- First aid kit
  - Each camp will have one, but building your own isn't a bad idea:
  - 2 packages moleskin to prevent blisters. If your feet are cut, blistered, bruised etc. you will not be a happy camper! Moleskin is going to be useful. One student found that moleskins were regularly ripped off while hiking and preferred just band-aids. Personal preference.
  - 10-20 assorted Band-Aids
  - 10 alcohol wipes
  - 1 tube antibiotic cream
  - 1 ace bandage
  - Tweezers for splinters (check your Swiss army knife first)
  - Small pair of scissors (your leatherman or pocket knife may have one already); good for cutting moleskin and bandages

## Food:

- You do not have to worry about packing meals, but we are not going to lie and tell you they are great. They are filling, keep you going, and are a fantastic treat at the end of the day. However, it is a lot of protein (spam, sardines) and grains (rice, spaghetti). If you are used to other types of foods (especially a lot of sugar) you will want to have snacks. **YOU CAN NEVER BRING TOO MANY SNACKS.** If it fits in your bag comfortably it is not a bad idea to bring it. You will be surprised how quickly it can get used up, and you can always bring it back if you don't use it (very useful in Moka as well). Here is the list of food we were wishing we had brought (or brought more of) while actually on the expedition:
  - Trail Mix
  - Space Food
  - Chocolate and/or other candy
  - Dried Fruit
  - Protein Bars (Energy Bars, Power Bars etc)
  - Granola Bars
  - Jerky
  - Drink Mix (Makes water taste SO much better, and you will need to drink a lot of water. Highly recommended! Crystal light and Gatorade mixes are good)
  - Oatmeal
  - Powdered Soup
  - Cookies and/or crackers
- You can get some of this stuff in Malabo (we mention that a bit later in the list). However, it's better to bring it from the States because you can probably get it cheaper and in better quantities.
- Lunches on the expedition will be light (cookies or something leftover from another meal) so that's normally a good time to breakout your personal stash.
- Some other protein stuff (bars, jerky, powdered soup) are good, but most likely you'll be craving sugar in one form or another. Sweet packaged foods, like granola bars will be very useful.
- One good thing to do is talk to your advisor and RD about the food options. If you are vegetarian there is always an option, but if you are allergic to something it might be good to let people know ahead of time.

## Tips for packing for Expedition

If you packed your things so your most important possessions are with you on the plane, then chances are you will need to move some stuff around before the expedition. Put your most important things in your daypack (pills, camera, binoculars, sunscreen, a snack, etc.) Everything else can go in your field pack. Try to organize everything to maximize room. You can rearrange stuff when you actually get to the camp. Remember you will come back with less stuff (since you eat your snacks, use toiletries etc.) so as long as you can pack everything comfortably you should be able to bring it.

## **Stuff For Moka**

During the experience you spend about two weeks living in the village of Moka at the Moka Wildlife Research Center. Here you will be conducting your Field Research in Tropical Ecology class. You will be living in similar conditions as the Expedition (tents, outdoor bathroom, etc). However, there are some interior facilities you can use to plug in your electronics and keep them out of the weather. There's also internet! As far as stuff to bring it will be pretty similar to that of the Expedition. We just have a few amendments here:

- Specific equipment for your project
  - Before you leave you will decide what you will be studying. Most of the projects require little to no equipment (binoculars, headlamp, notebook) and there is a lot of equipment in Moka. However, some projects might require something you need to take time to get. For instance the insect guy in our group needed to make/bring traps from the states. Talk to your instructor about what they have at the station so you can look into getting stuff if you need it.
- Gaiters are more useful here because of the different terrain.
- Moka gets much colder than most other places, especially at night and in the morning
  - We don't mean it gets East Coast cold (it's kind of like East Coast spring weather), but after a month and a half in Malabo/Caldera this might be a shock to the system. Make sure you bring your sleeping bag and DEFINITELY bring some warm clothes (hat, sweater/fleece, long pants, etc.)

## **“Gifts” for the House**

The student house is really great (this is in no way sarcastic, all four of us were surprised by how nice it is). However, it is lacking in a few things that are cheap and easy to come by in the States, but not as easy to get here. If you have some room and would like to make a donation to the house the next group of students would be very grateful. Here are a few suggestions:

- Board Games and/or Puzzles
  - It might seem lame, but on a rainy day it can be a cool way to pass the time with your roommates and the house is in serious need of better board games. If the Internet is slow it can be a fun bonding experience. As of May 2014, we have Cranium, Fact or Crap, an old Trivial Pursuit and some card game called Killer Bunnies.
- Books
  - The house has a ton of reference material, but is kind of lacking in light reading. If you have something like that lying around it might benefit someone who forgot a book.
- Football
  - There are no “Parks” per say, but there are a few green spaces where you could get a catch going.
- Playing Cards
- Hobby Stuff

- Being able to practice something like juggling or an instrument or a craft can be a really rewarding experience here. In our group one of the students brought a guitar (he obviously didn't leave it here) but it was great being able to practice with the other students and teach each other.
- Speakers
  - There are no speakers here, and no one thought to bring any, but \$10 speakers would have been the difference between us getting to listen to movies and music together versus on headphones individually. Getting speakers here would be much more expensive compared to the States.
- Tupperware (Large, Medium)
  - Also something that is cheap and available in the States, but not here. They store food better than wrapping stuff up and are more eco-friendly.
- Another surge protector
  - The socket situation in the common room is a bit crazy, so most of the electronics in there ran through one surge protector. This was a bit crowded at some points. A second surge protector (which some office stores sell for \$1) would make it a bit easier.
- Cookie Sheet
  - Kind of specific, but when our group wanted to make cookies it was kind of a roadblock. A small cookie sheet (it's a small oven) would be a cool addition to the kitchen supplies.

## Gifts for people

If you've got a bit of room in the suitcase you can consider bringing something as a gift for some of the people here. A few suggestions of people to keep in mind:

- Salimata (Our Watchie's adorable little daughter)
  - Crayons and coloring book (really hard to find here, but easy to come by in the States)
  - Small toys that a four-year-old girl (as of January 2016) would enjoy
  - Toddler books
- UNGE Partner (Something small that they could use during fieldwork. Optional)
  - Compass
  - Headlamp
  - Watch
  - Rite in the Rain gear

## Some Final Notes

*Aside from gathering what you need for the trip another thing you will want to look into is brushing up on your Spanish. For those who have had little to no Spanish experience it is definitely not a requirement. However, you will be in a country where Spanish is by far the most prevalent language. Even having a general understanding, and maybe a few phrases memorized, can go a long way. You will also be taking a Spanish class during your time, and it's a good way to get a leg up so you'll have one less thing to worry about. There are plenty of free online lessons that can help you brush up.*

*In our group we had one fluent Spanish speaker and three students that had learned minimal Spanish in the past. Right off the bat the fluent Spanish speaker was able to make so many connections because he could relate to everyone so much more easily. Everyone here was very patient and willing to work with everyone else's limited Spanish, but it's just easier to carry on a conversation with someone who speaks the same language. It comes down to this: the more work you put into this experience the more you can get out of it. If you want to be able to better relate to the people here, then make learning some Spanish before you come here a priority.*



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# **Planning a Budget for Equatorial Guinea**

## **How should I carry my money?**

Now that you have been admitted to the program, one of your first questions is how much it's really going to cost. This section will help you anticipate a variety of common expenses so you can start planning now. If your family is helping to pay for your program abroad, you should discuss your budget with them also.

Let's go through each of the items for which you will have to budget:

### ***Immunization Costs***

Please refer to the Immunization Cost Estimates section of this document for further details.

### ***Airfare***

You should budget about \$2,000 round trip airfare from an East Coast city to Equatorial Guinea.

### ***Books***

You should budget about \$400 for books and educational supplies.

### ***Meals, Local Transport and Personal Expenses***

These are probably your most variable costs, as they will depend on your personal habits. Consult the cost of living in EG section of this document for more specific estimates.

The student house in Equatorial Guinea has a full time watchman, and in prior years the group has employed a maid/cook to clean, purchase food, and prepare meals. This cost is included in the program fee. You should budget about \$400 on communal fund expenses (breakfast, dinner, occasional lunch).

While in Equatorial Guinea, most people get around the city by foot or by taxi. Taxi service throughout Malabo costs 500 cfa per ride or about \$1.00.

### ***Helpful Hints***

You'll stretch your budget if you do the following:

- Make daily and weekly budgets and stick to them.
- Prepare your own food. It's cheaper than eating out. If you do eat out, eat your main meal at noon, rather than in the evening.
- Plan your activities around free, inexpensive and discounted events.
- Take care of your belongings and safeguard your cash and passport.
- Loss from carelessness or theft is hard enough to bear at any time, but it is even more distressing abroad. Pickpocketing is common, particularly in spots frequented by tourists.

With a little realistic planning, you won't be caught by surprise later on.

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# **Banking in Equatorial Guinea**

## **Currency**

CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) Franc (written XAF or CFA, and pronounced "say-fah") is the currency in Equatorial Guinea

Notes are in denominations of CFA10,000, 5000, 1000 and 500. Coins are in denominations of 100, 50, 25, 10 and 5. Equatorial Guinea is part of the French Monetary Area. U.S. dollars and Euros can easily be exchanged for CFA upon arrival in Equatorial Guinea. CFA is almost impossible to exchange outside of West Africa.

Past participants have entered Equatorial Guinea with \$500-\$600 in US currency and this money lasted the entire semester. You'll spend about \$400 on communal fund house expenses for breakfast, dinner and occasional lunch. The remainder of this cash can be used for eating out and souvenirs. If you don't feel comfortable carrying this much money, then bring less cash with you and plan on withdrawing money from a U.S. bank account via ATM.

## **Credit & debit cards**

Credit cards are generally **not** used in Equatorial Guinea. A few select 5 star hotels and airline offices are the only known exceptions.

Debit cards are the best way of getting extra money. You can withdraw from a home bank with one of several ATMs throughout Malabo. Although they are sometimes inconsistent, at least one is usually working at all times. It is best to plan on withdrawing the maximum limit (sometimes 150,000 cfa, sometimes 200,000 cfa) only a few times to avoid excessive non-bank fees levied by the ATMs.

## **Travelers cheques**

Travelers cheques are **not** recommended. Banks and businesses will not accept them.

## **Exchange rate indicators**

The exchange rate as of December 2015 is 1 US dollar = 600 CFA.

## **In an Emergency**

When the program is in session, our staff in Equatorial Guinea can make emergency loans to students. Students must sign a promissory note and repay the loan as soon as they receive money from home. If you find yourself in dire financial straits while traveling, the State Department can help your family transfer money to you (provided you are a US citizen). To do this, your family must wire money through Western Union or their bank, or send a cashier's check or money order to the State Department in Washington, DC. A trust account is established and a telegram is sent to the appropriate US embassy or consulate abroad authorizing next workday disbursement to you.

For further information about this service, check out the [State Department's website](#).

Everyday Items	F. cfa	US Dollars
Tipping (exceptional service only)	500 - 1000 cfa in select circumstances	\$1-\$2
Phone Call (in-country)	100 / call	\$1 per 5 minutes
Skype Call (to US)		\$1 per 4 minutes
Airmail Postage (DHL - only reliable method)	57,000 for a package of documents	\$137 for a package of documents
Daily Newspaper	None available	None available
Haircut - get your friends to do it	Free	Free
Taxi	500	\$1
Ice cream bar	1000	\$2.50
Internet cafe	1000/30 min	\$2.50/30 min
Bottle of Water	1000	\$2.50
Beer	500	\$1.20
Meals in Restaurants		
Fine Restaurant	15,000/meal	\$30
Modest Restaurant	8,000/meal	\$16
Fast Food	1000/meal	\$2.50
Groceries		
Bananas	250/banana	\$0.60/banana
Oranges from Cameroon	500/orange	\$1.20/orange
Oranges from Spain	1500/orange	\$3.60/orange
Lettuce	3000/kilo	\$7.50/kilo
Tomatoes	2500/kilo	\$6/kilo
Potatoes	5000/kilo	\$12/kilo
Bread	50/roll	\$0.12/roll
Eggs	100/egg	\$0.20/egg
Cookies	1000/package of 24	\$2.50 per package of 24
Candy Bar	500	\$1.20
Can of Soda	500	\$1.20
Toothpaste	1000	\$2.50
275 Facial Tissues	4000	\$10
375 ml Shampoo	4000	\$10

## Can I talk to someone who has gone on the program?

The students listed below have volunteered to be advisors to future students through email. When contacting a Volunteer Advisor, please be sure to use the word Bioko Island in the subject line. Note that students who participated more than two semesters ago will not have the most current program information but will be able to provide more information about how the experience affected them both academically and personally.

- Winter5 2012:
  - Rumaan Malhotra [ruu.mal@gmail.com](mailto:ruu.mal@gmail.com)
  - Thomas Conner [thomasaconnor@gmail.com](mailto:thomasaconnor@gmail.com)
  - Allie Byrne [allison.q.byrne@gmail.com](mailto:allison.q.byrne@gmail.com)
- Fall 2012
  - Mackenzie Grapes [mag423@drexel.edu](mailto:mag423@drexel.edu)
  - Stephen Dench [stephen.m.dench@drexel.edu](mailto:stephen.m.dench@drexel.edu)
- Winter 2013
  - Lindsay Kummerer [lk423@drexel.edu](mailto:lk423@drexel.edu)
  - Sarah Rosebaum [Sarah\\_Rosenbaum@baylor.edu](mailto:Sarah_Rosenbaum@baylor.edu)
  - Reed Power [reed.a.power@drexel.edu](mailto:reed.a.power@drexel.edu)
- Fall 2013
  - Chris Quirin [christopher.m.quirin@drexel.edu](mailto:christopher.m.quirin@drexel.edu)
  - Raelyn Loftis [raelyn.e.loftis@drexel.edu](mailto:raelyn.e.loftis@drexel.edu)

- Erica Tuttle - ent27@drexel.edu
  - Katie Diangelus - kld76@drexel.edu
- Winter 2014
  - Araks Ohanyan - ao344@drexel.edu
  - Mark Nessel - [mpn37@drexel.edu](mailto:mpn37@drexel.edu)
  - Andy Anderson - andy [Andersonmatrix217@gmail.com](mailto:Andersonmatrix217@gmail.com)
  - Alexandra Capadona - alexandracappadona@gmail.com
- Fall 2014
  - Dan Lipshutz - dan.lipshutz@gmail.com
  - Gabby Farrell - gabrielle.c.farrell@drexel.edu
  - Chris Vito - christopher.e.vito@drexel.edu
  - Julia Dagum - jfd226@cornell.edu
- Winter 2015
  - Katy Lample - katherine.j.lample@drexel.edu
  - Emily Reich - reich@susqu.edu
  - Tara Tobin - tmt84@drexel.edu



# **CULTURE SHOCK**

## **Will I feel culture shock?**

Yes, Equatorial Guinea is very different from the United States. Returning students report feeling "out-of-it" when they arrive overseas and when they first return to the US.

## **What is it?**

Culture shock is the mental, physical and emotional adjustment to living in a new environment. It is the coming to terms with different ways of approaching everyday living—everything from fundamental philosophical assumptions (one's worldview) to daily chores.

Anyone living in a new environment long enough cannot ignore the differences. They become frustrating, and possibly infuriating, until recognizable patterns emerge and an understanding of why things are done differently develops.

Culture shock is different for everyone, but a common pattern can be charted on a U-shaped curve that encompasses five separate phases: fun, fright, flight, fight and fun. Typically, when you first arrive in your host country, everything is wonderful. You are excited that you have arrived, finally seeing first-hand all those places that previously were just one-dimensional pictures. This is the 'fun' stage.

After awhile, all those wonderful, cute customs become aggravating. There is no point to them. You think your own culture's ways are much better, more efficient, and more sensible. While your host country's people seem friendly at first, you feel it is just superficial warmth, not a real interest in establishing a friendship. You begin to miss your family and friends. This is the 'fright' stage.

Then it gets worse. You're really homesick. You can't find anything good about your host country. Everything stinks. You are convinced that nothing beats your home country, and you remember how good you had it at home. You may even come to believe that all your problems will go away if you can just pack up and go home. This is the 'flight' stage. It's serious, but usually temporary.

You give yourself a pep talk and decide to stick it out awhile longer. This experience deserves a fair chance. You decide to be less furious with those stupid policies (like post offices and stores that close early). Now you are into the 'fight' stage.

You begin to like the people you live with. In fact, those acquaintances are more like friends. They tell you why those stupid policies are the way they are. In fact, those policies make sense and don't seem too stupid. You are no longer inconvenienced by them and have trouble understanding why they bothered you so much. You suddenly realize you like it there and want to stay forever. You have arrived at the fifth and final stage — and have made it through the emotional roller coaster ride of culture shock.

## **Possible Symptoms of Culture Shock**

Sometimes people don't realize when they are suffering from culture shock or they may experience some of the symptoms during different times and in varying degrees. This confusion can be the result of looking at several symptoms as isolated problems rather than as related components of a single affliction. Some signs which you may notice that could indicate culture shock are:

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal (spending too much time in your room, only seeing other U.S. students, avoiding your local contacts)
- Negative feelings and stereotyping of nationals
- Inability to concentrate
- Excessive sleep or insomnia

- Compulsive eating or drinking
- Lack of appetite
- Irritability
- Crying uncontrollably or outbursts of anger
- Physical ailments, such as frequent headaches or stomachaches

### **Dealing with Culture Shock**

There are ways to prepare for, and thereby lessen the extremes of, culture shock.

First, know that you will experience some degree of culture shock (even if you don't believe it now).

Everyone does. Carefully read the process outlined so that you will recognize the symptoms and feelings.

Most importantly, understand that those frustrating feelings will pass.

Second, expect things to be different. Some differences will be quite obvious, others less so. You are probably prepared for the major cultural differences, such as religious and socio-economic differences. It is the apparently trivial differences that will become the most aggravating. Try not to allow yourself to blow them out of proportion.

Third, don't label differences as "good" or "bad." Because the American way is the predominant (if not the only) way you know, you will inevitably compare everything in your host country with the ways and approaches you know from the U.S. Realize that you are not looking objectively at your new culture. Rather, you are seeing (and judging) it from the American perspective. Instead of judging what you see as better or worse than what you know in the U.S., try to focus on the differences and ask why they exist.

Fourth, maintain the ability to laugh at your mistakes. It will take some time to adapt to the point where you can maneuver without making cultural missteps. After all, it took quite a bit of training by your parents and family and effort on your part to be comfortable in your own culture!

Finally, you don't have to "do as the Romans do" and accept all the differences. You will like some of your host country's ways and incorporate them into your daily routine. Other ways won't fit your values or outlook, and you will decide that they are not appropriate for you. You are free to make choices, and doing so is perfectly acceptable.

### **Taking the Sting Out of the Shock**

Culture shock occurs because, unconsciously, we expect everyone to be like us. Inevitably, something will occur in a new culture that will not fit your frame of reference and therefore won't be fully comprehended. This sort of ambiguity is threatening and frequently causes fear, anger, repulsion or some strong emotion.

The key to coping is to become aware of these reactions as they arise. Instead of allowing an extreme emotional reaction to control you, try to determine the cause of your reaction. By focusing on the cause instead of the reaction, you can frequently help the emotion to abate. Then you can experience the situation more objectively, without the American presumptions which caused the emotional reaction in the first place.

Careful observation, not clouded or skewed by your own cultural presumptions and expectations, will help you develop an understanding of the new culture and will facilitate your inclusion in that culture.

### **American Cultural Patterns**

Culture shapes everything — the ways in which you think and analyze; what you value; how you do things; what's considered proper behavior. It is difficult to assess all the effects of a culture while you are enmeshed in it. When you are abroad, you will discover important aspects of the American culture that you were unaware of before you left. Since you will be viewing your new culture from the American perspective, it is helpful to have a good grasp on the American perspective and understand how it shapes you.

Being aware of your own cultural biases and presumptions will enable you to understand your reactions to ambiguous events that occur while you are abroad. While you won't escape culture shock, you can be well-prepared to face it and dilute its effects. You may think this is obvious, but take a look anyway. Tacit knowledge can only be of help to you if you are cognizant of it.

### **Cultural Variations**

Most western cultures share many of the same assumptions with Americans, but some variations do exist. Be prepared for "efficient and quick" to be a very different concept from what you are used to. While everyone likes an idea that works, some cultures value aesthetics over practicality or emphasize the process over the end result, and family ties and social obligations are often given priority over individual needs and wants.

### **You are Not Alone**

Remember that everyone else on your program will experience similar feelings to yours. Don't hesitate to look to them for moral and emotional support. In addition, the staff of both your host institution's international student office and our offices abroad can help you if you're feeling particularly stressed or anxious. Please seek them out.

### **Helpful Links**

- Travelers' Health - Central Africa [<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/cafrica.htm>]
- State Department Consular Information Sheet [[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1110.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1110.html)]
- State Department Background Notes [<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7221.htm>]
- Official Website of Equatorial Guinea [<http://guinea-equatorial.com/default.asp>]