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## Welcome to the Yaoundé Program!

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Dear Yaoundé Program Participant:

Greetings from Carlisle! Congratulations to each of you on your selection to the group of students who will represent Dickinson College in Yaoundé. An academically challenging and personally rewarding experience awaits you. We wish you all the best!

This **Yaoundé Orientation Handbook** has been prepared to make your transition to Yaoundé and the Cameroonian educational system a little smoother. The handbook covers general topics affecting all students who study abroad: health matters, insurance, safe behavior, code of conduct and other policies, Dickinson course registration and room draw while abroad, and absentee voting. It also contains specific information about studying in Cameroon: packing tips, lifestyle abroad, an academic calendar, course information, and much more. Sections on cultural perspectives will help you put your observations and experiences into context. This program specific information will also help you to understand better and adapt more quickly to your new environment and culture. Everything in this handbook is very relevant, so please read it carefully. A copy of the handbook will be mailed to your parent(s)/guardian(s) at your home address.

If you have any questions, contact the Center for Global Study and Engagement at (717) 245-1341 or [global@dickinson.edu](mailto:global@dickinson.edu). The Center for Global Study and Engagement is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (EST).

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### **Important Reminders:**

If you plan to be at a different address during the break or if your insurance information has changed since you completed the Student Agreement form, please let the Center for Global Study and Engagement know right away.

You will need your passport and the yellow fever documentation to check in at departure and when you arrive in Cameroon. Do not pack it in your luggage!

If you want to change the date or itinerary of your return flight, do so early enough to secure the date you want. Airfare and any airline fees that occur due to changing the return date are the responsibility of the student.

As you read this handbook, if you feel anything has been left out that you wanted to know, or that some of this information is out-of-date, please let us know.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

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### **Program Director:**

**Mr. Teku Tanyi Teku**

B.P. 14478

Yaoundé-Centre Province

Cameroon

Tel: (011-237) 242.118.218

(011-237) 694.53.60.79

Mobile: (011-237) 6 776-644-61

E-mail: [mr\\_teetee@yahoo.fr](mailto:mr_teetee@yahoo.fr)

### **Dickinson Center (Student's Apartment)**

Location: Shell Nsimeyong

Tel: (011-237) 242 .00.65.22

Students can receive local and international calls on the apartment phone and can make international calls using prepaid calling cards. All students will be asked, prior to departing for Cameroon, if they would like to receive a prepaid cell phone through the program. The cost is approximately 40 US dollars and will be deducted from the first official stipend.

### **On-Campus Coordinator:**

**Joyce Bylander, Vice President and Dean**

Student Life

Holland Union Building (HUB)

Dickinson College

P.O. Box 1733

Carlisle, PA 17013-2896

Tel: 717-245-1639 (office)

E-mail: [bylander@dickinson.edu](mailto:bylander@dickinson.edu)

### **Center for Global Study and Engagement:**

**Samantha Brandauer**

Center for Global Study and Engagement

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**Major Emergency Protocol:**

If you need to contact the Center for Global Study and Engagement after hours for emergency assistance in a very serious situation, call the Dickinson College Public Safety 24-Hour Hotline (**001-717-245-1111**), identify yourself and the program, describe the emergency briefly, and give a number for call back. The operator will locate the proper staff member, who will return the call.

**The Center for Global Study and Engagement's Travel Agency:**

Advantage Travel  
313 East Willow Street  
Syracuse, NY 13203  
TEL: 1-800-788-1980  
315-471-2222  
FAX: 315-471-6264  
Contact: Darlene Sweet  
[dsweet@advantagecny.com](mailto:dsweet@advantagecny.com)

**Cameroonian Embassy in the U.S.:**

Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon  
3400 International Drive, NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
Telephone: (202) 265-8790  
Fax: 202-387-3826  
Web site: <http://www.cameroonembassyusa.org>

**U.S. Embassy in Cameroon**

U.S. Embassy to Cameroon  
Avenue Rosa Parks  
P.O. Box 817  
Yaoundé CAMEROON  
Tel/FAX: (011-237) 22.20.15.00 ext. 4531  
DOS Consular Information Sheet at: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1081.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1081.html)  
CDC website for Cameroon: <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationCameroon.aspx>

## PROGRAM PREPARATIONS

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### Program Fees/Financial Aid Information

#### **Payment of Fees/Financial Aid:**

The total cost of the program for 2015 spring semester is \$29,607. Students at Dickinson College will receive invoices from the Student Accounts Office that show credit for the \$300 confirmation fee and any applicable amounts from your financial aid package.

**The program fee includes the following:** tuition and fees, room and board, and scheduled group excursions. **Not included in the program fee are:** required health and accident insurance (purchased in the U.S.), transportation to/from Cameroon, immunizations, visa expenses, books, vacation travel, meals during independent travel, and other personal expenses.

Arrangements for any type of monthly payment plan options should be made as soon as possible through Tuition Management Systems (1-800-722-4867, x 775, or [www.afford.com](http://www.afford.com)). If the balance due on your account is not paid by the deadline noted on the billing, or if special arrangements have not been made with Student Accounts (Tel. 717-245-1953 or email: [stuaccts@dickinson.edu](mailto:stuaccts@dickinson.edu)), you will not be allowed to participate in the program.

#### **Financial Aid Information:**

Dickinson grant money and endowed scholarships are available only to Dickinson College students on Dickinson programs. Students from other colleges and universities should check with their own financial aid office to determine eligibility.

## TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

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### Passport and Visa Information

The responsibility for ensuring that you have a valid passport and visa in time for your program is ultimately yours.

#### Visa Guidelines (APPENDIX I):

A visa is a stamped endorsement placed in your passport by the embassy or consulate of a foreign government that allows you to enter that country for a specific period of time. All students going to Cameroon will need to apply for a visa. The Center for Global Study and Engagement will assist students with the visa application.

Visa guidelines for each program can be found in the back of this handbook. Please refer to this when applying for your visa. However, please note the following:

The information in the visa guidelines is current to date and is to be used as a general guideline only. Each consulate has specific rules that must be followed and that you must comply with. Before submitting your visa application, you will need to check and recheck the consulate website to be sure that nothing has changed. Please note that the responsibility for submitting all documents required by you or your parents for your student visa ultimately rests in your hands. If necessary, the Center for Global Study and Engagement will supply the supporting documents required from the College or your host institution.

### Packing Tips and Travel Information

#### Packing Tips:

When planning what to take with you, the first rule is to take the minimum amount of clothes possible. You will accumulate things while abroad, so when in doubt – leave it at home! Be practical and focus on the essentials of a wardrobe. Choose clothes that can be mixed and matched and layered to serve different seasons and temperatures. Dark, conservative colors can be worn longer without laundering, but do not be afraid to wear bright colors. Please note that cleaning establishments and laundry services are expensive, (about 1500-2000cfa/per load= \$3-4USD), and you should be prepared to wash most of your clothes by hand.

TIPS FOR WOMEN: Cameroonian female students dress conservatively and well. The following, written by a former (female) Dickinson student in Cameroon, sums up the issue of dress:

“When packing, keep in mind that Cameroonians are always well dressed when leaving the house. Presentation means a lot, so clothes are always well ironed and shoes are cleaned. Dressing well means both self-respect and respect for those you encounter during your travels. Even the poorest Cameroonians take pride in looking nice.

Also, keep in mind that white skin will stand out in Africa! Nothing will prevent attention being drawn to you and with the attention comes many comments and opinions. At first this may be

overwhelming, but after a while you come to accept that you are who you are and you'll never fit in as a Cameroonian, so you've just got to be yourself. It is a personal decision as to how much you want to blend into the Cameroonian dress code."

In general, it is better to dress modestly. In regards to the length of shorts and skirts, longer is preferable, but most teens in the area can be seen in shorter styles. Women should bring at least one skirt or dress to be worn when at École Normale. Otherwise, bring anything you would normally wear in the US. Here are some tips:

- flip-flops (known to Cameroonians as *sans confiance* because of their flimsiness and likelihood of breaking) are worn by many students who find them convenient and comfortable, though the sturdier they are, the better. They are readily available in Yaoundé for between 300 and 500 francs (about 1 US\$). Sturdier sandals (like Birkenstocks) are a comfortable and practical way to go.
- sneakers are commonly worn by Cameroonians and are useful when the rainy season starts and mud develops.
- a nice pair of shoes will be appropriate for any important family or school related events.
- jeans and casual slacks are very common and many Cameroonian women admire them. Dress pants are more frequently seen in the streets of Yaoundé than in the U.S. Bring 5-6 pairs, but keep in mind that heavier fabrics (like denim) will be much more difficult to wash.
- skirts, especially knee-length or longer, are customary for women (this applies more so in the northern Muslim-populated region). Women dress up for school, so keep this in mind. At École Normale Supérieure women must wear a skirt to be permitted to enter the campus. Sundresses and maxi dresses are also a comfortable and an appropriate alternative. You will be invited to receptions and formal dinners and/or activities. Skirts or dress pants are the best way to go. Women should be aware that any style of dress, as modest as it might be, will draw a lot of attention.
- 8-10 shirts and blouses in coordinating colors
- sweaters/cardigans are good for the changing temperatures throughout the season
- having clothes tailor-made in Yaoundé is a great option. To negotiate a good price, it helps to be accompanied by a more skilled Cameroonian. Fabric can be bought at one of many markets in Yaoundé (for between 4000 and 7000 francs a piece, the equivalent of 8 and 14 dollars), then brought to the tailor. Prices vary depending on what you have made. A **kaba**, a kind of large, loose dress that many African women wear outside the home, costs about 3000 francs (\$6) or more depending on its complexity, but can also be purchased ready-made.
- 15-18 pairs each of underwear and socks
- a light jacket with a zip-in lining in case it gets cool & a raincoat
- a swim suit and beach towel
- 2 towels, 2 washcloths
- when packing, keep in mind that the streets of Yaoundé are extremely dusty, and that the dust is sometimes difficult to get out of clothing and shoes
- **an extra pair of contact lenses, eyeglasses and prescription (enough to last the duration of your stay)**
- **a plain, inexpensive wallet**
- a money belt or neck pouch to secure money and valuables
- (twin) bed sheets and pillowcase (you will need these for your first weeks in the apartment)

**TIPS FOR MEN:** Bring a sports jacket and tie for occasional dinners, evening gatherings, and church. Past participants mostly wore jeans, khakis, cargo pants, and shorts. T-shirts or polo shirts are appropriate, as are nicer shirts. Bring a swimsuit. Bring light-weight (cotton) washable underwear and socks.

**Other useful packing hints:**



- space/Vacuum bags (can be found at Walmart or Target and can condense the amount of space your clothes uses in your luggage)
- 2 converter/adaptor plugs if you plan to use U.S. appliances
- USB memory device for transferring documents and photos between computers (especially useful at internet cafés)
- a small supply of toiletries, especially bath soap, toothpaste, dental floss, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, and feminine hygiene products. All of these are available in Yaoundé, but may be more expensive than in the U.S.; if you prefer a particular brand of any of the above, bring them with you.
- first aid supplies, perhaps including burn ointment (Neosporin), **Imodium**, **Pepto-Bismol** (tablets), Tylenol/aspirin for pain/fever, antihistamine for allergies/colds (Sudafed, cough syrup, etc), **sun screen**, antiseptic/calamine lotion for bites, band-aids, scissors, **hand sanitizer**, tweezers, thermometer, and the like
- 2-3 bottles of insect repellant (20-30% DEET)
- plenty of saline/cleaning solution for contact lenses (about 2 large bottles) and a small bottle to take on trips
- camera, film, and extra batteries for camera. Film, batteries, and memory cards for digital cameras can be expensive in Yaoundé.
- zip lock plastic storage bags and some garbage bags (various sizes)
- raincoat
- a travel alarm and extra battery
- a plastic hanger or two
- a small sewing kit and safety pins
- all medications (both non-prescription and prescription) need to be in their original, labeled containers. Take copies of all prescriptions with you.
- swiss army knife--with corkscrew, bottle opener, and scissors (packed in your checked luggage)
- playing cards
- DVDs and movies
- flashlight
- bag for daily use that can be closed securely
- sunglasses
- shower sandals
- small backpack
- portable music device with extra batteries
- address book
- packaged drink mixes (e.g., Crystal light, Kool Aid, Hi-C, etc)
- spices (spices commonly found in American cuisine may be expensive, so bring a few spice combinations to liven up your home cooked meals)
- roll of duct tape
- board games
- French/English dictionary
- lots of pictures of you and your family. Cameroonians love photos and photo albums, and will likely show you their photo books when you come to their houses. They may even ask you to leave a picture of yourself so that they can remember you.
- small gifts: candy, gum, Bic pens (children values these as gifts in many areas in and outside Yaoundé), hats and T-shirts with Dickinson and sports team logos, cheap digital watches, colored pencils and markers, match box cars, etc.
- a day bag or book bag for traveling (i.e. duffle bag)

- luggage ID tags inside and outside of your luggage

### **Immediate Cash/Travel Funds:**

As of 1997, the banks in Cameroon have ceased to exchange traveller's checks in any currency. Unless this policy changes, **you will have to bring cash for your non-stipend needs.** It is suggested that you bring no more than \$500.00, which should be more than adequate. Keep in mind that your monthly allowance from the Program Director will exceed the annual income of the vast majority of Cameroonians. Some students report that they did not have to spend any of their own money. It is recommended that you leave your US money with the Program Director, where they will be safe.

**ATMs: Money can also be withdrawn from ATMs with VISA and Master Cards. But a tax will be deducted**

## **Flight and Arrival Information**

### **Travel Arrangements:**

**Students are invited to but are not required to take the group flight from Dulles with the Program Coordinator. However, ALL students must be on the connecting flight from Europe (typically Charles DeGaulle in Paris) to Yaounde.** Students will receive an email from the College's travel agent at Advantage Travel regarding the details of this group flight. **Students are responsible for the payment of this flight and any connecting flights.**

In general, passengers on international flights need to be at the airport at least 3 hours before departure. Be sure to leave yourself plenty of time for potential delays due to increased security measures. You will need your passport to check in and when you land, so have it available.

**In case you miss your connection or your flight is delayed, make a note of the Program Director's contact information** and carry it in your wallet so that you can get in touch with him.

When you have booked your flight, please complete the flight itinerary questionnaire found on the online application system at <http://dickinson.studioabroad.com>.

### **Clearing Immigration and Customs in Cameroon:**

Your luggage will be checked through to the Yaoundé airport. When you go through customs and immigration in Yaoundé, you will have to show your **passport** and **yellow WHO card**.

After clearing immigration and customs and getting your baggage, the group will be met in at the airport by the program director. It is important that you wait until the entire group has collected their luggage and exit the airport with the program director.

In the case that your luggage does not arrive or is delayed, be sure to inform the program director. This does not happen often, but if it does, do not worry. The program will help you take the necessary steps to retrieve your items.

### **Arrival in Yaoundé:**

After you arrive, you will be taken to the Dickinson apartment for a light meal and to settle in for the night. During the first several weeks of the program there will be an on-site orientation that

includes intensive French instruction as well as excursions outside Yaoundé. Those with home stays will move into the family home a few days after the week-long orientation.

**Registering with the Authorities:**

You must register with the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé, on Avenue Rosa Parks (see contact information on page 6). This will enable you to receive e-mail updates on travel and security from the US Embassy. **Dickinson staff in Cameroon will facilitate registering with the embassy authorities.**

## THE PROGRAM

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### **Cameroon:**

The Republic of Cameroon is located in West Central Africa, and is bordered on the southwest by the Gulf of Guinea, on the northwest by Nigeria, on the northeast by Chad, on the southeast by the Central African Republic, and on the south by Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. The country is shaped like an irregular triangle, covering 183,567 square miles, or roughly the size of California; it is divided into three primary geographical regions, ranging from the extremely arid sub-Saharan north to the thick rainforests of the south. Yaoundé is the capital and Douala is the largest city and main port. The population of Cameroon is comprised of more than 20 million people and between 130 and 200 different ethnic groups. 58% of the population lives in villages, while 42% are city dwellers. Three forms of religions are prevalent: Christian (65%), Islam (20%), and traditional worship (15%). Cameroon is unique in Africa in that two “official” European languages (English and French) are commonly spoken, although French is the more widely spoken of the two and is the dominant language in Yaoundé.

### **Yaoundé:**

Yaoundé, with an estimated population of 1.5 million, is the political capital of Cameroon as well as the country’s administrative, financial, and communication center. Items produced in Yaoundé include beer, cigarettes, dairy products, clay and glass goods, and lumber. Yaoundé is a regional trade center for coffee, cacao, copra, sugar cane, and rubber. The city is at a highway junction and is intersected by Cameroon's main railroad. Yaoundé is the home to the University of Yaoundé I and many other educational and research institutes, including a school of administration and law and a school of journalism.

The city is set in green hills some 2,500 to 3,000 feet above sea level, resulting in a much cooler climate than one would expect in a city only 5 degrees north of the equator. Students can take advantage of the large international community in the city, including the U.S. Embassy and other U.S. agencies. The city has many modern buildings, including a new airport, and sports arena. The many *quartiers* of the city are colorful and lively with their open-air markets and food stalls.

The city sprawls over undulating hills and thus lacks any semblance of street patterns; most streets snake their way around and up and down. The center of the city is Place Ahmadou Ahidjo, and the major commercial hub is Ave Kennedy.

A good map is hard to find, so be prepared to do a lot of self-exploration if you want to get to know the city, and don’t be afraid to ask a lot of questions!

### **Climate:**

The climate of Cameroon is as varied as the topography. There are three primary geographical regions, ranging from the extremely arid, sub-Saharan north to the hilly, central grasslands, and the thick rain forests of the south. Average temperatures (maximum and minimum in Fahrenheit) in Yaoundé between January and May are 85 and 66. Temperatures and humidity fluctuate greatly outside of Yaoundé. It can get surprisingly cold in the jungles of the East. Temperatures often reach 50 in the evenings. As for the North, the dryness is often very uncomfortable at first but

students adjust after a few days. Also, the North is extremely hot and students should be prepared for this. There are two main seasons in Cameroon: dry and rainy.

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## ACADEMIC INFORMATION

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### **The University of Yaoundé I and the Dickinson Center**

The University of Yaoundé I is the oldest university in Cameroon and specializes in the arts and humanities. Most faculty members who contribute to the program also are contributing faculty at Yaoundé I. Due to difficulties obtaining space in courses already offered at the university, the Dickinson program hires faculty members to teach at the Dickinson center. Courses may meet at the Dickinson center or in a rented classroom not far from Dickinson's property. Program participants also have the opportunity to join clubs or sports teams on campus and to meet Yaoundé I students through their extracurricular involvement at the university.

Students who have a high level of French and who perform well in the French placement test are chosen to take courses at the Catholic University of Central Africa, UCAC, Yaoundé. These students are taught in French by the UCAC Faculty and have the opportunity of sitting in the same class with Cameroonians and students from other countries of the central African region. They take a maximum of two courses at UCAC, then two others with the Yaoundé Faculty including Contemporary Cameroon, which is compulsory.

### **Use of the French Language:**

A working knowledge of French, while not required, is highly recommended. Because French is essential to navigating the city, shopping in the market, understanding your surroundings, the program offers a mandatory French Intensive program that begins soon after you arrive in Cameroon. Students are tested for French language ability and placed in an appropriate group. Experiential-based work focusing on the acquisition and use of functional French is the basis of study. Students whose language testing indicates advanced level French language ability are able to take courses at Université Catholique and also course taught in French at the Dickinson Center.

Few people in Yaoundé speak English. To shop in the market, take a taxi, or ask directions, **you will need to speak some basic French.**

### **Academic Culture:**

Course work is by independent study/tutorials and lectures, much like at Dickinson. Each student will establish a list of courses in consultation with the Program Director who will then arrange tutorials with individual faculty members. Attempts will be made to arrange tutorials that fit students' academic needs, but students will have to be flexible. Due to the difference in schedules, classes will not be held with Cameroonian students at the University of Yaoundé I. Students may arrange to visit classes at the University of Yaoundé I but it is not recommended.

### **Course Information:**

Elective course offerings vary from year to year based on student interest and faculty availability. The following courses are among those typically offered:

- Contemporary Cameroon (Required core course)
- Issues in Environmental Management
- Orality, Landscape and Literary Creativity
- African culture, Philosophy and Religions

- International Relations of African States
- Comparative Politics
- Modern Africa: Society, Culture and Change
- Women and Gender Studies
- Humanitarian Law and Crisis in Africa
- Negritude et Mondialisation (taught in French)
- Le Roman Africain Francophone colonial et post-colonial(taught in French)
- Medical Anthropology

### **Credit Transfer /Grades/Transcript:**

Participants enroll in one required core course and three other courses selected by the student.

**Students typically earn a maximum of 4 Dickinson transfer credits for work successfully completed in Cameroon.** Courses taken are recorded on the transcript with course titles and letter grades earned. Course grades equivalent to a Dickinson “C” or better will receive credit, but will not count toward the GPA. No credit is earned for a grade of C- or below.

### **Internships**

Students have the opportunity to engage in internships in Yaoundé or its environs. Placements are available in the areas of government, women’s empowerment, entrepreneurial development, environmental management, protection of the mother and child, caring for the aged and homeless, peace and conflict prevention, and primary and secondary education. We introduced internships into the Cameroon program several years ago. We continue to work with organizations and agencies where we have relationships and where students have been placed in the past. But you should know that internships are not typical in the culture and students’ experiences vary widely. When they work well, internships are a valuable component of the Cameroon experience.

The following are some of the non-governmental organizations and associations and community groups with which students may intern:

- **Centre for Rehabilitation and Abolition of Trauma(CRAT)**-NGO working to provide treatment and rehabilitation services(Counseling, psychosocial support and mental health care interventions) to people who have been traumatized as a result of war, torture and other forms of organized violence in Cameroon.
- **African Action on AIDS(AAA)**
- 
- **Akwi Montessori School:** Working with children between 2-8 years)
- 
- **National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms**
- 
- **PLAN CAMEROON:** International NGO working on health issues, human rights etc.
- **CIPRE : Environmental NGO working on waste management and recycling of plastics.**
- **Stay Green Foundation:** Environmental protection and sustainability organization. Students are expected to do volunteering, such as planting trees, recycling of used plastic materials, sensitizing people on the need to help protect the environment by avoiding littering, bush burning, indiscriminate waste disposal etc.

- **Traditional African Ballet:** African dancing and drumming, learning to play various traditional musical instruments and knowing their origins).
- **United Methodist Church Medical Department**
- **Fondation RAPHA Orphanage:** Students volunteer to work with orphans 2-15 years old.
- **HARAMBE Cameroon:** NGO promoting youth entrepreneurship
- **MAYA INITIATIVES:** NGO fighting against violence on young girls and women
- **Wisdom Academic Complex:** Students work with children 4-10 years old
- **CAMYOSFOP:** NGO defending the rights of youths
- **ACDIC: NGO defending rights and interests of citizens.**

**Note:** Over the years it has been difficult getting internships with UN agencies and the US Embassy. However depending on special needs of students we may look for other internship places.

If you are interested in working with a research organizations in Yaoundé, you should be prepared to work on an internship proposal to give to the Program Director when you arrive. Otherwise, you may not get an internship until after you have been in Cameroon for a few months. In writing your proposal, think about what you would like to do and who you would like to work for.

Also, keep in mind that regardless of the culture of the work environment in which you will be participating, it is important to maintain a level of professionalism and to take your internship seriously. Be sure to arrive to your internship on time and ready to work. This is important because your behavior and attitudes are a reflection of Dickinson students and will affect potential prospects for future students applying to the program.

### **Accessing College Library Resources from Off-Campus:**

If the libraries at your abroad site do not have the resources you need, or if you have trouble getting the assistance you need for your research projects, please remember that you can access all the resources and services from Dickinson College Library no matter where you are. All you need to do is to go to the Dickinson Global Library page

([http://lis.dickinson.edu/Library/Research/Global\\_Library/LibraryResourcePage.htm](http://lis.dickinson.edu/Library/Research/Global_Library/LibraryResourcePage.htm)).

You can access the page on the library website under “For Students,” or “For Faculty,” or “Doing Research.”

From the Dickinson Global Library page, you will find detailed information on

- How to find journal articles through the online databases
- How to find books and have them sent to you
- Research resources available online such as subject guides and online reference works
- And most important of all, how to get in touch with a Dickinson College librarian via phone, email, and instant messaging and get the assistance you need. However, because the internet is frequently disrupted in Cameroon, you should not wait until the last minute to access online information from the Dickinson library.



## **LIFESTYLE ABROAD**

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### **Living Accommodations**

Students have the option of living with a French or English speaking host family or to live in a shared room at the Dickinson Centre in Yaoundé. Students are strongly advised to choose the option of living with host families as it greatly enriches their Cameroon experience.

### **Life at the Dickinson Centre:**

Program students are housed in a furnished room in a multi-bedroom house leased by Dickinson College. The Centre is furnished with beds, a table and chairs, one stove, one refrigerator, pots and pans, and basic silverware. The house has a computer (in the program director's office), a laptop, a phone, and a television set. Sheets and towels are not provided. Sheets are expensive in Yaoundé, but a piece of local cloth is a reasonable (and colorful) alternative. Students shop in the local markets (where French is spoken) and cook for themselves.

Students must not allow strangers to enter or roam about the Centre. Pilferage will certainly result. Be wary of persons who introduce themselves as friends of the Centre's previous residents. Centre keys should be secured and never left about the apartment (or elsewhere) where someone might pick them up. A reasonable attention to safety and security will protect you and your roommates' money, personal documents, and possessions. Students must be prepared to share responsibility and ensure that the gate of the Centre remains locked.

The Centre is NOT a college dorm. There are neighbors with small children who live close by. Be respectful of your neighbors and keep noise to a minimum.

### **Life with a Host Family:**

Students have the option to live with a host family. Living with a family will give you insight into Cameroonian life that can otherwise go unnoticed (including women's and men's responsibilities in the home, interactions between parents and children, etc.), permit you to sample local cuisine, have people to take you to the market, show you how to wash clothes by hand and do things the Cameroonian way. Since Cameroonian women typically spend a lot of time at home, American female students who spend a lot of time away from their home may encounter lots of questions regarding their whereabouts. It is always important to announce when you are leaving and greet the family according to custom when you return. You may not come and go as you please without regard for the family's concerns – most homestay students will not have keys to the home. Keep this in mind when considering weekend plans. You don't want to come back late because then someone will have to let you in. By establishing and understanding expectations through good communication, you should be able to join your friends' gatherings around the city, but be prepared to explain where you are going.

In summary, Cameroonians do not possess the sense of privacy and the need for one's own space that Americans are used to. This fact will be the most difficult part of adjusting to a homestay. The Program Director will discuss mutual expectations and make explicit the "rules" which will guide you and your host family with regards to privacy and other issues.

Whether you live in the Centre or with a family, living in Cameroon will require major adjustments on your part. You will find it easier if you remain flexible, keep an open mind, and maintain a sense of humor. In the Centre, you are more independent; you shop and cook for yourself, you come and go according to your schedule and you work things out with your apartment mates. Students often cherish the apartment space as a sort of sanctuary.

### **Food:**

There is an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables at the many open markets; there are no fast-food chains. Both African, European, and “American” foods are available. Being a vegetarian is a hard concept for locals to understand but is interesting to most Cameroonians. Be prepared to explain and be open when eating with Cameroonians.

### **Shopping/Bargaining:**

When you shop, be prepared to bargain. Often the social value of bargaining outweighs the commercial purpose. When you see something you want, greet the seller; hunker down if the seller is seated. Ask the seller’s price, but have an idea of what the item is worth (or at least what you are willing to pay for it). Some items are not negotiable and just have a standard price; find out which items those are. Do not look as if you **must** have an item. Simply offer a lower price, commenting perhaps that the seller’s first price is too high (**très cher**), that the price is what one might offer a stranger, but not a friend.

Above all, be patient and good humored; the haggling may take time. If you take the first price, you spoil the game. Do not get angry or upset; you will be respected if you bargain. You will probably pay more for the purchase than a Cameroonian would, but do not think of yourself as being cheated. The best advice is: when the bargaining seems to be about over, that is, when the seller’s and your “best price” are not very far apart, think to yourself: “When I get home, will I be happy I bought this?” If you decide you will be, then go for it.

However, if you really think you can do better, say thank you and walk away; you may get that final offer. Alternatively, you can agree to the price, but suggest that the seller toss in something extra, such as an orange or an extra pepper. Never offer a lower price than the last offer you made. In the end, the seller may act like he/she has been cheated. Do not worry, for if he/she cannot make a fair profit, she will not sell. If the price is not acceptable to you, you are under no obligation to buy. If the seller acts irritated that you have taken up her time, remember that it is part of the sales strategy. Say “maybe tomorrow,” and leave.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Take small bills and coins to the market. For small traders (e.g., those selling fruit, vegetables, etc.), a 1000CFA (\$2) bill is considered quite large. Always pay and accept change with your right hand. Hire a porter to carry your purchases if you plan to do a lot of shopping. Your purchases will be safe, and you will be appreciated for supporting the local economy. The usual tip is 100-150 francs. In larger markets, men will try to show you around. If you accept their help, a small tip is appropriate.

**Watch your money and purchases carefully! Keep your market money separate from the rest of your money. Do not be seen flaunting a roll of bills!**

### **Social Life:**

Some student-run clubs and organizations at the University provide opportunities for social interaction and cultural enrichment. **Ask the program director about these types of opportunities.** The city has museums as well as bars and night clubs for night life. Monthly cultural events are held at the French, German, American, and Cameroonian cultural centers. In addition, the top hotels have pools and tennis courts open to outsiders for a fee. Yaoundé also has a tennis club, a golf club, and a sports center (Centre Sportif). If you are a jogger, there is an exercise course outside Yaoundé. Running is common enough among expatriates. You can run in the neighborhoods in the morning; there are usually a lot of people around and it is quite safe. There is the modern multi-purpose sports complex. Watch sporting activities and musicians having concerts every weekend.

### **Fun Things to Do While in Cameroon:**

**Briqueterie-** Neighborhood largely populated by Muslims and influenced by Islamic culture. Here you can find a booming market for beautifully woven fabric, wide array of street meat, smoothie stands, and many more.

**Mokolo-** large market for fabric, clothes, shoes, food, etc. Bring the best of your bargaining skills! It tends to be overcrowded and is a hectic and buzzing atmosphere.

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**Tsinga Craft Market-** Small market located in Tsinga, mostly worked by Muslim craft artists. Provides a wide array of paintings, jewelry, crafts, and sculptures. The sellers can be persistent so be sure you have an idea of what you want and how much you are willing to pay.

- **University of Yaounde I-** The university is located between the Dickinson apartment and downtown. It is a beautiful campus that remains open throughout the day. You can walk around, chat with local students, find food, visit the library, etc.
- **Restaurants in Bastos/Downtown:**
  - **Pizza Roma-** good pizza, burgers, and fries
  - **Espresso House-** up-scale restaurant serving a variety of meals; hookah is available
  - **Mr. Lee-** Fast food style restaurant serving chicken, pizza, burgers, fries, etc.
  - **Uncle Donald's Rotisserie-** home of some of the best shwarma in Yaounde (located near Rondpoint Nlongkak
  - **Dolce Vita-** "American-style" cuisine; great ice cream

-LE Challenge Restaurant (Avenue Kennedy

-Green Restaurant opposite SHELL Nsimeyong

- **Safari Night Club-** located in downtown Yaounde; a very fun and exciting night club for those who enjoy dancing, mingling, flashing lights, and loud, popular music. The atmosphere is lively and reminiscent of an American-style club. The music tends to be a mix of contemporary African, hip hop, and pop (depending on the night), Hookah is also available to be purchased for about 6000 CFA each (12 US dollars). Drinks are expensive and admission into the club costs about 10000 CFA per person (20 US dollars).
- **Djuega Night Club-** located in downtown Yaounde; caters to an older crowd than Safari and the music is more traditional, while the American songs that are played tend to be older.

Beautiful and lively environment.

\*\*\* Sometimes, there may be a soccer match happening in Yaounde. Whether it is national or not, this is a very fun and engaging experience. It also offers an opportunity to learn more about the culture and the way in which soccer games are celebrated. Admission is very cheap (2000 CFA/ 4 US dollars) and tickets can be purchased at the supermarket Casino, located downtown, up to a week before the event.

**National Women's Day** (March 8<sup>th</sup>)- this is a great opportunity to celebrate equality and women's rights on a national and global scale. A parade will take place in downtown Yaounde hosting participants from all different sectors of social, economic, and political life throughout the country. Premade kabas can be purchased for the female students to wear in celebration.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

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### **Monthly Stipend:**

You will receive a monthly allowance of either CFA 225, 000 (for host family students) or CFA 275, 000 (for Centre students), from which you will pay for groceries, bottled water, taxi fares, household expenses, and local excursions. This allowance will be paid on or about the first of the month. Stipends will be pro-rated to take into account group meals and any excursions around Cameroon.

### **Credit Cards:**

Credit cards are accepted by airlines, large hotels, and a limited number of boutiques and restaurants in Yaoundé and Douala. **NOTE:** There are ATMs. Credit cards can be used at banks for cash withdrawals. Western Union maintains an office in Yaoundé. Funds can be transferred from the US if needed. Visa and Master cards can be used to withdraw money from ATMs, but charges are high.

### **Check on Fees with Bank and Credit Card Companies:**

Before leaving the U.S., check with your local bank and credit card companies about fees for using your card overseas. Many banks and credit card issuers impose additional charges on foreign transactions; others such as Capitol One (at least at print time) do not. If the fees are hefty, consider withdrawing larger amounts of cash from the ATM and taking only what you need and keeping the rest in a safe place. Only use credit cards with high fees for big purchases or in emergencies.

You should notify your bank and credit card companies that you are going abroad for an extended period of time. Otherwise, when they see charges on your card from a foreign country, they may assume that your card has been stolen and suspend your account. Keep a separate record of your credit card numbers and phone numbers of the companies so you can report theft or loss of your card quickly.

### **Travelers Checks:**

As of 1997, the banks in Cameroon have ceased to exchange traveller's checks in any currency.

### **Spending Money:**

Students sometimes ask how much spending money they should plan to have during their time abroad. This amount depends, of course, on the lifestyle you adopt and how much you plan to travel. You will have to bring cash for your non-stipend needs as travellers' checks cannot be exchanged. It is suggested that you bring no more than \$500.00, which should be more than adequate. Keep in mind that your monthly allowance from the Program Director will exceed the annual income of the vast majority of Cameroonians. Some students report that they did not have to spend any of their own money. It is recommended to bring no more than \$500 USD, although many participants report spending less.

### **Transferring Money/Banking:**

Yaoundé and other major cities have Western Union offices. Transferring money through Western Union, although quick and highly reliable, is expensive (the surcharge is about 20%). Transferring

money using MoneyGram is also a safe and reliable alternative. You will **not** be using the banking system in Yaoundé except to exchange your currency. You may leave your US money with the Program Director, where they will be safe. You will be given more information about this upon arrival.

**Student Advice on Money:**

Alison Egic, 2003 program participant: “When people recognize you as an American, they automatically believe you have money, and will not hesitate to ask you for gifts and/or money. Furthermore, if you invite a group of Cameroonian friends out (to a night club, a bar, a movie, or dinner), it is assumed you will pay. Be cautious not to be flagrant with money initially and give your friends the idea that you will be able to sustain weekly, even daily excursions, with them.

“If you don’t want to pay for something or are low on money at the moment, the best way to explain this to people is by saying you are a student and you don’t have a job (this is also a good bargaining strategy in the market when a vendor is charging a price that is too high).

Don’t forget that your stipend will be used for different excursions you will plan outside of Yaoundé (transportation, lodging, and food) and for buying optional expensive items at the outset of your stay (such as a personal cell phone which costs about \$40 to purchase and about \$15 per month to use, and is useful to keep in contact with other students on the program and Cameroonian friends). It may seem like you have a lot of money, which you do by Cameroonian standards. However, still be aware of your spending habits because your money can go quickly if you are not careful.”

## COMMUNICATION INFORMATION

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Students sometimes tell family/friends that they will phone home the minute they arrive. However, plans often go awry because of plane or train delays, unavailability of an international phone line, etc. To save parents and loved ones worry, we suggest an agreement to call at the earliest convenient time, rather than promising to call at once.

### **Mail:**

Be sure that correspondence between you and family/friends is sent via air mail in both directions or it may take months to get to its destination. There will occasionally be stretches where mail will not get in or out. The system of mail distribution is very slow and sometimes unreliable. Packages will take either a long time (up to two months) or a short time (sometimes as fast as two weeks) to get through. Do NOT mail valuables, medication or any other necessary items – make sure to bring those in your carry-on luggage.

### **Telephones:**

You can make a direct long-distance phone call from either a cell phone, a telephone at the post office, from one of the many telephone boutiques around the city (you may also send faxes from there), or from international calling booths at around 5 cents a minute to the U.S. A regular phone is installed at the Centre. This land line can be used to make local calls only, though it can receive international calls. Most students buy their own cell phone in Cameroon in order to make local calls and to be easily contacted. Teleboutiques are a good option. It is usually around 50CFA a minute to call the U.S. and, most of the time, the connection is good. International calling booths can also be found in cyber cafes throughout Yaoundé.

Cell phones are a poor option for calling home because they are pay as you go and you can only get about 15 minutes with 10,000CFA (20 US dollars). However, they are convenient for parents or friends to contact you.

One option you may want to consider is having your parents arrange for a low cost international calling service and arrange for a time for your parents to call you.

Remember that there is a **five-hour time difference** (during US daylight savings time) between the U.S. (east coast) and Yaoundé (it is five hours **later** in Yaoundé).

### **Cell Phones:**

Many students purchase cell phones while in Cameroon. This is an excellent way to communicate with other students on the program, to be accessible to family and friends at home, and to be reachable in the event of an emergency. It may, however, be very expensive to make international calls from your cell phone. It is much cheaper for your family and friends back home to call you.

Cell phones in Cameroon are ubiquitous and relatively inexpensive. You can expect to pay \$30-40 USD for the phone, and then you can purchase phone minutes from small boutiques. See the FAQ section (page 73) for more information.

**Computers and Internet Access:**

The program does not recommend that you take a laptop, but if you plan to take one, make sure it has an internal voltage converter that allows for 220 voltage. You will need a plug adaptor to change your U.S. plug end into one that works in Cameroon, which you can normally purchase at an electronics store. If you are unsure if your computer will adapt to the 220 voltage, please contact your computer dealer for further information. Also, be sure to install quality virus protection software. There are many cyber-café's in Yaoundé, although the connection speed may not be as fast as what you can find in the United States. In any case, you are encouraged to limit your Internet use to create a healthy balance between staying in touch with your friends and family in the U.S. and taking advantage of the time you spend.

The Centre has a computer and a laptop. The best cyber cafes are in Bastos.. There is also a Cyberlink café, which has pretty good internet, that is located at Tradex Mendong.



### **Vacation Travel:**

You will have ample time to explore the wonders of Cameroon. Travel may be by bush taxi (a small mini-van type taxi for many people going to the same place), bus, airplane, or train. Trains are either first or second class; **second-class travel is not recommended**. Booking a couchette (sleeping cabin) requires a surcharge above the first class ticket. Traveling by bush taxi can be an adventure and is cheaper than by train. Flying is rather expensive, e.g. \$250 from Yaoundé to Maroua. Avoid motorbike taxis; they are dangerous, and their drivers may be disreputable and reckless. Be prepared for slight discomfort no matter how you travel. Personal space has a different meaning in Cameroon.

When you travel, especially by bush taxi or bus, be prepared to find many checkpoints staffed by armed men in uniform. Remain patient and courteous. If you are asked for papers, provide them. A special orientation session on personal safety will be offered by the Program Director. **Students are discouraged from traveling outside the cities/large towns at night.**

### **Travel Guides:**

The best travel guide is the volume on Central Africa in the Lonely Planet series; information specific to Cameroon is available at <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/africa/cameroon/>. Some guide books are available in the College bookstore, or you can look for used travel books online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.half.com](http://www.half.com). Other travel guides can be found in Cameroon at the American Cultural Center, the American School Library, The Peace Corps Library, and local bookstores. Good Cameroon websites can be found as well.

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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY WHILE ABROAD**

## Health Care

The preferred physicians for students in Yaoundé are from the Hospital General Yaoundé. Contact details will be provided when you arrive in Cameroon. Excellent dental care is available as well from Clinique Dentaire Adventiste (tel 22 11 10), operated by the Seventh-Day Adventists located opposite Boulangerie Calafatas and the Adventist Church.

If you have diabetes, are allergic to penicillin, or have any condition that might require emergency care, carry some personal identification – a tag or bracelet – on you at all times. **CAUTION: Do not buy any medications in Cameroon without checking with the program doctor, especially medications on the street.**

Participants are reminded of the presence of avian flu (H5N1 virus) and swine flu (H1N1 virus) in various countries. For the latest information on these as well as CDC health suggestions, go to:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/outbreaks/current.htm>.
- <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

## Insurance Information

### Health Insurance:

**You are required to purchase primary health insurance in the United States** that is valid overseas to protect against the costs of hospitalization and medical care in the event of sickness or an accident while abroad.

## Health Matters

### Medical Check-ups:

Before leaving the United States, you should visit your physician, gynecologist, eye care specialist, and dentist. Make sure you are in good health before going abroad so that you can avoid any potential problems.

### Immunizations/Inoculations:

Up-to-date information about vaccinations and other health precautions for Cameroon is available at the Centers for Disease Control web site at

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationCameroon.aspx>. It is recommended that you print out the CDC information and take it with you when you consult with your physician. Make sure that all of your routine inoculations are up-to-date. These include measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) and diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT). It is strongly recommended that you ask about other types of inoculations, such as Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B, or any medicines that are advisable.

You should start your immunizations **immediately**, so you will have plenty of time to complete them all. Local places to obtain immunizations are:

- **Holy Spirit Hospital Travel Center Nurse**  
Address: 503 N. 21st Street, Camp Hill, PA 17011  
Phone: 717-972-4222 to schedule an appointment
- **Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center Clinic**

Address: 1711 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102  
 Phone: 1-800-243-1455 to schedule an appointment  
 All agencies will provide the yellow WHO vaccination card.

**The cost of immunizations and medications are the responsibility of the participant.**

**Have all inoculations or immunizations recorded on an “International Certificate of Vaccinations” (yellow World Health Organization [WHO] card). Carry the card with you; it will be checked at the airport upon entering Cameroon!**

**Please review the following with your physician:**

- ☐ **Yellow Fever:** the only immunization **required** for entry; you must get this immunization at least 10 days before departing for Cameroon. However, it is in your best interest to take of care of this well before this time.
- ☐ **Gamma Globulin:** helps prevent infectious hepatitis (type A). Given shortly before departure (not good beyond 6 months). Vaccination is available for some other types of hepatitis. Check with your doctor about this.
- ☐ **Typhoid:** oral or by injection. Takes about 3 weeks. Check with your doctor about this.
- ☐ **Polio booster:** if you have not had one within the last 5 years.
- ☐ **Diphtheria and tetanus:** good for 10 years. (If you are uncertain when you had the last one, it is recommended that you get the booster.)
- ☐ **Meningitis:** likelier in the north during dry season. Check with your doctor.
- ☐ **Cholera:** the cholera vaccine is largely ineffective; the State Department no longer requires it for overseas employees. Check with your doctor about this.
- ☐ **Measles** is endemic; you should be protected by prior disease or by vaccination. Discuss with your physician when updating your MMR (measles, mumps, rubella).
- ☐ **Smallpox** has been eradicated: no vaccination is necessary.

### **Disease Prophylaxis:**

**Malaria:** Good prevention and immediate attention to symptoms will help shield you from malaria. You should bring insect repellents containing DEET (20-30%) with you; bring enough that you can use it every day. There are many different prophylaxes currently available. Consult your physician. Please note that some drugs available require a seven month supply, and you **MUST** bring enough to last the entire semester. Please note that some insurance plans will only cover a supply for a few months, and you are advised to not ship medication to Cameroon as there is not guarantee that you will actually receive it. Therefore, you may have to pay a surcharge to your insurance company in order to secure a sufficient supply.

If you or your physician has any questions, call the Center for Disease Control, Malarial Division (770-488-7788). If you experience side effects, you may contact one of the preferred program physicians (see page 42 for contact information).

**Diarrhea-producing infections:** What is often called traveler’s diarrhea is fairly common, lasting

for a few days, characterized by watery non-bloody bowel movements. It is recommended that you take Imodium or Lomotil with you. More serious diarrhea is due to giardiasis and amoebic dysentery (parasitic) and bacillary dysentery (bacterial). These infections are caused by contaminated food and water. In the event of prolonged diarrhea, accompanied by cramps and vomiting, contact one of the preferred program physicians (see page 42).

**To minimize the risk of coming into contact with contaminated food or water, observe the following:**

- **Do not drink tap water**, even as ice or in alcoholic drinks (alcohol does not kill organisms) unless it has been boiled for 20 minutes or treated with tincture of iodine. Drink bottled water (Tangui, Supermont) which is available everywhere for about \$1.00 a liter. The cost of bottled water is factored into your allowance. Bottles are sealed at the factory, so make sure you see them opened in front of you in the restaurant. Beer and soft drinks are safe, if unopened. You can eat commercially packaged and pasteurized yogurt with no ill effects, though milk is a good medium for bacterial growth. **CAUTION:** Ice cream as well as “rebottled” water purchased from street vendors should be avoided. Generally, ice cream from a bakery is fine (i.e. Select Plus)
- Eating raw vegetables, including salads, may be risky. You should wash raw vegetables and fruit in a solution containing disinfectants like iodine solution (2%= two drops per liter, or crystals). Do not eat street fruit, unless it has a rind or peel (e.g. a banana or an orange). Meat and fish, especially shellfish, should be well cooked.
- You can probably eat most of the cooked street food without any ill effects.
- You will dine with Cameroonian friends, so use your common sense. Part of the pleasure of being in Cameroon will be lost if you become paranoid about food.

**Schistosomiasis (=bilharzia):** Do not swim in fresh water. Swimming in seawater or in properly chlorinated water is fine. Take showers in the hotels rather than baths (a bucket or sponge bath is better than a long soak in untreated water).

**Rabies:** Endemic in Cameroon. Avoid cats, dogs, and monkeys. If you are bitten by an animal, wash the area well and see a doctor immediately. If the animal can be captured and held for testing, by all means do so. NOTE: Rabies immunizations are available, but generally sought only by those who will be off the beaten path and alone for long periods of time.

**Sexually transmitted diseases (venereal diseases, hepatitis B and AIDS):** Epidemic in Central Africa. Please be careful and take the proper precautions. In the case of suspected exposure, please see the program physicians immediately.

**In general, be prudent and take precautions**, but do not be fearful. The worst sickness you will probably experience is diarrhea, but if a condition lingers or worsens, talk with the Program Director.

### **Medications:**

Prescription/non-prescription medication(s) should be in the original container from the pharmacy and labeled with your physician’s name, your name, and the medication name and dosage. **Do not transfer any medication into an unmarked container.** You should also carry a written letter or prescription from your physician verifying that this medication was prescribed by a licensed

practitioner and is necessary for medical reasons. If you are on prescription medications or take particular over-the-counter medications, such as a particular brand of painkillers, you should take enough with you to last the duration of your stay. It is neither advisable nor legal in some circumstances to ship medications by mail. It is your responsibility to make sure that your medications are legal in your host country. You can find this out by consulting the consulate website of the country you will be visiting. **You may also want to take along some cold/flu medication, anti-diarrhea, and anti-fungal medicine.** Women prone to gynecological infections should take an adequate supply of medication. Be aware of recent changes in airport security regulations limiting the type of liquids or gels that can be transported in carry-on luggage.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that students with diabetes or health situations that require routine or frequent injections should carry a supply of syringes sufficient to last their stay abroad. If you carry narcotics or syringes, you should also bring a copy of the prescription and a statement from the prescribing physician.

### **Mental Health, Stability, and Stress:**

For students under the care of a counselor or psychiatrist, please be sure that you see him/her before you depart from the US. Participating in a study abroad program in another country will not lessen any emotional issues that you may presently be experiencing. When you are abroad, you will probably experience various states of excitement and frustration as a result of the opportunities and differences presented by the new culture. These alternating emotions are usually related to the natural phenomenon of culture shock, which occurs when people adapt to a new culture and surroundings. As you become accustomed to your new surroundings and establish a routine, these feelings will begin to subside. If homesickness, depression, or eating disorders persist, consider seeking out professional assistance.

### **Special Accommodations:**

The accommodations available to students with disabilities in the United States may not be available to students studying abroad. It is unlikely that you will find the same medications, medical and/or psychological care, or support services at your study abroad site that you would at home. For you to fully assess whether you will be able to successfully complete a study abroad program, we encourage any student with special needs to review the program descriptions and to visit websites about the community in which you will be living and learning. If you wish to have assistance in assessing your ability to succeed in studying in a particular program or in identifying programs where more support may be available, you are encouraged to disclose your situation on the medical forms you completed during the application process or to come talk to the Center for Global Study and Engagement. Such disclosure is completely voluntary. If you travel to an abroad site, you will be expected to fully participate in the program. Therefore, you need to inform yourself about the demands of the program in order to plan ahead and to prepare to cope with your health needs in a new environment.

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

For safety and comfort, wear loose-fitting, natural-fiber clothing during your flight. Do not wear snug-fitting or heeled footwear! If possible, avoid wearing contact lenses. Low humidity in flight tends to remove the moisture from the eye's surface. It is helpful to do seat exercises or to walk in the aisles in order to maintain good circulation. One easy exercise you can do is to tap your toes while keeping your heels on the floor. This pushes blood up your legs and reduces swelling. Tap for several minutes every hour or so.

It is always advisable to sleep during long flights. You should avoid alcoholic beverages in flight because they cause dehydration. Recycled air also has a drying effect, so you should stay hydrated with non-alcoholic beverages. If you require a special diet, be sure to notify the airline at least 72 hours before departure.

The most common difficulty or problem that can result from flying is known as jet lag, which is the sudden sense of fatigue or wakefulness at the “wrong” time. Jet lag is more pronounced flying east than flying west. Veteran international flyers recommend going to bed and getting up at the customary local time from the beginning. This helps the body adjust quickly. Avoid naps until fully adjusted to the new time zone; the body confuses naps with night sleep.

## **Safe Behavior Abroad**

### **Personal Safety in Cameroon:**

The social consequences of Cameroon's economic situation and occasional political tensions have sparked isolated incidents of violence in the several areas of the country, in most recent times this has been limited to the far northern region and to the North West Province (Bamenda). The Program Director will notify you if travel to these regions becomes risky.

### **Final Thoughts:**

Observing these mentioned precautions will be reassuring to you and to your parents, relatives, and friends at home. However, being overly concerned with safety should not interfere with the enjoyment of life and study in another country. Yaoundé is relatively safe. Do not feel scared just because you believe you should be. Women who can understand French can travel alone during the day and be fine. However, please keep in mind the following:

- No cabs for women (who are alone) after 9 pm.
- Do not take money out inside of a cab and count it.
- Do not speak English too loudly.
- Do not bring backpacks when you are downtown. Keep items you are carrying with you on your front.

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## **CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**

## Being Informed about the Host Country and World Affairs

What do you know about your host country?

1. Can you name the capital city and the head of state?
2. Can you name the major political parties and what they stand for?
3. How is the government organized in your host country as compared to the U.S.?
4. Name five large cities, identify their location and a feature they are famous for.
5. What are the key historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in your host country?
6. What are the major religions in your host country and what role do they play?
7. Who are the major literary and/or cultural figures of the last two centuries?
8. What is the state of the economy? What are its problems, successes, and how is it organized?
9. Can you identify on a map the major rivers, mountain ranges, and other significant geographical features?
10. Can you identify on a map the states, provinces, or other political subdivisions of the country?
11. How is the educational system organized and funded?
12. What is the predominant view in your host country regarding current U.S. foreign policy?

Without researching the answers, most of us would do poorly on this little quiz. However, most local people at your study abroad destinations could probably answer most of these questions about the U.S. Think about it!

Before you leave, do some serious research to educate yourself about your host country. Travel guidebooks and encyclopedias offer a respectable starting point. Read books, magazine articles, and newspapers about host country history, literature, geography, cuisine, etc. However, we strongly recommend you to also consult The Moscow Times ([www.themoscowtimes.com](http://www.themoscowtimes.com)), The New York Times, or The Washington Post. Foreign films are also a good resource. Take the initiative and get acquainted with international students on Dickinson's campus before going abroad.

No matter where you go, you will be asked hard questions about U.S. foreign policy. It is crucial that you have an understanding of what is going on internationally. Read newspapers and magazines that cover international affairs in depth. Include foreign news sources to expose yourself to other perspectives and a different set of facts abroad. The point is: you do not want to arrive abroad poorly informed or be caught off-guard by an encounter with viewpoints sharply different from your own. You especially need to be knowledgeable about the situation in Iraq and the Middle East, and how your host country and the United States stand in relation to those areas. People will have strong opinions and want to engage you in dialogue. Prepare for these situations and recognize their value as learning opportunities.

### **New York Times e-delivery:**

The New York Times runs an email service that provides daily delivery of the International section of the New York Times to your email box! You receive a brief overview of the article and a link that takes you to the full article.

To subscribe to the service, go to <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

Down the left side of the page, there is a MEMBER CENTER, where E-Mail Preferences are listed. You have to "sign-up" with the NYT, which is free. Once you sign up, you can click on a box that says "International" and you will receive an email with headlines from the NYT every day.

### **Local Customs (Cameroonian Etiquette):**

***GREETINGS:*** Always greet people when you see them, even if you have already seen them earlier in the day. Greetings can be quite elaborate and show respect. Hand-shaking is usually involved; always use your right hand (if your right hand is wet or dirty, you may present your right wrist and the person will shake that). If your right hand is occupied (if you are carrying something), a Cameroonian will give you time to change hands. The left hand is considered unclean, and is used for toilet purposes. Saying *bonjour* or *bonsoir* is most often sufficient for less formal settings.

### **USE OF “*tu*” & “*vous*”:**

Adults use *tu* to children.

Children use *vous* to all adults.

Adults use *vous* to other adults whether in business or social contacts.

Give Cameroonian acquaintances, office employees, workers, etc. the dignity of a *vous* greeting.

It is important for women to use *vous* with Cameroonian men.

If a friendship develops, a Cameroonian will sense when to shift to *tu* and you can follow.

***HOSPITALITY:*** To friends and respectable acquaintances who have arrived by invitation (but not the casual drop-in visitor, especially strange men), you should offer something to drink: water, a soft drink, even beer. Open the bottle in front of them and pour it into their glass. It is always wise to serve your guest. If you offer fruit or cookies, pass them around yourself. (If you give the plate to one person, he might think he is supposed to eat it all and that you eat a dozen cookies at a sitting.) The idea of “make yourself at home, help yourself” will be unfamiliar to Cameroonians who do not know American habits of hospitality. If you invite someone for dinner, be aware of food taboos (some cultures, for example, do not eat pork).

Neighborhood kids will take to hanging around day and night. They are curious and affectionate. They will be happy to run little errands for you in exchange for your hospitality. If a child is there and you are eating, offer him/her some. Children belong to the community. When you’ve had enough of them for the day, ask them to go. If you don’t have time to meet with them when they knock on your door, tell them to return another time. **DO NOT ALLOW** strangers to wander in and out of the Centre. Do not tell casual acquaintances where you live. Keep the gate closed and locked so that visitors must knock to enter. Cameroonians do not leave their doors open to passersby, and neither should you. The Program Director will discuss how to secure your possessions against theft.

***INVITATIONS:*** When invited out for food, expect it to be a rather formal occasion. Cameroonians like an agenda, and may even give formal speeches of welcome. A person’s acceptance of you as a friend often involves sharing food. Try a polite bite. You will probably like it. Cameroonians won’t try to force anything exotic on you. You may be offered the gizzard of a chicken. This is a sign of honor and respect. Likewise, if you are offered a kola nut, take a bite; although bitter, the kola nut is a symbol of honor and respect. If you cannot deal with something, fill up on other stuff and plead that you are full. If you are a vegetarian, be flexible; rice and



vegetables are common staples of a Cameroonian meal. If you invite someone to meet you somewhere to eat, you will be expected to pay for them as your guests.

**GENERAL CONVERSATION:** Cameroonians may avoid direct eye contact as a way of showing both respect and attention. When seated in conversation, they may cross their arms, but not their legs (especially women – while women may cross their legs in urban areas, they rarely do in more rural areas). Pointing is considered rude. Cameroonian men often hold hands with other men, women with women. People of opposite sexes, married or not, do not hold hands in public. Public displays of affection are considered inappropriate. Social kissing, the kiss on each cheek *à la français*, is practiced by most Cameroonians. Having your hands in your pockets and whistling are often considered rude.

**APPROPRIATE TOPICS OF CONVERSATION:** Generally avoid political discussions as casual conversation with Cameroonian acquaintances. Such discussions can be sensitive. Likewise, it is impolite to interrogate Cameroonians about their ethnic origins. Such subjects are fine among friends, but it is best to let Cameroonians bring them up. Do not be afraid to ask your host families about appropriate topics of conversation.

Avoid the use of the following expressions because they have derogatory connotations:

- (Un)civilized – *civilisé*
- savage/primitive/native – *sauvage, primitif, nègre*
- hut (say house)/*hutte* (say *case* or *maison*)
- bush (say countryside) – *brousse* (say *village, campagne*)
- race (meaning same ethnic group) – *race* (say *ethnie* or *groupe ethnique*)
- indigenous/*indigène*

You need not fill up the air with chatter. Relax and listen. Cameroonians who come to visit and talk may take some time in coming to the point. The principle virtue to be cultivated in Africa is patience. People don't pay as much attention to time and punctuality. They believe that people should not be enslaved to a clock.

### **Racial/Gender Issues:**

**RACIAL ISSUES:** As a U.S. citizen, you will be seen as privileged, so you should expect to pay more for things. There are some 200 ethnic groups in Cameroon, each with its own language. Not all of these groups are treated equally, and you may witness signs of discrimination. Do not get involved in what you do not understand and are unable to change.

**GENDER ISSUES:** (For women): **Men should not be allowed to hang out or become a nuisance.** Tell them politely and firmly that you are busy and they should please go away. If trouble persists, talk to the Program Director. Men will pester/verbally harass you, accost you in the street, and propose marriage; play it as a joke, which it mostly is. When they persist, or show up at your door, allow your irritation to show. Men are not allowed to grab your arm or pull at you. This is rude in Cameroonian culture, as they well know, but they will try it – especially in markets. Insist that you be treated with respect (a lecture on Feminism, however, will serve no practical purpose). A good phrase to know is “ne me touchez pas. Laissez-moi.” Do not invite a man alone to the Centre after dark, unless you know him well; expectations might arise. Use good sense, as you would in the U.S. You may become embarrassed at times, but you are not likely to be assaulted, or

worse.

**SEXUALITY ISSUES:** Homosexuality among both men and women in Cameroon is against the law! Avoid public displays of affection between men, except the customary walking arm-in-arm.

### **Suggested Readings:**

You should read as much as you can about Cameroonian and African history and culture before you leave. It is also important to know something about your own culture's relationship with Africa -- you will inevitably be asked questions about the U.S. A basic knowledge of the history of colonialism in Africa and the impact of globalization is important to know. Here is some suggested reading:

#### **BOOKS:**

1. Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden*; *Africa and the Curse of the Nation State* (New York Times Books, 1992) and *The Search for Africa* (Times Books, 1994).
2. Roland Oliver, *The African Experience*
3. John Reader, *Africa* (Vintage Paper).
4. Mark W. DeLancey, *Cameroon, Dependence and Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989, 2000).
5. Michael G. Schatzberg & William I. Zartman, *The Political Economy of Cameroon* (New York: Praeger, 1986)
6. Joseph Takougang & Milton Krieger, *African State and Society in the 1990's; Cameroon's Political Crossroads* (Boulder: Westview, 1998).

Cameroonian novelists include Ferdinand Oyono (*Houseboy*; *The Old Man and the Medal*), Mongo Beti (*Mission to Kala*; *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, *The Poor Christ of Bomba*, *Remember Reuben* and writing as Eza Boto, *Vie Cruelle*), Francis Bebey (*Agatha Moudio's Sons*, *Calixthe Beyala*, *Loukoum*, *The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me*, *Your Name Shall be Tanga*), and Werewere Liking (*It Shall be of Jasper and Coral*, *Love-across-a-Hundred-Lives*).

Some West African women writers are: Ama Ata Aidoo (*Our Sister Killjoy*, *No Sweetness Here*, *Changes: A Love Story*), Buchi Emecheta (*The Joys of Motherhood*, *The Double Yoke*), Flora Nwapa (*Efuru*, *One is Enough*), Mariama Bâ (*So Long a Letter*, *Scarlet Song*) Yvonne Vera, Zainab Alkali, Bessie Head, and Tsitsi Dangaremba.

The college owns several Cameroonian films, including *Afrique, Je Te Plumerai*, *Sango Malo*, *Quartier Mozart*, *Chocolat*, and *Le grand blanc de Lambarene*.

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## **COMMENTS FROM FORMER PROGRAM STUDENTS**

“A wonderful learning experience that I would recommend to anyone regardless of major or academic interest.”

“As long as students who attend this program are capable of taking care of themselves and do not expect a lot of ‘hand-holding’ in the adjustment process, they will do fine.”

“Always smile and never be afraid.”

“A lot can be kind of scary in Cameroon: the taxis, diseases that can be contracted, etc., but, if you dwell on these ‘bad’ aspects of the country, you will not enjoy your experience.”

“While a certain amount of common sense should be exercised, extreme caution will limit you and end up making you neurotic.”

“Cameroonians are in general very hospitable and friendly--anything lacking in creature comforts is more than made up for by the friendship and concern the people will share with you.”

“Some of the most important parts of my semester occurred outside of the classroom--traveling around the country, visiting villages, and talking with the people.”

“The program was the biggest learning experience in my career at Dickinson; in fact, off-campus study in Cameroon will have a big influence on me for the rest of my life.”

“Just keep an open mind, keep remembering why you chose this program, and keep learning throughout the entire semester. Cameroon has so much to offer.”

## A FINAL NOTE FROM DICKINSON

All of these security and health caveats may at first appear daunting. By Western standards Cameroon is materially poor, and lacks many of the physical amenities we are used to. But students quickly realize that its people are gracious in spirit, and the country is remarkably diverse and rich in many other ways. **Patience, good humor, respect for difference, and a willingness to listen to what others have to say will yield a remarkable experience.** Dickinson College tells its students that the essence of a liberal education lies in developing habits of intellectual tolerance for the ideas of others and the critical examination of one’s own beliefs and values. Cameroon will constantly offer you occasions for such reflections and reassessments.

-Joyce A. Bylander, Cameroon On-Campus Coordinator

## MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

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### **Work Study:**

You will not be allowed to work while you are in Cameroon. However, the director will attempt to set up internships with local school, U.S. government institutions, etc. At the moment credit cannot be assigned.

### **24-Hour Clock/Time Change:**

Telling time in Cameroon (and in the rest of the world) is based on a 24-hour clock. To convert, add 12 hours to any time after 12:59 p.m. – e.g., 1:15 becomes 13:15. There is a **five-hour time difference** between the U.S. (east coast, daylight savings time) and Yaoundé (it is five hours **later** in Yaoundé).

### **Currency:**

The Cameroonian Franc (CFA) was devalued early in 1994. Current exchange, which fluctuates, is approximately CFA 500 = \$1.00) as of 09/2015. Watch out for counterfeit CFA bills and expect sellers to inspect large bills (10,000 CFA) closely and refuse them if they find them suspect.

## METRIC CONVERSIONS

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<u>Thermometer Readings</u>		<u>Kilometers - Miles</u>	
C	F	Kilometers	Miles
38	100.4	1	0.6
37	98.6 (body temp)	3	1.8
35	95	5	3
30	86	10	6
25	77	15	9
20	68 (room temp)	20	12
10	50	25	15
5	41	30	18
0	32 (freezing)	40	24
-5	23	50	30
-10	14	100	60
-15	5	150	90
-20	-4	200	120
-25	-13	250	150
-30	-22	500	300
[To convert centigrade to Fahrenheit: multiply by 9/5 and add 32]		[To convert kilometers to miles: multiply by .6]	

OR, observe the simple rhyme: “ 30's hot and 20's nice, 10 is cool and zero's ice.”

### Weights and Measures

Metric	U.S.
1 gram (gr)	0.035 ounces
500 grams (= ½ kilo)	1.1 pounds
454 grams	1 pound
1 kilogram (= 1000 grams)	2.2 pounds
5 kilograms	11.0 pounds
1 liter (l)	2.113 pints
1 liter	1.056 quarts
3.785 liters	1 gallon
1 deciliter	0.21 pint
1 meter	3.28 feet
1 meter	39.37 inches
1 centimeter	0.394 inches
2.54 centimeters	1 inch

#### Kitchen Hints:

1 cup sugar = 200 gr. 1 tsp. = 5 gr.

1 cup flour = 150 gr. 1 tbsp. = 12 gr.

[To weigh yourself: double the number of kilos and add 10%]

## APPENDIX I: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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### ABOUT CAMEROON

#### **Where can I find some information about what is going on in Cameroon?**

CRTV ([www.crtv.cm](http://www.crtv.cm)), based in Yaoundé, is Cameroon's official state TV and radio company.

AllAfrica, accessible at [www.allafrica.com/cameroon](http://www.allafrica.com/cameroon), is a great site that provides daily updates in English from several countries major newspapers.

The local weather is available through the BBC website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/5day.shtml?world=1605&links>.

#### **What is the currency in Cameroon?**

Cameroon uses the Communauté Financière Africaine franc, often noted as the FCFA or referred to simply as the “franc”. It is used in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. It is a product of the BEAC (Bank of the Central African States), and its official code is XAF. As of November 2008, \$1USD is equal to 502 FCFA. NOTE: There is also a West African CFA (code XOF), which is used in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. You don't want this!

### PACKING

#### **Do you have any suggestions as to what we should bring if we're living with a host family as far as house warming gifts, etc?**

A gift for your host family is a good idea, though there is no need to spend more than \$20. Something unique to your town or area is always interesting, as is something from your school's bookstore. Your host families and friends would also enjoy t-shirts or hats from NYC, Washington D.C., or your school. In addition to a little present, you may want to bring some food or candy that is typically American.

It is highly recommended to bring a lot of photos. Your friends will want to see everything, including your house, your town, your family, your school, your friends, and your vacations. You will be asked about all of these things, and Cameroonians love looking at your pictures and showing you theirs. They will want to see your “exotic” pictures from home as much as your friends at school will want to see your “exotic” pictures from Cameroon.

#### **How much money should I bring?**

Past participants have brought between \$400 and \$500 in cash. Most people do not spend much of their own money, even when spending liberally, but it is recommended to have some extra; **you will need cash to cover non-stipend needs and personal travel**. Some people report spending only around \$100 of their own money, while others do not spend any at all. Any cash you bring can be stored in the Program Director's safe.

Also, bring whatever ID or credit/debit cards you normally have with you. Once you get to Cameroon, you can give them to the Program Director and he can store them in his safe for the duration of your time there.

#### **Is it safe to bring expensive electronics, like iPods, laptops, and digital cameras?**

Electronics, especially small or portable ones like iPods and cameras, are convenient to have and can

improve the quality of your experience abroad. It is, of course, a matter of personal preference. As with any electronics or valuables, you just have to be careful. Don't flash them around. Keep track of them when in large crowds, don't leave them sitting out in the open, and don't tell people where you store them. Your homestay room door will have a lock on it, and you may also lock up your things in the apartment. Remember, most of the people you will meet are honest, lovely people. Only a very small number of people will be, for various reasons, dishonest or unsavory characters.

### **Is it useful to bring a laptop?**

It depends. At the Centre, there are several desktop computers that are used for word processing and storing photos. The Centre, unlike most private residences, does have an internet connection, but it can be very slow, especially when multiple students are using their laptops at the same time. Most students use internet cafés, which are everywhere. So is a computer necessary? No. If you want to put pictures on it or keep files, it can be very useful. Just make sure you have a proper electricity converter and a really good virus protection program. If you are staying with a homestay family, you may want to keep your laptop at the Centre where it will be safer.

### **If I am living with a host family, should I bring sheets? If so, how many pairs?**

Everyone should bring at least one set of twin sheets. Your host family will probably provide them, but you will definitely want a set to cover the mattresses in the Dickinson apartment during the first few days before you move in with your host family. After you move in, you may keep your bedding at the Centre in case you spend the night there.

### **What kind of shoes should I bring?**

Flip-flops, sturdier sandals (like Birkenstocks or Teva sandals) and sneakers are the most appropriate shoes for every-day life in Yaoundé. If you like to hike and explore, bring good athletic sneakers or hiking boots, and make sure to bring at least one pair of dress shoes. Everything else depends on how much room you have left! Remember, Cameroonians take pride in dressing well; shoes should always be clean and in good repair.

### **What type of ID should we bring, if any, other than our passport and visa?**

In the first few days in Cameroon, you will have your passport and visa copied, and the Program Director will have it notarized. Your original will be stored in a safe place (although you must have it with you if you travel outside of Yaoundé). You must keep this passport copy on you AT ALL TIMES. You will be stopped regularly and will have to present it to the officers. The Program Director will tell you how to deal with these stops. Also, you may want a driver's license, which can be kept in the safe. You DO NOT need an international student ID card. It will not do you any good.

### **What over-the-counter medication should I bring with me?**

- Multi-vitamins: Unlike eating in the United States, you will miss out on a lot of important nutrients. Vitamin B is especially important. There is evidence that mosquitoes are attracted to people with vitamin B deficiencies.
- Insect repellent: Bring 2-3 bottles, or enough to last the entire semester.
- Pain killers: You will not find ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol), but there are generic pain killers and fever reducers available. Make sure to buy them from a reputable source, such as the pharmacies with green crosses.
- Saline solution for contacts: NO ONE has contacts in Yaoundé, so the cleaning solutions are very difficult to find.
- Imodium AD/Pepto-Bismol/Tums/Roloids: Helps with digestion and adjustment issues.
- Sleeping pills/nighttime medication: Medications Tylenol PM or melatonin will reset your biological clock; if you have a problem with jet lag, you may want these so you can be well rested from day one.

- Oragel: Bring if you are prone to cold sores.
- Cipro: This isn't technically over the counter, since you need a prescription, but make sure you have 20-30 pills, just in case of infections and stomach bugs.
- Tampons/pads: Tampons and pads are expensive. Many women prefer having their particular American brand and bring them. Another suggestion is The Keeper or The Diva Cup, both of which are sold online.
- Hydrocortisone cream: This reduces swelling and discomfort from insect bites; buy the strongest percentage available (usually 1%).
- Heartburn medication: *Piment* is a hot pepper commonly used in traditional cuisines, and past students have reported discomfort.
- Calamine Lotion
- Benadryl/Claritin

### **What kinds of toiletries should I bring?**

Bring enough shampoo, soap, conditioner, and toothpaste to last several days. Once you are settled in Yaoundé, you can go to a market and get more. Some toiletries, such as deodorant, hair styling products, shaving cream and razors, are sold in local stores but may be expensive. If you are particular about the brand you use, bring enough to last you all semester.

**Bring sunscreen!** There is little/no market for sunscreen in Africa. Bring plenty, as it is very sunny almost every day. Even during the rainy season it is mostly sunny with a brief mid-afternoon downpour.

### **Do I need a raincoat?**

A raincoat may come in handy, but if you don't have the space, don't worry about it. The rainy season means that it will rain most days, but only for about an hour or two at a time. When the showers do arrive, almost everything shuts down and the streets empty. A lightweight jacket, a small travel poncho or a small umbrella will suffice.

### **Should I buy a mosquito net in Cameroon, or should I bring one with me?**

If you can find a mosquito net at a reasonable price that you can pack easily, you can bring that with you. Some host families will provide them, though not all. Mosquito nets are easily available at a reasonable price in Yaoundé. They are available at Score and Mahima, two grocery stores downtown, as well as Marché Centrale, the main market downtown (though it can be a little intimidating there – take a friend or host family member with you!). Having a fan blowing on you, and/or using permethrin will also keep the mosquitoes out. If you bring permethrin, one bottle should be plenty. It is possible to buy it there, but for the most part you won't need it. If you want to cover your mosquito net every so often, it will kill the mosquito on contact. You may also want to use it for travelling, though that is all personal preference.

### **What should I bring in my carry-on?**

Make sure you have all medications with you (especially for malaria), official documents (especially your passport and yellow WHO card), at least one extra change of clothes, and your toothbrush. If your bag gets lost, you will want everything valuable with you.

### **Any other packing tips?**

Bring books. Everyone ends up reading A LOT, and between long bus rides, hot, dull afternoons, and rainy days, you will have plenty of time to do all that pleasure reading you've been missing. There are novels and nonfiction books that were left in the apartments from past years, but you'll still want your own. Also, bring movies to watch both at your homestay and the Dickinson apartment. They are a good and entertaining way to pass the time.

Bring a lot of baby wipes. When you're hiking in the rainforest, riding the bus, or there is no water, you'll want to be able to get relatively clean. In daily life in Cameroon, you are likely to get dirty. Bring a money belt



or secure bag that you can keep close to you. It is the best way to keep your money safe.

### **Should I exchange money before I go to Cameroon?**

If you can even find a place to exchange money, which is rare, it isn't worth it. Not only will you probably get a bad exchange rate, but it is unnecessary. You will not need any money before you actually receive your stipend, and it is easy once in Yaoundé to exchange USD for francs.

## **ACADEMICS**

### **Can I get an internship?**

Yes. You will have a lot of free time in Yaoundé, so having an internship is a good way to fill that time. In the past, this has been something arranged by the Program Director and Academic Director upon arrival. An internship can be arranged once things settle a bit, but you will need to be proactive. Researching organizations based in or active in Yaoundé before you arrive. A meeting will be held with the on-site staff to find a placement site suitable to your academic and personal goals.

### **What options do we have for courses besides those that are listed?**

Talk to the Program Director when you arrive. If a course can be arranged, he will do it for you, and during the first week of classes you can switch things around pretty easily. After that, your schedule is basically set. Each of your four classes, including a practicum during which you will learn about Yaoundé, is held once a week for two hours. Most classes have less than seven students.

### **When will we pick classes?**

You should have indicated in your application which kind of classes you wanted to take. These preferences will give the Program Director a good idea of what classes to arrange. A list of courses should be emailed to you before your arrival in Cameroon; during your orientation you will meet the professors and decide which classes you will take.

### **Do we have classes with local university students?**

No. Their school schedule is not compatible with ours. Your classes will consist of students from the Dickinson program and are taught by a Cameroonian professor. They will usually be held in a room at the Center or within walking distance of the apartment.

If you would like to visit the university or attend a class there, talk to a professor and/or the academic director. Professors really enjoy it when you want to sit in on a class. To get in contact with university students, talk to the Program Director. If all else fails, just go to the university and hang out for an afternoon--you are guaranteed to talk to many people. Don't be scared – it is really fun and interesting.

## **DAILY LIFE:**

### **What activities are available in Yaoundé? How accessible are sports clubs?**

If you are interested in football (soccer), Cameroon will be heaven. There are two stadiums very close to the apartments, and many pick-up games go on all over the place. At the universities (Yaoundé I, Yaoundé II/Soa, and the Catholic University), there are even more activities and sports clubs, though you may have to do a little scouting around. If you like to run – do it! Running is fairly popular, though it's best to do it during the cooler hours in the morning.

Plenty of other activities are available through the university. Talk to your professors, and they can help you find groups that interest you. Previous students have participated in art, dance and theater groups.

If you are interested in art and cultural events, check out the Centre Culturel Français (French Cultural Center), which is located downtown next to Score. They often have movies, performances, and art displays.

Just by hanging around for a bit, you are bound to meet creative, original, and artistic people. Also, if you ask your Cameroonian friends to join you, they will be more than happy to show you where you can hear some great live music.

### **What we can expect to find when traveling in the markets?**

In local food markets, you will find commonly used ingredients – fruits, vegetables, spices, beans, peanuts, palm oil, rice, beef, and chicken – as well as second hand clothing, dishes, and other random goods. Go to the markets often. It's a great way to see Cameroonian culture; if you are friends with the vendors, they will often help you out with whatever you need. There are a few large markets in Yaoundé where you will have a diverse selection of clothing and almost anything else you can imagine! There are a few craft and artisan markets, where you can buy handmade gifts and souvenirs.

In every market, you will have to bargain. Bargaining is a learning process. Some people are amazing, while others have a hard time. It can be a fun game for me, and you will end up with some interesting things. Ask your Cameroonian friends or your host families how much you should be paying for things to make sure you are paying a fair price!

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

The best idea is to invest in a money belt or secure bag that you can wear close to you, which is worn around your waist but under your clothes. It's similar to a fanny pack, but much thinner. Some students also choose to wear neck pouches. In the belt or pouch, you can keep your notarized passport copy, money, extra coins for a cab, and even an extra malaria pill. You don't want a wallet or purse with you all the time since they are too easy to take in markets or crowded area. Keep coins and small bills in your pockets for cabs for shopping in the market. Do not bring attention to your money if you do not have to.

### **How will I do laundry?**

You will probably be doing laundry by hand. Frequent water outages complicate the laundry process, so be patient and flexible. There is a particular brown square soap (called Maysoap) that everyone uses for laundry, as well as a powdered detergent called "Blu" Another good detergent to use is Total, which comes in packs. If you don't know how to do laundry by hand, ask a professor, Cameroonian friend, or host mother/siblings. They will probably be happy to show you.

At the Centre, there is a basin and clothesline to do your laundry. For students staying with host families, there will be a central location where everyone does laundry. It is probably best to ask your host mom or sisters about this. Some host families actually did laundry for the students, but don't count on this.

In the past, people have hired friends to do laundry for them in exchange for some "small money," but that is your choice. It can take days for clothing to dry during the rainy season, so plan accordingly. After four months of hand washing, your clothing may be worn out and faded. Don't expect to get things as clean there!

You should probably iron all your clothing. It's been said that bugs can crawl in and lay eggs that will then get in your skin if you don't iron them, although this may happen when Cameroonians lay clothing to dry over bushes and in the grass. In any event, ironing your clothing and maintaining a generally neat appearance is important to many Cameroonians, and you will be expected to do the same.

### **Can we have friends stay over in our apartment?**

Absolutely not. The only people who can stay overnight in the Centre are others in the program, or, with approval from the director, family members who are visiting. There is too much of a risk if others stay there.

### **How can I be safe with water?**

Don't bother with a water purifier; it's not worth the hassle. When cooking, make sure the water is thoroughly boiled, or you can treat it with iodine.

It is very easy and cheap to get bottled water to drink and for brushing your teeth. Never buy water on the side of the road that comes in bags, and when buying water from random vendors, make sure it is sealed

from the factory and not just refilled.

Never go swimming in fresh water and avoid baths (showers, however, are fine). Oceans are fine, and if you would like to go to a pool, there are good facilities at the American School, Club France, and various upscale hotels.

### **Do I need to know French?**

The more you know, the better. Study up on basic pleasantries, food, and numbers. The more you make an effort to speak French, the more warmly you will be received.

## **ELECTRONIC GADGETS**

### **What kinds of camera should I bring?**

Pictures are a priceless souvenir from this experience, but people have brought many different types of cameras in the past.

- DISPOSABLES should be avoided. The heat, dirt, and humidity tend to be too much for them.
- 35 MM CAMERAS work well, but be careful to protect them from the elements. If you go to the game park in the north, a powerful zoom is a great investment so you can really see the animals in your photos. It is recommended to develop your film at home rather than in Cameroon.
- DIGITAL CAMERAS worked very well, as long as people were careful. The computers in the apartment will be convenient for storing your photos or for transferring them onto a USB or discs. Make sure your memory card has enough memory that you can take tons of photos on trips. Bring plenty of batteries or rechargeable batteries, since they can be hard to find (especially lithium batteries) and are very expensive.

Remember, Cameroonians love pictures, and many have not seen the places to which you will travel. They will want to see the other parts of their own country too! Putting together a slideshow for them is often a great idea.

Getting film developed in Cameroon is not recommended. It is hard to find a reliable developer and can be extremely expensive. If you do decide to develop a roll, maybe to give to friends (which is a great idea), it is best to go in the morning, while the chemicals are still fresh, for better results.

### **What is the deal with cell phones?**

- IF YOU HAVE A CELL PHONE in the U.S.: your American phone will not work in Cameroon. Most companies offer some sort of deal where, for a small fee, you can suspend your service contract without a penalty for up to 6 months.
- GETTING A CELL PHONE IN CAMEROON: It really is worth buying a cell phone when you are there. Nearly everyone has a phone or access to a cell phone, and it is the best way to communicate with your friends and host families. Your Cameroonian cell phone will be a pay-as-you-go system, and small boutiques selling minutes are on nearly every street corner. It does not cost you to receive domestic or international calls. The program can help you get and set up a cell phone.
- IF YOUR FAMILY WANTS TO CALL YOU: Skype or calling cards are probably the best way to go. Websites like [www.callingcards.com](http://www.callingcards.com) offer rates of about \$0.19 a minute. Whoever purchases the card should take into consideration whether they are calling you on a cell phone or a landline (*telephone fixe*), because the rates can be different. Usually your phone card will give you more minutes if you are calling from a landline, and less if you are calling from a cell phone. You will probably be able to call home in the first few days, though as with everything in Cameroon, that can't be guaranteed! Set up "dates" with your family and friends and try to stick to them. Again, call boxes run only about 5 cents a minute to call the United States.

## **LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

### **How did the experiences of students who live in the Centre compare with those who lived with a family?**

It is all about the attitude you bring to the situation. The more flexible you are and the better sense of humor you have, the more pleasurable your experience will be. Living arrangements don't have to be the defining factor in your time spent abroad. Each situation has its advantages and disadvantages (see page 32 for more information).

### **When will our housing arrangements be made?**

As you'll learn in Cameroon, sometimes you just have to go with the flow. Many host family arrangements are not made until the last minute, or changes are made. Don't worry, you will live with great people! Unfortunately, you will not know far in advance where you will be. Take it in stride, and you'll enjoy it.

### **Generally how wealthy are the families we stay with? Are these people in the top, middle, or lower economic classes?**

You will be with families in the middle to upper class. You will live in a place that is secure, and many of the families have host parents involved in teaching or business. Honestly, you will get to see a range of lifestyles, even if you live with a relatively wealthy family. If you'd like to visit a more rural area, that can be arranged.

Remember that there are a wide variety of lifestyles in Yaoundé and in Cameroon. You will learn tremendous amounts no matter where or with whom you live.

## **RANDOM QUESTIONS**

### **What kind of internet access do we have?**

There is internet access at the Dickinson Center, however, if you need to use internet outside of the center you can find many internet cafes within walking distance of the apartment for about a dollar an hour. They are usually open from 10 am-10 pm. Internet access may be much slower than what you are used to in the U.S., but a little patience will go a long way.

You will not be able to download AIM, but you can use AIM express through [http://www.aim.com/get\\_aim/express/aim\\_expr.adp?aolp=](http://www.aim.com/get_aim/express/aim_expr.adp?aolp=).

GoogleChat and Facebook are both fast and reliable ways to keep in touch with family and friends.

You may find that the connection and privacy issues hinder your ability to use Skype, but there are a lot of telephone booths that offer inexpensive international phone rates and a bit of privacy.

You may also want to suggest to people that they contact you with Yahoo! Messenger. Most computers already have that installed, so it will be relatively easy to set up times to chat.

### **We are not to use the banking system, so how do we access money?**

NEVER use the banking system. You should be able to get most of what you need with the money from your stipend. You will have to bring cash with you, which you may store with the Program Director, for your non-stipend needs. If you give him a few days, he can exchange your USD for FCFA. There are a few ATMs available, but remember that the fees will most likely be exorbitant.

### **If I need medicine, where can I get it?**

DO NOT buy any medicines off the street. If you really need something, the pharmacies with green crosses are fairly reputable, such as the one in Biyem-Assi. In any event, talk to the doctor or Program Director, and one of them can help you find what you need.

### **Can I go on a safari?**

There will be a weeklong excursion to the northern provinces, including a trip to the Waza Game preserve. If you would like to plan additional travel around Cameroon, talk to the Program Director for travel suggestions, preparations and arrangements.

### **I know that the mail system is unreliable. Is there anything I can do to make sure things get to me?**

Basically, no. Almost everyone got most of their mail, but there is always a chance that things will be lost. The best tip is to tell people to write to you in red ink. Cameroonians associate it with death and bad news, and are often more likely to make sure the letter gets to the recipient. If you do receive a package, do not go to pick it up alone. Go with a Cameroonian. Having someone there who is knowledgeable about the inner workings is helpful. Another recommendation is to have things sent in padded envelopes instead of boxes (if possible) to shorten the time it will take to get to you.

### **How are women treated in Cameroon?**

This is a delicate subject. As a woman, especially if you are white, you will be subject to a lot of unwanted attention by men. Most likely, you will be harassed and touched as you walk down the street, especially in crowded market places. This type of behavior is not acceptable, but unfortunately it does happen. There is not really a way to prepare for this before leaving, and to be frank, there are times when it will seem unbearable. Talk to each other – you can really be supportive of one another, because it can be a difficult issue to deal with.

Until you are comfortable in your surroundings, wear a ring and try to go places in the company of a male, because if all else fails you can say he is your husband. Tell people you have a boyfriend/fiancé/are married when they ask. A few helpful phrases:

- “J’ai un petit ami/fiancé/mari.” = I have a boyfriend/fiancé/husband.
- “Je suis fidèle.” = I am faithful (men will tell you it’s ok to be with them, even though you have a significant other)
- “Ne me touche(z) pas.” = Don’t touch me.
- “Laisse(z)-moi seule.” = Leave me alone

Be aware that Cameroon reflects a patriarchal society in ways that are much more overt than in the United States. It is important to keep in mind that you are operating under a Western framework of thought and values, and you must keep an open and objective mind while in Cameroon.

Finding a balance between respect for where you are and adherence to your own personal beliefs may be difficult but will prove to be worthwhile for the experience.

### **Will I be able to change Cameroonian society while I’m there?**

As silly as this question may sound, there are some people who think they will be able to save the world while they are there. Remember that you are there to learn. While in Cameroon, it is important to be respectful of laws and customs and not criticize them without understanding them. It will make your transition much smoother if you keep this in mind. This is not to say that you won’t do anything that will have a positive impact, but don’t be disappointed if, for example, the men in your host family still won’t help with chores around the house, even if you’ve tried to “enlighten” them.

### **Final comments...**

*“Erase all preconceptions of how Africa is. It isn’t anything you expect, believe me. Continue to be open minded throughout the whole time there. Everyday, you’ll experience/observe more random events than the day before. This program is one of those that gives you the ability to make of it as you like. Do as much as you can, travel as much as you can, and adapt into the culture as best you can. You will feel frustrated, tired, upset, and scared at times, but it will only make you a strong and*

*better person at the end. Be careful with who you trust. Be smart with your actions. The semester will go faster than you think. We all wish we could stay longer.”*

*“I would tell the students to be prepared for anything, and to remain flexible even when outside of their comfort zone. I would tell them to rely on their peers for support, but to make the experience solely their own, and to experience Cameroon for themselves and no one else.”*