



## **INFORMATION FOR MCW FIELD VOLUNTEERS**

### *I. General Travel Information*

- Field interns are required to register with and review the US State Department website for travel and country-specific information (<http://travel.state.gov/>);
- Field interns are required to review the CIA's World Factbook webpage for additional information (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-worldfactbook/>).
- Field interns are encouraged to follow current affairs pertaining to the region in which they will be volunteering.

### *II. Travel Health*

- Field interns are required to review the CDC website for comprehensive travel health advice (<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>);
- Field interns are required to visit a travel medicine doctor and receive appropriate vaccinations, medications (e.g. Malaria), and other requirements, recommendations and information. It is highly recommended that field interns get vaccinated against rabies and understand the procedures to follow if exposed to rabies;
- Field interns are required to have emergency medical evacuation insurance (e.g. Seven Corners, [www.gatewayplans.com](http://www.gatewayplans.com), SOS Travel Insurance) and a health insurance policy that covers them at home and abroad. Field interns must also know the details/protocol of the evacuation and medical insurance policies, and carry a hard-copy of this information (including policy number and Emergency contact information) with them at all times when abroad.

### *III. Other Requirements*

- Prior to beginning their internship, field interns must submit the following to MCW:
  - MCW Liability Form
  - MCW Conflict of Interest Form
  - MCW Medical Information Form
  - Copy of medical and evacuation insurance
  - Copy of passport and relevant visa(s)
  - Copy of vaccination form
  - Copy of flight itinerary
- Review the MCW Donation and Gift Guidelines
- As a precaution against rabies field interns are not allowed to keep pets while interning abroad.

### *IV. Recommended Items to Bring<sup>1</sup>*

- Insect repellent;
- Small flashlight;
- Pocketknife for utility
- Reusable water bottle
- Quick-dry camping towel;

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<sup>1</sup> Do not expect to be able to buy any necessities while abroad, as supply of most items is not regular and varies greatly by country; bring all items that you know you will definitely need.

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- Sun protection (e.g. sunblock, hat, sunglasses);
- Lightweight fleece sleeping bag that can double as a blanket;
- Travel pillow (useful for long bus rides);
- Fleece or other jacket for chilly evenings and mornings;
- Packable rain jacket if traveling during the rainy season;
- Comfortable walking shoes;
- Toiletries (anti-bacterial bar soap, tissues, cleansing wipes, hand sanitizer);
- Ear plugs (for noisy bus rides, etc.)
- Water filter (although bottled water is available);
- Power adapter to plug American devices into foreign outlets;
- Voltage converter to convert 220/240/250 volts to US 110 volts (most laptops, cameras, phones have this built in);
- Photocopy of passport and visa (kept separately from your passport in case it is lost);
- Medical insurance cards and emergency contact information.
- Batteries (if needed);
- Personal items (enough to last for your entire time abroad) including ALL NEEDED medications, over the counter drugs, tampons, sanitary napkins, first-aid items;
- Recommended over-the-counter medicines:
  - Pepto Bismal;<sup>2</sup>
  - Tylenol Flu/Cold or DayQuil;
  - Anti-histamine;
  - Anti-fungal cream;
  - Rubbing alcohol;
  - Multi-vitamin.

### *V. Water*

- Bottled drinking water is readily available, it is unsafe to drink water directly from the tap, and it is advised not to boil water for drinking purposes;
- In certain areas, at times, water service is unpredictable and can be shut off for days.

### *VI. Bathrooms*

- Most toilets are squat toilets, one flushes by pouring a large cup of water from a bucket (usually adjacent to the toilet) into the toilet thus forcing the waste out of the bowl and into the sewage pipe that carries it to the septic system or sewer main, toilet paper / sanitary napkins / tampons may clog squat toilets and should be disposed of in wastebaskets only;
- Often a shower consists of a 20 liter bucket of water with a 1 liter cup beside it, one uses the smaller cup to pour water over oneself to wash and rinse (hot water is often not available for showering unless water can be boiled, mixed with cold water and added to the 20 liter bucket).

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<sup>2</sup> It is strongly advised to never take Immodium to treat a bacterial stomach infection. Please consult your doctor.



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### *VII. Electricity*

- Electricity service can be irregular, some places implement rationing schemes and/or experience frequent power outages. Rural areas often do not have electricity.

### *VIII. Internet*

- Internet service is available in most urban areas in internet cafes, service is usually much slower than in the US and service is sometimes not available.

### *IX. Phone*

- To call a number in Africa from the US dial 011 followed by the country code (and city code, if applicable) and then the number;
- To call a US number from abroad dial +1 followed by the area code and then the number;
- Public pay phones are available in some areas;
- Prepaid cell phones with SIM cards are widely used. International SMS's can be sent and received between certain foreign and US service providers.

### *X. Money*

- Traveler's check / currency exchanges are available for use in most major cities;
- ATMs are available in some areas. Many ATMs only work with Visa cards (and not Mastercard).
- Credit cards can be used in very few places, it is best to plan not to be able to use them at all (US ATM and credit cards cannot be used in Sierra Leone);
- Western Union is available in most places and it is recommended that you set up a system with a family member or close friend who has access to your money in the US should you need it wired to you.
- Field interns may want to confirm transaction fees charged by their bank for using credit and debit cards abroad;
- Most currency exchanges and banks will not accept USD bills dated before the year 2000 and many do not accept denominations lower than \$50;
- Do not carry large amounts of cash on your person and do not show money in public, you could risk making yourself a target for robbery;
- All prices are negotiable, many prices are doubled, tripled, or more for foreigners. Local prices can usually be achieved with bargaining.

### *X. Etiquette*

- Women may want to wear modest, loose-fitting clothes at all times (i.e. avoid shorts, short skirts, tight pants, or tank tops).
- For men, shorts are considered very informal and are often not worn in public;
- When undergarments are washed it may be a good idea to hang them to dry inside or out of view of the public;
- It is best to shake hands and eat with your right hand, doing so with your left hand can be perceived as unsanitary and/or rude;
- In most places it is not customary to tip at restaurants / bars.



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- It is important to remember that no matter where you are , you are a representative of MCW and your behavior, dress, and attitude should be professional.