

## **Pre-trip Preparation South Africa**

### **Topics Covered:**

- Payments, Cancellation & Insurance
- Passport, Visa & Entry Requirements
- Air Travel Arrangements & Time Zone
- Packing List & Luggage
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### **Payments**

Payment can be made in one of two ways; 1 payment for the full amount of \$3000 due February 2, 2015, or in three installments of \$1500 due February 2, 2015, \$1000 due March 2, 2015, and \$500 due April 1, 2015. Failure to complete payment by April 2, 2015 will result in forfeiture of the total cost that has been paid by March 2 unless special arrangements have been made prior to payment. Students will receive a refund of the balance left that has been paid after \$1500 has been deducted from the total should they have an emergency cancellation (\$1500 is the non-refundable deposit made for payment of plane tickets and accommodations in country- both of which will be made in February 2015 and are non-refundable). Emergency cancellations will be handled on a case by case basis but will only be considered if the student has experienced a severe issue such as a health problem that prevents them from participating on the trip or death of a close relative. No refunds for students who change their minds or decide not to participate on the trip for any other reason. All payments are to be made by check which should be made out to FRANCISCAN MISSIONARY UNION and mailed in care of Br. Paul O'Keeffe at his address provided below.

### **Cancellation**

Cancellation notices must be received by Br. Paul O'Keeffe in writing as soon as possible. Your \$1500 deposit is non-refundable.

In the event that a Travel Warning is issued by the US State Department regarding travel to South Africa we will do our best to either change our itinerary in South Africa to avoid the conflict areas or if need be to cancel the trip. Participants will be refunded any recoverable expenses.

All participants are encouraged to purchase trip cancellation or interruption insurance in the event of a personal or family illness or other unforeseen events. This insurance may not be provided by your schools and is not part of the fee charged for this trip.

### **Cancellation Insurance**

We recommend you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against emergencies that might prevent you from traveling. Some examples of unforeseen disruptions that could require you to cancel your trip are: you or a family member becomes sick or dies; bad weather or natural disasters that results in closed airports, roads, or hotels; calls to serve on jury duty; terrorist attacks/civil unrest in-country or at home; health epidemics (such as H1N1).

Most travel insurance companies have specific policies in relation to the H1N1 virus. Please check with your provider on their policies for H1N1 coverage. Some companies may offer "Cancel for Any Reason" clauses at an additional cost that will allow you to cancel for any reason. When purchasing these products we recommend you call the company to discuss any exclusions.

NOTE: For many types of cancellation insurance you must purchase the insurance within 14 days of your first payment towards any trip related costs (i.e.: deposit on program, airline ticket, final payment, etc.)

### **What Cancellation Insurance Do We Recommend**

You are free to use any insurance company. Make sure the company you work with offers cancellation and trip interruption coverage as a part of the package. Check with your college or university to see if they have coverage for student travel.

### **Medical Insurance**

This insurance is not part of the fees paid for this trip. It provides primary coverage for international emergencies and accidents. If purchased, you do not need any other type of health insurance for the program. There are various types of plans that cover Accidental Death and Disability, Repatriation of Remains, Emergency Medical Evacuation and Emergency Travel Assistance. However, most medical insurance policies do not cover trip cancellation/interruption.

Please consult your current health insurance plan to see if you are covered or for recommendations for medical insurance while traveling abroad. You should also consult with your school to see if they provide any kind of medical coverage for students traveling on school sponsored international trips.

NOTE: For many types of medical insurance you must purchase the insurance within 14 days of your first payment towards any trip related costs (i.e.: deposit on program, airline ticket, final payment, etc.)

### **Passport, Visa and Entry Requirements**

The information below addresses passport requirements for U.S. and Canadian citizens. Citizens of other countries living in the U.S. should contact Br. Paul O'Keeffe for further information.

South Africa requires you to have a passport that is valid for at least six months past the scheduled date of departure. That would mean that you should have a passport which is valid until November 31, 2016. While the average processing time for a standard passport application is six weeks, it can possibly take much longer. If your trip is departing within six weeks and you have to renew your passport, we recommend using Expedited Service. Consult the U.S. Department of State's Web page for fees and procedures:

[http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)

Once you receive your new or renewed passport, you sign it on the designated page opposite your picture to validate it. Please send us a photocopy of this page after signing it. Make sure you also have a photocopy for yourself to keep with you during the trip separately from where you keep your passport. It is also a good idea to leave a photocopy with a family member or friend at home.

Keep any documents inserted into your passport or given to you by immigration officials upon arriving in South Africa. You will need to present them upon departure. Please provide two copies of your passport to your chaperone and Br. Paul BEFORE DEPARTURE.

### **Visa & Entry Requirements**

The information above addresses entry requirements for U.S. citizens residing in the United States. U.S. citizens living outside the U.S. should contact Br. Paul O’Keeffe for further information. If you are a citizen of a country other than the U.S., check with your nation’s consulate for visa and entry requirements. Br. Paul O’Keeffe will assist you in reviewing information, but the responsibility for obtaining and paying for proper documentation is yours.

Since you will only be visiting South Africa for less than 30 days, no visa is required. You will enter as a tourist. On the arrival form you will need to tick a box under "Purpose of Entry". Please mark Holiday/Tourist. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. Although your occupation may be a student, you are not entering South Africa to study, as you will not be receiving credit for this visit from a South African school as you are not enrolled in an institution of higher learning in South Africa.

### **Air Travel Arrangements**

Your air travel is included in the cost of the program and will be arranged out of the city closed to your school. We will use the most convenient connections, efficient routing, and lowest fares possible. Some cities have limited service that may result in multiple connections or long layovers. If you have special travel needs please contact Br. Paul O’Keeffe.

It is essential that the name on your travel documents be identical to your name as it appears on your passport. If there is a discrepancy, you could be delayed or required to purchase another ticket on your own. Please check your ticket as soon as you receive it and contact Br. Paul directly if there are any discrepancy. In the event that changes need to be made to the itinerary due to illness, strikes, terrorism, weather, or other causes, these changes will be made to ensure the well-being of all participants. Additional expenses, if any, will be the responsibility of the mission trip participant, although Br. Paul will make every effort to minimize such expenses.

During overseas flights, it is important to get up periodically and move about the cabin to increase blood circulation. While seated, try to straighten your legs under the seat as much as possible and flex your calf muscles every couple hours. Sitting in one position for many hours in a row, especially with your legs crossed, will not only make you uncomfortable but also may pose a health risk. Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is an extremely rare but potentially fatal condition where a blood clot forms in the calves and then may travel to

other parts of the body. Please contact your personal physician if you have any questions about reducing your possible risk of DVT on long haul flights.

**Time Zone:** Normally South Africa is seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. South Africa does not observe daylight savings time. Thus, during U.S. daylight savings time (early April through late October) South Africa is six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

### **Packing List & Luggage**

**Packing Tips:** Pack comfortable, modest clothing. Cotton slacks, neat blue jeans, t-shirts **without logos** and button-down shirts are appropriate – sweat suits, athletic gear, and tank tops or any other revealing clothing are not permitted. Shorts are not appropriate to wear in public, but you may want a pair to wear around the retreat centers.

Bring an outfit for church visits and appropriate clothing for all other occasions. For church, men should consider wearing button-down shirts and slacks (ties are not required) and women should consider wearing a dress, or skirt/slacks and blouse (not a t-shirt).

- We strongly recommends leaving expensive jewelry and/or watches at home.
- Plan to bring items that are lightweight and can be layered in case of temperature or weather changes or air-conditioned rooms.
- Laundry facilities may not be available to you during the mission trip. Please plan to hand-wash items in your room and bring soap as we may not be able to find brands you are accustomed to at home in South Africa.
- Do not bring anything with a camouflage pattern or of a military style.

### **Suggested Packing List**

- Comfortable walking shoes with a closed toe for rural areas and markets, where there may be mud or biting insects.
- Appropriate clothing for shared bathrooms.
- Sweater, sweatshirt or a light jacket for use on the plane and at night since the climate in some areas is semi-desert and temperatures are high during the day and cool at night.
- Rain jacket, poncho, or umbrella (if traveling January-April).
- Dressier outfit for church or meetings (described above).
- Toiletries – items such as tampons, mouthwash, and disposable razors are relatively easy to obtain in Southern Africa; however, you may find it more convenient to bring your own.
- Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)
- Medications – most common over-the-counter medications such as Dramamine, Monistat, and Pepto-Bismol are available in Southern Africa; however, it is often easier to bring your own.
- Sun & insect protection – hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent.
- Photography supplies – camera, extra batteries, and electricity converters to charge batteries, iPods, etc.
- Small flashlight & extra batteries (for dark streets, rural areas, or if the power goes off in the retreat centers).
- A refillable water bottle.
- Power bars or other high protein snacks, especially for vegetarians.
- Small backpack for items you will need for everyday use.
- Notebook or a journal.
- Reading material, deck of cards, iPod, etc. (for waiting times or delays or just for fun)

- Travel clock, watch, or other timepiece.
- Money belt or neck pouch to hold valuables.
- ATM card, credit cards.
- Moist towelettes and/or hand sanitizer.
- Plug adapter and converter (if you are bringing electrical appliances).
- Passport and photocopy of the photo page (packed separately).

### **Luggage**

We will be using the cheapest airline possible to get the best value for travel arrangements to South Africa. We urge you to follow the standards of the airline which you will be traveling on. Carry-on, etc. guidelines can be found on the website once we know which airline we will be using.

Due to space restrictions on our vehicles in South Africa, you are allowed to pack only one large, soft-covered bag and one carry-on, plus a purse, camera case or backpack. Pack as lightly as you can. In general, if you cannot comfortably walk five city blocks with all of your gear, you have packed too much. You may want to pack a small tote bag or collapsible suitcase in your luggage for souvenirs you will acquire during your trip. The suitcases designed to double as large backpacks are especially good for travel in South Africa.

### **Weather**

South Africa is in the southern hemisphere and seasons are the opposite of North America. The following are average temperatures, not the extremes. As in the U.S., weather patterns can vary frequently.

Johannesburg: The average high temperature is 75-77°F, while the average low is 53-56°F. The nights may be quite cool year round (especially at LaVerna where evening temperatures can get as low as 30°F during the time of you we will be visiting), but most of the rainfall occurs in November, with an average of 4 inches. The weather in the Rustenburg area will be slightly warmer by a few degrees.

Durban: The average high temperature is 80-72°F, while the average low is 55-60°F. Weather is usually similar to Johannesburg, with the exception of more humidity and warmer nights.

### **Money**

Most participants find that US \$200 to \$300 is sufficient spending money for a two-week mission trip. Of course, how much you bring will depend on your personal spending habits. Remember that all meals and program expenses are included in your mission trip cost with the exception of ONE MEAL OUT WHICH STUDENTS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYING. \$25 should be more than enough to cover the cost of this meal.

ATM cards are the most convenient way to obtain cash in the local currency. Traveler's checks and U.S. cash can at times be difficult to exchange into the local currency, except at airports and tourist centers. It is helpful to have some cash in large currency (fifties and hundred) as smaller bills attract a lower rate of exchange in South Africa. Try to bring new bills, as some past participants have encountered difficulty in changing bills that are worn, written upon or torn. You are strongly encouraged to bring a money belt.

Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted in many stores. Important: call your credit card company to let them know that you will be using your card outside of the country

for a set time. Some people encounter trouble using a credit card abroad because the credit card company assumes the card is stolen. We strongly encourage you to bring a money belt.

For current information concerning exchange rates, visit <http://www.xe.com>, as exchange rates for South Africa can fluctuate.

### **Accommodations**

Accommodations: In keeping with the style and philosophy of the mission trip, you will stay at a modest guesthouse or church-run retreat center where rooms are semi-dormitory style with shared bathrooms.

### **Electrical Current**

The electrical current is 220/240V, the same as in Europe, but different from the U.S. and Canada. The plugs have three rounded prongs. For most U.S. appliances you will need a voltage converter, unless the appliance already has a built-in switch to change the voltage AND an adapter for the plug. If you have a Continental or U.S. adapter you may find that it won't work. One solution is to buy a plug that will fit between your appliance and the adapter once you arrive in South Africa, although it is best that you do without appliances if possible.

### **Health and Safety Information**

Review your vaccinations: Check with your doctor or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding recommended vaccinations for travel to South Africa. Currently, the CDC recommends that you be up-to-date on diphtheria-tetanus and measles for travel in South Africa, no other vaccinations or prophylaxis are necessary. You may call the CDC at 404/332-4559 or visit their Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

- Bring enough medical/health supplies. If you take a prescription or medication, make sure you bring enough to last your entire mission trip, including a possible day or two of delay. Be prepared, and bring medical and health supplies for potential problems. Many medications, including common over-the-counter items, may not be readily available.
- Drink lots of water. Besides drinking contaminated water, the most common health problem is not drinking enough water and getting dehydrated and/or constipated.
- Wash your hands with soap whenever possible or use hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available. Clean food and water can be contaminated by dirty hands.
- Watch your food. Eat meat, fish and vegetables only if they are well cooked, and avoid salads unless the greens have been washed with purified water. Fruit that you peel is the safest. Br. Paul will give you more information on safe eating and drinking habits in country.
- Pace yourself. While strenuous walking is not a regular part of any mission trip, there may be an occasion when a long walk is necessary to reach a certain location. If a particular health condition makes strenuous walking a concern, please be prepared to communicate your limitations with your group leader and the chaperones.
- If you get sick while traveling, please let Br. Paul know right away. This will help to pinpoint problems with food and water, and help you to get better and arrange a visit to a doctor or medical clinic if necessary.

### **Possible Ailments**

*Traveler's Diarrhea:* Just the change in food, water and climate can lead to an upset stomach. If you get diarrhea, treat it with Pepto-Bismol and drink lots of water. Br. Paul

recommends that you get a prescription from your doctor for Ciprofloxacin (Cipro) in case you have a bout of unmanageable diarrhea that is bacterial.

*Hepatitis A:* According to the CDC, travelers to South Africa are at high risk for Hepatitis A. Studies have shown that many cases of travel-related Hepatitis A happen to travelers in developing countries with “standard” itineraries, accommodations, and food consumption behavior.

*Malaria:* Malaria is a mosquito-borne illness that is not present in most parts of South Africa, depending on the time of year and the area of the region. The threat in winter is little to none. In the city of Johannesburg, for example, there is no risk of malaria. Consult your physician as to the best options for you.

*HIV/AIDS:* 15-20% of the South Africans are infected with HIV. The HIV virus can only be contracted through unprotected sexual activity and/or the exchange of blood. As participants of this short mission trip to South Africa you will have contact with persons who are living with HIV/AIDS. Your risk of infection is little to none and all precautions will be taken to protect you and the person’s you encounter with HIV/AIDS.

### **Safety**

We will not hesitate to cancel or end a trip should something occur that would make it appear to be unsafe to travel to a specific part of South Africa.

### **Safety Guidelines**

Out of his extensive experience on mission Br. Paul has developed the following guidelines for you to observe before and during your mission trip. These guidelines come out of important safety, security and cultural concerns. At times, the reasons for these guidelines may not always seem obvious to you. Keep in mind that following these guidelines helps to ensure the safety of mission trip participants, staff and resource people. In addition, it enhances the group’s educational experience and fosters long-term relationships of trust and mutual respect which the Center seeks to develop in the region.

If all participants follow these guidelines, it means less inconvenience for you and the group and less work for our staff. Please read these guidelines carefully and be familiar with them before your departure. Thank you.

As you prepare for your mission trip to South Africa, please keep the following in mind:

- Shorts, short skirts, tank tops or flip flops are often not appropriate for meetings with resource people. However, you may wear this clothing at the retreat centers.
- Military clothing and military style hats could be mistaken for military apparel and should not be taken on the trip. Apparel with U.S. patriotic messages or symbols (such as conspicuously displayed flags) could provoke aggressive responses and should be left at home.
- Bring a small lock for your bag. You should also bring a money belt that can be hidden under your clothes in which to keep your money and important documents.
- Please do not bring flashy jewelry. Any expensive jewelry or watches, or any that looks expensive, should be left at home.
- Bring a pair of closed-toed, flat, non-athletic shoes for township and other visits.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of an item, it is best to err on the side of caution.

### **When you arrive at the airport in South Africa**

You may be asked by the officials what your itinerary and schedule is. If so, simply respond: you don't know what your schedule is. (You will receive a tentative schedule of appointments from Br. Paul O'Keeffe upon arrival in South Africa.) Identify yourself as a tourist if asked; the official purpose of your trip is tourism. Watch your bags and documents at the airport, as bags have been stolen before and while loading luggage into the vans.

### **Do's and Don'ts While on this Mission Trip . . .**

#### **Do . . .**

- Listen carefully to all safety information during your in-country orientation.
- Keep a copy of your passport with you at all times, you may leave your passport at our accommodations while out on tour.
- Stay close together as a group when you are out in public and always travel in groups of two or more.
- Always ask permission of a person before taping or photographing.
- Be cautious about what you say in public (including airplanes, airports and restaurants). There will most likely be people around you who will understand English. Also, North Americans tend to speak in louder voices, so keep your voice at a low level--even when at our accommodations.
- Be respectful of resource people, even those with whom your views differ. This doesn't mean that you have to avoid asking the "hard" questions, just ask them in a non-confrontational way.
- Be respectful of other group members. Before asking multiple questions of resource people, look around to see if other people have questions and remember that people have varied learning styles and may need more time before asking questions. Remember that you are part of a mission group and not simply an independent traveler.
- Drink a lot of water to maintain good health. Because South Africa is an arid climate you will not notice you're thirsty as easily as at home, when the weather is hot, you will dehydrate much more quickly! Our field staff will give you guidelines for finding sources of safe water.

#### **Don't . . .**

- Leave suitcases, bags, or purses unattended, even for a minute!
- Handle large amounts of money in public. Know how much you have and where it is.
- Give anybody any reason to rob you. That means don't wear flashy (or any) jewelry, watches, bulging pockets, or expensive-looking sunglasses.
- Disclose the tentative schedule or names of resource persons and groups of which you may be aware. This information should not be given either to "friendly strangers," to other resource persons on the program, or to anyone outside of your group. If you want to ask someone about information provided by another resource person/organization, find a way to do this without mentioning the other person/organization (e.g. "I read before I came that. . .").
- Photograph military personnel or military installations. In many countries, airports and bridges are included in this prohibition. This is true for U.S. immigration and customs areas as well.



Your group will have an orientation session upon arrival in South Africa. You will receive additional information and have the opportunity to ask questions at that time. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the information above, call Br. Paul.

*NOTE:* It's likely you will hear the above guidelines again at various points during your mission trip. We ask for and appreciate your patience with this fact in advance of your trip.

### **Policy on Controlled Substances**

The use, possession, transport, or purchase of “controlled substances” (i.e., illegal drugs) by a mission trip participant carries significant risks and penalties for the participant, the entire group, and the reputation of your school and your trip leaders and chaperones..

A participant who uses illegal drugs while on this mission trip will be sent home at his or her own expense. If the participant is detained or arrested, legal officials in the site of the arrest (U.S. or foreign country) likely will not permit travel leaders or chaperones to contact or assist the detained person in any way. Your schools and Br. Paul’s responsibility for the participant ends at the time of detention or arrest for drug violations.

United States law prohibits the transport of illegal drugs across its borders. Also, U.S. law does not protect U.S. citizens, U.S. residents, or others traveling abroad who violate foreign drug laws. The laws that prevail are those of the country in which the law was broken.

Please reference the U.S. State Department’s Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad for more information [http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs\\_1237.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs_1237.html)

The police and customs officials have the right to search your luggage for drugs. In many countries local laws make no distinction between hard and soft drugs. United States laws DO NOT apply to Americans abroad who violate foreign laws. Once you are overseas, you are subject to the same penalties for drug violations as the nationals of the country you are visiting.

In some countries, anyone who is caught with even a very small quantity of drugs for personal use may be tried and receive the same sentence as a large-scale trafficker. If you are arrested for drug possession abroad you may be subject to interrogation and/or solitary confinement for up to a year before trial and receive a mandatory prison sentence of seven years to life if you are convicted.

### **Gift Giving**

As participants on this short term mission trip we are committed to building long-lasting relationships with the communities in our host countries. As part of that commitment we have a policy of not giving gifts, no matter how small or inexpensive, to people on the streets, including not giving candy to children. Regardless of the intentions, the practice of gift-giving can lead to ill feelings among both givers and receivers. It also reinforces the stereotype of North Americans as patronizing, wealthy foreigners. If you wish to share something with the people you meet, we suggest you bring postcards, photos or mementoes from your home community and family and that you have enough to give to everyone in a group you may encounter.

Some groups may decide to make a monetary donation to one or more of the organizations with which they meet. This is always done in coordination with Br. Paul and the local resource person, and the donation is given to a responsible individual within the organization to ensure that it goes for the intended purpose. This type of gift-giving is always voluntary.

### **Diversity**

Siena College, Bonaventure University, the University of St. Francis, and The University of Georgia all strive to create for its participants an intentionally diverse group of travelers where a variety of cultures and backgrounds are represented. Students, faculty, and staff help each other respond to issues of oppression such as racism, sexism, homophobia, economic inequality, xenophobia, and classism, in an environment where diversity expands the participants' thinking and worldview.

### **Contact Information**

Due to the relatively short duration of your mission trip, friends and family should not expect to have regular contact with you either through post, email, or phone calls. However, friends and family may place a direct-dial call to you through Br. Paul's South Africa Cell phone. Before your departure Br. Paul will provide you with direct-dial emergency numbers for the places you will be staying and his South Africa Cell phone number. It is much less expensive to call from the U.S. to South Africa than vice versa. Be prepared to purchase South African calling cards upon arrival for calling the U.S. International calling cards purchased in the U.S. as well as 800 numbers do not function when calling from of South Africa. None of our accommodations have phones in the rooms, short phone calls to home will be permitted for those students who purchase calling cards in country.

Br. Paul's contact information:

Br. Paul O'Keeffe, OFM  
St. Anthony Shrine  
100 Arch Street  
Boston, MA 02110

Cell: 240-393-0532