

# **ST. LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY**

## **KENYA ORIENTATION HANDBOOK SUMMER 2011**

**Bring this packet with you when you travel to Kenya!**

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# KENYA SUMMER PROGRAM

(Excerpted and edited from the Semester Orientation Booklet)

## Arrival and Orientation

**Karibuni!** (Swahili for “welcome”). We are happy to have you on the 2011 summer program in Kenya. You will reside at the St. Lawrence Study Center, a five-acre plot in Karen, a suburb about 8 miles outside of Nairobi. The area is named for Karen Blixen, author of Out of Africa, and is not far from the Ngong hills which overlook the Great Rift Valley. On the property there are lots of trees, flowers, over 60 species of birds, and open spaces. There you will meet the program staff as well as some of their families!

The Study Center comprises dorms, living rooms, dining room, and kitchen and study space. The faculty and other program staff live with their families at the Study Center compound. It is required that students reside at the Study Center throughout the semester, except when on field trips. Program offices, classroom, library, and computer lab are in another building on the compound. Orientation to the program and additional readings for your course will be provided upon arrival.

**The summer course on Conservation and Media will spend the bulk of their time in the field, but will return to the compound at the end of the course.**

### Travel

Students are strongly encouraged to take the group flight that will be offered. If this is not possible, students are expected to arrive at the Nairobi airport **before noon** on the date the group flight arrives. The reason we ask you to arrive before noon is because there are security issues regarding your transport between the airport and the compound. If you are on the group flight, do not change currency at the airport, as it is time-consuming and the rates of exchange are not competitive. We will arrange for you to change money soon after your arrival.

### Taking a taxi to KSP compound from the airport

**Important:** If you are traveling independently please make a copy of the following instructions and take it to Kenya.

Students traveling independently will not be picked up by the KSP's staff and must arrange their own transport (we highly recommend taxi use) to our compound. Students traveling independently are required to supply the SLU international studies office with complete flight details before your departure (Please include airline, flight number, arrival time and date and, city your plane is departing from).

When leaving the airport please do not take any random taxi on offer because of the security risks involved. As you clear with customs and move out to the area where arriving passengers are received by waiting relatives and friends, many taxi drivers will approach you to offer their services. Just ignore them and do the following:

1. Change about US\$ 50 to Kenyan shillings (Prevailing rate is about 80 Ksh to one US dollar) from any of the banks at the arrival hall.

2. Go to the office (in the same arrival hall) of any of the following taxi companies: Expert Taxis and Travel (Phone: 827305, 827018) or Europcar (phone: 822348) and ask for a taxi to our compound at 91 Miotoni Road, Karen. The companies have fixed rates which vary between Kes 2,300 and 2,600. Make sure that they register your name, the taxi driver's name and taxi's number plate.
3. Give them the description of the location of our compound and make sure that the taxi driver knows our compound's location:

The campus of the St. Lawrence University Kenya Semester Program (SLU - KSP) is located at 91 Miotoni Rd, off Ngong Road, Karen. Turn right at Miotoni Road, drive for about a kilometer, and turn left at a small sign, located on the ground with the writing "91 SLU (KSP)". It is the first gate after the Nairobi Waldorf School. The drive from the airport should take about 45-60 minutes depending on the traffic.

If you need help please call our office: 0722-201975 (cell phone), or 0734-333038 (cell phone) during working hours. You can also reach us on the cell phone as follows:

Abdelwhab Sinnary: Cell phone 0722-310966

Lina Karingi: Cell phone 0722-770046

**(Please give the above contact information to your families before your departure.)**

Our summer programs do not allow time for independent travel outside of the scheduled travel times. Students may make arrangements for independent travel when the summer course is finished.

No formal research can be undertaken after the conclusion of the program. Should a student choose to stay on, she or he does so as a tourist and **under the conditions of the tourist visa.**

Students who elect to stay in Kenya **MAY NOT** use the Center as a base of operations once the program is completed. Students should leave their travel plans with the program staff prior to leaving the Center. Although the University is no longer responsible for the students, it is necessary to have that information in case of an emergency (family, personal, political).

#### **CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND DRUG USE**

Given the legal system of Kenya, and given our strong desire to maintain the integrity and viability of the St. Lawrence Kenya Program, we are adamant that all students adhere to the existing laws in Kenya. This includes our drug policy, which states: **DRUG USE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN KENYA.** Kenya maintains strict laws against the possession and use of many drugs, including marijuana. Drug use by students jeopardizes the future of the Kenya Semester Program, which employs and supports many Kenyans. It can also lead to serious legal consequences for the individual. The current minimum sentence for drug possession in Kenya is a mandatory ten (10) year sentence. Any student found possessing drugs will automatically be sent home. The American Embassy will not be able to help you. The same applies to students who engage in criminal activity.

#### **SAFETY AND INTEGRATION**

In Kenya, forms of dress and behavior are different from what the students in the United States are used to. For instance, be aware that many families practice polygamy. Many people, women in particular, dress more modestly here. For the most part, older and rural Kenyan women do not

wear pants or shorts. Female program participants should plan to wear skirts and dresses during the Health Course field components. Shorts and pants are fine for most other activities in the field and in the city. A wrap-around kanga or kikoi, which you can buy at markets throughout Kenya, becomes a popular piece of clothing for both men and women.

You are in a foreign country. Remember that you will stick out as a foreigner no matter what you do. **DO NOT TRAVEL ALONE!** Group travel at all times is recommended.

You may find yourself in an uncomfortable position when approached (or propositioned) by a member of the opposite sex. **DO NOT** be afraid to voice a clear, but polite, refusal. If polite words do not remedy the situation, do not be afraid to be more firm or share your situation with a faculty or staff member. You should not feel that you have to remain in a compromising or uncomfortable position for any reason. This is the reason we encourage that you travel with one or two other students at all times.

By respecting the customs of Kenyan people, students will become better acculturated and, therefore, will probably have a more enjoyable experience. A good example of cultural differences is the use of cameras. Many Kenyans believe that a camera is an invasion of their person. Remember that these are people, not objects. Always ask a person before taking his/her photograph. A sensitive attitude will open opportunities that would not otherwise be available.

## **EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING**

Travel light! We recommend no more baggage than you can carry at once. Traveling is more enjoyable, easier and faster with less stuff. Note that you will need appropriate gear and dress for several different situations (classroom, casual events, field work, and “smart casual” for restaurants) and many times clothes can serve many purposes, so don’t bring something for every occasion. You will need mainly clothing for the field, but you should bring one nicer outfit when circumstances require it.

Pack light! In general, you will need light, durable clothing. It can be chilly because you will be in Kenya during their “winter” – rainy season --, so a couple of heavy sweaters or sweatshirts/fleece are advisable. Also, dressing in layers is better than taking heavy clothes.

Kenyans expect a very neat appearance in most situations, so when you are in Nairobi in restaurants or bars, you will want something relatively nice, but durable.

Women: For the Health Course, take 2 longer (slightly below the knee) skirts (1 casual, 1 dressier) as well as shorts and pants. It is still very much the norm for women to wear skirts in Kenya. In the rural areas, a skirt or dress is essential. Durable cotton skirts with a blouse or T-shirt and T-shirt dresses are great. They are comfortable and look nice. Tank tops are acceptable on the compound or in situations where you are wearing shorts. However, they are not acceptable in the rural areas or in more formal situations. Slip-on shoes or practical sandals are also a good idea.

Men: For the Health Course, a nice Oxford shirt and khaki pants will come in handy when doing ward rounds in hospital settings where they expect you to dress fairly formally. You may want to take a tie and a pair of reasonably dressy shoes (e.g. loafers).

**In General:**

- Take clothes that you like and in which you feel comfortable. You will be wearing them a lot.
- Avoid expensive, hard-to-care-for clothes since you will be washing clothes by hand much of the time and Kenyan detergents are harsh. Easy-care and fast-dry items are best: cotton, permanent press, and wool.
- Whites are difficult to keep clean. Earth tones are less conspicuous and are best for field conditions.
- Take all the clothes you need. Although you can get clothes--made and/or purchased, it can be time-consuming and expensive and we will have no time during this fast paced summer term.

**Specific Clothing Checklist: (Remember, this list is for an entire semester! Summer program participants should reduce it accordingly! Most items are however important)**

- Teva-style sandals – Leather sandals like Birkenstocks will get ruined.
- Flip-flops
- Sneakers – Most students recommend only needing a good pair of cross trainers or shoes that can be worn for a day hike. Hiking boots are necessary especially if you have bad ankles.
- Pants (a total of 3 to 4 pairs...the following are just a suggestion!!)
  - 1 pair of sweatpants
  - 1 pair of zip off pants
- 2-4 athletic shorts
- 3 skirts (Khangas can be purchased here but versatile solid skirts are the best)
- t-shirts
- 2 long sleeved shirts (if you are sensitive to the sun then you might want light colors but these may get ruined)
- 1 thicker fleece or hooded sweatshirt
- Jacket – one that is versatile like a windbreaker that is waterproof so it can be used as a raincoat and
- Rain pants – some felt these were necessary others thought this should be optional
- Socks –One pair of wool socks is recommended for times of rain.
- Underwear – Two weeks of underwear is a must. Some wished they had a couple of pairs of poly underwear for field components.
- Bathing suit

**Gear Essentials:**

- Binoculars (7X35) or higher magnification is essential.
- Camera – to be able to take good photos in the field a camera with a magnification of 10X or higher are ideal. For digital cameras bring cords and blank CDs to take your pictures off your camera even if you do not have a laptop; otherwise bring lots of memory cards.
- Swiss army knife.
- Daypack
- A one liter nalgene or water bottle either wide or small mouth (small mouth better)
- sunglasses – make sure they protect for UVA and UVB
- plastic bags – various sizes
- Towel and wash cloth.

- Hat with a protective brim. Bandanas are good too and can be traded but they are not a replacement for a hat. Most students wear baseball caps.
- Insect repellent – 30% deet
- Camera – for digital cameras bring cords and blank CDs to take your pictures off your camera even if you do not have a laptop; otherwise bring lots of memory cards.
- FLASH DISK –
- LAPTOP is recommended and especially during out of town travels.

**Additional Good Ideas:**

- A money belt

**Toiletries:**

- Regular sized shampoo and condition and optional smaller leak proof bottles for field components
- soap
- Face wipes or astringent pads (very nice for field components)
- Hand sanitizer and baby wipes (very nice for field components)
- Chapstick with SPF
- SUNSCREEN –
- Tampons – Bring enough although you can buy them in Nairobi
- Contacts – We recommend short term ones like dailies or weeklies and extra solution. In addition you should bring your glasses. The air is very dusty and many times you will not want to wear your contacts.

**Medical Items:**

- Tums or Pepto Bismol
- Aspirin or ibuprofen
- Dramamine or Sea Bands – if you suffer from motion sickness
- Antibiotic cream or baby powder
- Bandaids
- Moleskin/blister pads

**MEDICAL PRECAUTIONS / INSURANCE**

All students are required to have medical insurance while they are abroad. Students participating in the Kenya Summer Program will have a local policy as well to have access to good local health care. It covers outpatient bills up to \$625 and hospitalization costs up to \$2,500. Mental health, dental problems, optical problems and pre-existing conditions are not covered by the plan.

- Local medical insurance is arranged by the program and covers for both in-patient and out-patient hospitalization at the Nairobi Hospital. This insurance covers for an in-patient ward bed and students always opt to pay the difference in the costs for a private room for in-patient hospitalization. While in-patient hospitalization is rare during the semester, most students end up at the out-patient Accident and Emergency unit for most of the common gastrointestinal infections. There are certain conditions exempted by the insurance that require students to have their own or family medical covers that shall cover these costs. Examples include Malarone (anti-malarial) drugs that are now affordable in Kenya and are not covered by our local insurance as is the case in the US unless given as a prescription during a routine hospital visit. ARV's are only given as an emergency measure and any follow-up

prescription after an accidental exposure is not usually covered by the medical insurance as is the case in the US. (If you have SLU health insurance, our Health Center can arrange for your malaria meds to be covered by this insurance.)

- If you require medical care while in Kenya, expect to pay the bills while in Kenya. Once you are back in the States, you may present an itemized bill with details (in English) of the diagnosis, treatment, prescribed medicine and charges in the local currency to your insurance company. You will be reimbursed at a later date, at that date's currency exchange.
- Take any current prescriptions and/or medications that you will need throughout the semester.
- Most common tropical infections that students are exposed to while in Kenya have effective treatment here in Kenya. It is unnecessary to carry extra medications that may not be applicable in the tropics. We encourage students to have their ailments taken care of here in Nairobi by professional tropical medical doctors who are keen to diagnose and treat this effectively.
- Take the pills or serum for any allergy injections you will need. You can ask the flight attendants on planes and hotels to refrigerate these items. Students can store their medication in the study centre where a refrigerator is available for their use.
- Do not swim in fresh water areas. Do not even wade, since there is a widespread disease known as schistosomiasis (bilharzia). This is a liver fluke (a parasite) that lives in fresh water (Lake Victoria/Nyanza, for instance) in snails during part of its life cycle. When it matures, the parasite's preferred environment is in a human body, which causes severe illness in the individual. Occasionally there are a few places where it is safe to swim. The directors and tour guides will inform you when it's safe to swim.

## MONEY

Each student should bring \$50 as a damage deposit for their cell phone and other things at the center. This will be returned at the end of the program unless something is lost or broken. We suggest each student bring around \$200 for travel, gifts, and other personal expenses. The amount of money needed depends on the individual. In the past, favorite gifts that students have purchased for themselves, friends and family have been kikois, other materials, and crafts -- all of which are relatively inexpensive.

The easiest way to get money in Nairobi is by using an ATM card. Before you leave for Kenya, ask your bank if the card will work outside the United States. Outside of Nairobi, you will need cash or Travelers' Checks to make purchases. Watch the exchange rate for optimal times to exchange travelers' checks. Don't travel with a lot of loose cash. Credit cards are usable for some expenses in Nairobi. Visa is widely accepted. Mastercard and American Express are not as widely accepted. **If you plan to exchange US\$ cash, ensure that you carry notes that are newer than the year 2001.** Older notes are increasingly being rejected by Forex bureaus and banks.

Record the serial numbers of your camera, lenses, tape deck, travelers' checks, credit cards etc. Likewise, make an inventory list of all valuables. Keep one copy with you and leave one copy at home. Each student is provided with a lockable drawer where you should, keep all credit cards, bankcards, valuables and extra money. Make sure that all your bags/suitcases/backpacks are properly tagged and secured. The KSP does not insure student valuables and students should make their own arrangements for insurance in the U.S.A. **In short, you are responsible for your money and your things.**

## PHONES

Although not mandatory during the Summer term, each student will have use of a mobile phone for the program (\$50 deposit required). Students then buy “call units” that range from KES 20 – 1,000 (\$0.25 - \$12.50). Phone calls from Kenya to the U.S. are approximately \$0.04 per minute. If you have no pre-paid units on your phone, then you do not call. But even if you have no call units you can receive a phone call. The phones and the call units will be explained during orientation.

## LAPTOPS

There is a computer lab at the Center BUT you will need your LAPTOP during travels. There is a security risk involved and it is advisable, if you bring one, that you look into ways of organizing an insurance coverage before you leave. Modern laptops accommodate 120 to 240 volt AC power, so there should be no need for a transformer – but you should check on this for your own machine. You will need an adapter to allow you to plug in your machine to Kenya’s 3-pin big power outlets, similar to those in Britain. Purchase a surge protector to guard against spikes in the main power. These can also be purchased locally.

## CAMERA AND FILM

Although it is unwise to experience Kenya solely through the lens of a camera, a camera is a MUST. Expensive cameras should be insured before you leave the U.S. SLR’s with large lenses give you great shots, but they are not always the most practical.

As mentioned earlier, you are encouraged to record some of your memories on film, but use your camera wisely. Do not forget to ask for a person’s permission to take her/his photograph. **Also, note that taking photographs in, and of, government buildings and transportation depots (airports and train stations) is against the law in much of Africa.** This restriction also applies to the heads of government. Therefore, you cannot take photos of the President.

Film is readily available in larger towns and cities.