

Tips for Travelling: Volunteers for AIDSfreeAFRICA

Written by Marcy Auerbach, AIDSfreeAFRICA volunteer February 2007

General Advice:

Study the AIDSfreeAFRICA web site!

Study our Mission and Vision of AIDSfreeAFRICA

Be clear what your goals are. Write them down.

Be clear of the role you are having as an volunteer for AIDSfreeAFRICA.

You travel on your own risk and no legal action can be taken against AIDSfreeAFRICA for any reason.

As a volunteer of AIDSfreeAFRICA everything you do on this trip has to be agreed upon with AIDSfreeAFRICA.

If things change while in Africa, discuss any change prior before taking action.

Do not promise anything to the people in Cameroon. They remember and later ask for whatever it was and you may have already forgotten. Instead talk to the head of AIDSfreeAFRICA if there is anything you want to do. Do not use anything from the trip for business at home or to make money in any way.

Fundraisers have to be discussed and approved to by AIDSfreeAFRICA. E-mail solicitations are not allowed in most places of employment. Any fundraising letter has to be approved by AIDSfreeAFRICA prior to posting/ mailing. Any contacts made on the trip are not to be used for other organizations or to establish new organizations. It is good practice to CC any correspondence to AIDSfreeAFRICA.

Healthy Traveling

Vaccinations:

1. Yellow fever (the doctor will give you a YF certificate- you need this for your arrival in Cameroon at the airport- carry this with your passport)
2. Typhoid (the shot lasts for 3 yrs, 5 yrs for oral- 4 pills over a few days)
3. Meningitis (bacterial)
4. Hepatitis A and B vaccine
5. Poliovirus booster

It's best to see an infectious disease-travel doctor and check <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

You can have them all done at once at a travel clinic, such as <http://www.passporthealthusa.com/>

Medications:

- *Malaria Prophylaxis*
 - o Lariam: take 1X week for 2 weeks before, 1X week while in Africa, 1X week for 4 weeks after return. Get it through Rolande or from a travel doctor.
 - o Malarone: take 1 the day before you leave, 1X day while in Africa, 1X day for 1 week after return.
- *Antibiotics*: for bacterial infections, diarrhea. Get from your doctor.
-

Register with the US Embassy online

Entry Requirements

1) Passport that is valid for at least 6 months after departure (first time passport or renewal). You will need a total of 4 passport photos (2 for passport, 2 for visa). You'll need your passport to get your visa so get this done ASAP. Takes 2 weeks to 3 months to process. You can rush it for a hefty fee.

2) Visa- passport, as of 2010 \$141 money order- get at post office, 2 copies of the completed application, 2 passport photos, flight itinerary, letter of invitation from AIDSfreeAFRICA, self-addressed stamped envelop or FedEx. It takes 2-3 weeks

Or if you go in person in Washington DC
<http://www.embassy.org/embassies/cm.html>
phone: 202-265-8790, staff is very helpful.

5) Yellow fever vaccination record (you'll get this at the doctor's office).

Flights

www.besttravel.com

See if you can use any miles towards your ticket. I buy my tickets directly from Brussels air via Brussels. Consider donating your miles to AIDSfreeAFRICA if you can not use them otherwise. Tickets range from 1300 to 2400 depending how advanced one buys. I.e., I buy my ticket 5 month ahead of time.

Packing

Clothing

- Long sleeve light clothing pants, T-shirts, tank tops, shorts, bring several skirts (if you go to church or visit elders), you can also buy clothing in Cameroon. Bring one nice outfit.
- Shoes: sandals, Texas (seemed to be the worst option- crocks were great), sneakers, flip flops for the shower, one nice pair for church, or a celebration.

Electronics

- Digital camera
- Universal converter,
-Digital camera (Radio Shack has a good one- different parts of Cameroon will use different plugs so be ready)
- Rechargeable flashlights

Medical supplies:

- Feminine products
- Hand sanitizer
- Sun block, moisturizer
- Benedryl (antihistamine), decongestant, aspirin, Tylenol, cough syrup and drops
- Antibiotics, band-aids
- DEET spray or lotion
- Toothbrush and toothpaste, floss

Misc.

- Only cash, \$100 bills are preferred over \$20 bills, \$1500/2 months traveler checks don't work well, you can wire some money to AIDSfreeAFRICA's African bank account.
- Books, journals, good pens that don't dry out
- Sheet, blanket, or fleece for sleeping
- Mosquito net- must be queen size bed not the small dingy ones.
- Familiar snacks (i.e.- nuts, power bars...)

Gift ideas

For women, cosmetic products, i.e. lipstick, nail polish, perfume, pens and pencils, coloring books and color pencils if there are small children in the house. DVD movies, soccer balls. Western style clothes, books.

Safety

Avoid being on the road after dark. Avoid traveling alone. Allow for plenty of time to get home prior to dark fall at 6 PM. Do deposit bulk of cash and passport in safe place away from place of residence. Have copies of passport/visa and yellow fever card in separate place. When taking a taxi know where you go. Know the local appropriate price. Be alert. Cameroonians generally do not harm tourists but stealing is common. Carry little money but give it if robbed. They also ask for camera, jewelry, and cell-phones. Give it and keep yourself unharmed. Stuff is replaceable, you are not. Call US Embassy and report any incident to the local police. Get a copy of the report. Stay in the company of a Cameroonian you know.