

Traveling to Africa: An Orientation

by

Bradley R. Converse

A PROJECT

submitted to

Oregon State University

University Honors College

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Mechanical Engineering (Honors Scholar)

Presented March 1, 2011
Commencement June 2011

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Bradley R. Converse for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Mechanical Engineering presented on March 1, 2011. Title: Traveling to Africa: An Orientation

Abstract approved:

Badege Bishaw

Abstract

After traveling to Africa and experiencing the struggles and confusion of interacting with a new culture, I saw the need for some sort of orientation device that would adequately prepare first timers, but also not be too lengthy and daunting for a person that will only be spending a few weeks abroad. While current literature contains some of the necessary information, nothing was in a pocket-style format. This led to the idea of creating a pamphlet that organizations could provide to people going to Africa. After gaining approval from the IRB, I sent 21 questionnaires to people that had traveled to Africa. I asked them about preparations before the trip, actions to take while in Africa, and proper attitudes and demeanors while working with local people. The responses were quite varied and provided information that would not be obvious to someone that has never been to Africa. For example, flexibility and humility were more important than strength, responsibility, and creativity. The results have been summarized into a pamphlet that can be modified by each organization to suit their specific needs.

Key Words: Africa, Travel, Culture

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply thankful to Dr. Badege Bishaw for his tremendous support, knowledge, and willingness related to my project. His guidance made this venture possible, and his enthusiasm made this project a joy to complete.

Professor Ray William was crucial in perfecting the content of my thesis. His insight has immensely improved my research and writing capabilities, for which I am extremely grateful.

This entire project would have never happened without Fiona Kiker's involvement with sending me to Africa in the first place. I will be forever thankful for her and everything she has taught me, as a student and as a person.

I would also like to thank the 21 interviewees. This project is for you. Thank you for making the world a better place.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Dan and Ruth Converse, who made me who I am today.

Thank you for everything.

Traveling to Africa: An Orientation

Introduction

In April 2009, my roommate and I took the long journey to Senegal, which is on the western side of Africa. Bright-eyed, adventurous, and a little naive, we were sent by the Corvallis church Doxology to support a water project and encourage the long term missionaries. We received guidance from well-traveled people, but still felt anxious and unprepared as we boarded the plane. Our complete lack of expectations allowed us to enjoy the experience without disappointment. It also meant that the majority of the first few days involved asking questions and learning things we did not even think to ask. For example, I learned that greetings may go on for several minutes and use many languages. I learned that if I said I liked something that somebody had, they would give it to me. The pace of life is much slower in Senegal, so I had to expect people to take several breaks, especially when the sun is hot. I was told not to look policemen in the eye or they would pull us over, and if somebody asked me for something that I could not give them, I could simply say “enshala,” which means “If God wills it,” and they would stop asking. I learned that I should not travel at night by myself, and that I should smile at everyone. I also found that the people would love it if I attempted to learn their local language. After learning about their customs and traditions (usually after committing a faux pas) and discussing with missionaries how some travelers are viewed negatively by the local people, we saw the need for some sort of brochure or pamphlet that a new traveler could carry for reference. It would not necessarily contain every custom, word of greeting, or safety tip, but rather it would address the general topics and inform the reader of questions he or she should ask before stepping foot on the great continent of Africa.

Present literature addresses the issue of traveling to Africa, experiencing culture shock, and being a good guest. Ranging from approximately 100 to 300 pages, these books may seem a

little daunting to a short term traveler. However, much of the information is categorized by country, which makes the task much more realistic. *Behave Yourself!*, by Michael Powell, provides tips on meeting and greeting, conversation, eating and drinking, dress, and gifts and tips for many of the most popular countries, but only contains data for two African countries, South Africa and Egypt (Powell 2005). Some of the information for South Africa fits for other cultures as well, such as “The pace of business is relatively slow. Being overly aggressive about deadlines or the pace of decision-making will be counterproductive. Being pushy in South Africa does not get things done; it just annoys people and loses you trust” (Powell 2005, 113). Another interesting comment was that “talking with your hands in your pockets is considered rude,” which proves that if a traveler goes without any preparation, he or she will undoubtedly offend the hosts (Powell 2005, 114). One more basic concept is that “in rural communities, women should avoid wearing sleeveless, low-cut, or otherwise revealing clothes” (Powell 2005, 114). Understanding the little things will aid a traveler much more than ignorance. This book is useful as a cursory glance at several different countries. It addresses specific cultural issues, but fails to make claims on any general themes for the entirety of Africa.

A more substantial book, *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East* provides analysis of every country in Africa (Foster 2002). A traveler looking for great depth would do well to absorb this wealth of information. While it addresses the general topics such as dress and communication, it also gives a historical context, an area briefing of politics, schools, religion and demographics, and then describes nuances of the culture. For example, the book provides information on how each African culture views time and punctuality, the inherent formality, communication styles (down to eye contact), how to be a good guest, and even topics related to business relationships. This book addresses everything that the pamphlet will cover and more. The pamphlet only touches on some of those topics, but instead of providing all of the

answers, it simply informs the reader which questions to ask and how to prepare for a productive experience in Africa.

One book that provides an interesting look into cultural faux pas is *Multicultural Manners: Essential Rules of Etiquette for the 21st Century* by Norine Dresser (2005). It is more of an interesting read than a manual someone could use to find specific information about any country in particular (Dresser 2005). The stories highlight cultural confusions around the world, proving the need for a pamphlet that addresses travels to different cultures. For example, in many cultures a “thumbs up” sign is equivalent to a raised middle finger in the American culture. Pages 204-219 address specific countries in Africa, but focus more on the demographics than the customs. Each country’s culture is described in approximately two paragraphs. The facts are rather random, such as the tidbit that in Algeria, “the groom is responsible for the costs of the marriage celebration” (Dresser 2005, 205). While interesting, this information seems irrelevant for a traveler to Algeria.

One chapter in the *Handbook of Intercultural Training: Volume III*, which was edited by Dan Landis and Richard W. Brislin, addresses traveling to Sub-Saharan Africa (Plueddemann 1983). Plueddemann addresses the need for aid and assistance in Africa, but notes that “the long-range outcome of the interaction should not merely be a one-sided independence, but international cooperation and interdependence” (Plueddemann 1983, 135). This sort of information would be rather useful for a short term traveler, but is buried in an obscure book from the 1980’s.

Plueddemann then analyzes the views of Aristotle, Friere, Plaget, and Dewey. He discusses their theories about “praxis,” a term that means the meshing of theory and practice. He eventually asserts that Dewey’s “reflective experience” is the best way to experience a new culture. “(1) A perplexity or confusion is the first step in reflective experience; (2) next, a tentative interpretation leads one to (3) survey data, examine, inspect, and analyze the situation in

order to clarify the problem, (4) which results in a tentative hypothesis; (5) finally, one tests the hypothesis by doing something overt” (Plueddemann 1983, 137).

This method is a wonderful way to approach confusion in a new culture, but is also a great way to live life every day. Plueddemann sees that “for the person contemplating the prospect of living overseas, the experience can be a frustrating, embittering experience, or it can be a life-changing experience that makes the person more patient with frustrating experiences, more tolerant of ambiguous situations, and more often to alternative ways of viewing the world” (Plueddeman 1983, 138). Now this is not simply trial and error learning, but rather reflective experiences come “from the testing of tentative hypotheses in new situations” (Plueddemann 1983, 138-139). The praxis method is extremely useful for learning how to respect a new culture, and will surely be addressed in the final pamphlet.

Objective

This thesis describes proper conduct in other cultures, especially Africa. It could be used to teach travelers to any part of Africa, and will then be summarized into a pamphlet that will describe the most vital suggestions and information. The purpose of this research is to learn what people who have experienced Africa think a new traveler should know to serve the people in some manner.

Methods

The first step of this research defined the scope of study. The initial search for a similar pamphlet or survey about traveling to Africa revealed short stories from reporters who had vacationed abroad, travel and safety facts from governments, or travel sites for adventurers looking to go on safari. Instead, the preferred information for this study would come from people who had spent time in Africa serving rather than being served. With the encouragement and guidance of Dr. Badege Bishaw, study questions were formulated and interviews were conducted with people who would be able to provide the required information.

The second step involved determining the subject population. Having traveled to Africa, the researcher knew approximately 30 people who would qualify for this study. Since respondents live in Corvallis and Africa, this meant that the method of acquiring information would have to accommodate a wide geographic area. First, a list of questions was outlined. Second, data collection could involve personal or phone interviews as well as sending the questionnaire to people living in Africa. To provide the most consistency, we sent the questionnaire to everyone while also allowing personal interviews.

The survey was divided into three parts: demographics, preparation, and actions while abroad. The first questions dealt with a person's background to ensure that responses included age, gender, and time in Africa. Assumptions included that the length of stay would provide credibility to the study, while a range of stays would provide a variety of perspectives.

The second set of questions asked respondents to describe the physical and emotional preparation, as well as safety while in Africa. Participants also were asked about how much the traveler should study the language and the culture prior to arrival, followed by a question that addressed actions or events that might result in diminished enjoyment. Next, a question about what cultural sensitivity meant to the person followed by a query about what they would like to tell to a person traveling to Africa.

The third part asked about qualities they see in a person who enjoys their experience. Respondents were asked to rank these qualities, and explain why. Lastly, respondents were asked to add any other information they thought might be useful. Oregon State University requires that any study involving human participants requires Internal Review Board approval. Board members review methods, the list of questions, and an example of an Informed Consent form that let the participants know their rights, what to expect, and what would be required of them if they chose to complete the survey. A signed informed consent document was required from each participant

before administering the questions. Emails were sent to people on the list representing the survey population.

Data Analysis

The main goal of this analysis was to identify trends. A spreadsheet allowed the organization and analysis of data. Each question was written in a separate column in Excel. Each respondent was assigned a number that was placed in rows within Excel. Data from 21 respondents were placed within cells, out of 33 queries, representing a 64% response rate. Only one person signed the consent form but failed to complete the questionnaire. The following variables were summarized from the questionnaire.

Age

Average age of a participant was 46 years, with a maximum of 70 (person #15) and a minimum of 21 (person #25). The median, at 47, closely matched the average, and the standard deviation of 15.5 shows a large spread. These results are satisfactory because responses should not necessarily be swayed toward the ideas of the young or the old.

Gender

Respondents included 14 females and 7 males. This may skew the data toward women's views.

Nationality

This question was answered inconsistently. While the expected response was "American" or "Kenyan," several people responded "Caucasian". The thought was that respondents might identify themselves as an African national. All respondents identified themselves as either Caucasian or American, which means that no participant identified themselves as an African national.

How many years, months, or weeks did you stay in Africa?

To statistically analyze this question, responses were converted into numerical decimals in years. The cumulative total length of stay is 46.8 years, with a maximum of 19.1 years and a minimum of 0.02 years, or one week. The average stay was 2.2 years, but the median was 0.2 years, or 2

months. These numbers are large enough that the responses are sufficient for use in the pamphlet, since the pamphlet is designed to teach people traveling for the first time. The standard deviation is 5.5 years, showing a spread of durations that will prevent skewed data from either the inexperienced rookie or the calloused expert

How Should Someone Physically Prepare to Travel on a Short Term Trip to Africa?

The most common response was immunizations (n=15). The required immunizations vary based on location, but that information can be found at a doctor's office or a local health department.

The next most common reply was to exercise and be in good health (n=11). Comments ranged from simply "eat well [and] exercise" (person # 3) to "eat your veggies" (person #9) and "develop an exercise routine" (survey #28). Supporting arguments included that "excess weight will make for a less comfortable experience," (survey #1) and "being physically ready is important due to the trekking around that one does while there" (survey #18). Some people noted that different amounts of preparedness are required depending on the reason for your travel. Sometimes people think they can help build a house, but must realize that "it's foolish to think that one can 'take on' help with construction of a building when one wouldn't be fit to do that at home" (survey #13).

Another response suggested preparing by eating a lot of starches, such as "potatoes, flour products, green bananas, beans, and rice" (survey #20). It might be a good idea to find what the diet may consist of before traveling, and start acclimating while still in the states. The people that did not specifically mention exercise or eating healthy did mention researching the topic. Only one response said that "much physical preparedness is [not] necessary," but they continued "if you were going to be part of a work team, then ... some physical strength building might be necessary" (survey #25). With this many positive responses, there will surely be a focus on exercise and healthy eating in the pamphlet.

Four people thought it was necessary to remember sunscreen, bug spray, and medications. These are great preventative measure to stay healthy while in Africa, and are also

very important for physical preparation. Three people suggested packing light and not taking more than is needed, but two people said that enough should be brought so that things could be left behind with “those in need.” Three people also mentioned resting prior to travel because “a strong immune system is vital” (survey #13) and it takes time to “transition to that time zone and jet lag” (survey #17). Some responses that were important but did not have high response rates advocated “drink[ing] a large amount of bottled water to stay hydrated” (survey #12) and “check[ing] the weather before [the] trip” (survey #16).

How Should Someone Emotionally Prepare to Experience Africa?

The most common response was to research the country and learn about what to expect (n=14). Five people recommended reading, and four people said that new travelers should “discuss conditions ... of the country with persons who have recently been there” (survey #15). Other respondents suggested research, but did not offer a preferred method. This research should prepare the traveler to “see horrifying examples of sickness and pain” (n=9) (survey #9). Seven responses suggested reducing unrealistic expectations to prevent disappointment. One person said that an important key is “understanding that your presence there can do very little to change [extreme poverty] immediately” (survey #34). Sometimes people expect to bring thousands of people to Christ and provide clean water to entire villages, so when that does not happen while they are there, disappointments arise. Part of being a good short-term missionary involves trusting that the long-term missionary will utilize the team in the best way possible, even if it seems like the team is not very impactful.

Travelers also have to prepare to be flexible when complications arise, which they often do, according to six respondents; different “people have different... ‘time clocks’” which some Americans have trouble adjusting to (survey #13). Two people responded that bonding with a person traveling within the team is also important. This will provide a support network that will protect against loneliness. Three people also emphasized prayer: “Ask God to prepare your heart

to see the people the way He sees them” (survey #20). If the purpose for travel is to spread the gospel, then surely the traveler should seek guidance from the Lord.

Another important topic was “reverse culture shock” (survey #2). This happens when a person notices new things in their own culture that they find to be unusual or unsettling. It is truly shocking to see a person driving down an organized, well paved street in a shiny Corvette when just days earlier, starving children who have lost even a glint of hope in their eyes were witnessed. This is definitely something that needs to be addressed in the pamphlet.

What Precautions Should the Traveler Take in Regard to Safety?

The most common response was traveling light (n=13). This meant that “travelers should not keep valuable possessions in a visible place [or] carry large amounts of cash.” This person went on to say that “if you need to carry a lot of cash, store it in different places” in your clothes/pockets (survey #7). The respondent said, “don’t give thieves an easy target” (survey #13). One reason for this is that “even simple things we take for granted ... can be seen as desirable and valuable” (survey #1).

Second, visitors should not travel alone (n=7), especially at night; this included going to “bars [or] clubs” (survey #34). Many respondents mentioned having a “trusted national person” with you, rather than just another visitor. If at all possible, “have a cell phone with you” (survey #2).

Regardless of the number of people a person is traveling with, it is also important to stay alert (n=6). This includes being aware of personal actions; “don’t be loud, don’t be demanding, be polite, say thank you and please” (survey #33). Further, pay attention to “local people [at] bus [stations], parks, [and] public places” (survey #32); “if they look calm and are going about their everyday business, you can, too” (survey #9).

When in doubt, always “listen to the advice of the people you are working with,” (survey #14) according to four surveys. Travelers should “ask locals about safety” (survey #33). Who better to ask about safety than a person who has safely lived in an area for several years?

Researching the country by going to the US Embassy website was also suggested by two respondents. Two other people recommended registering with the local embassy, as “they will share current alerts relevant to where you are traveling” (survey #1).

One person proposed “carrying a medium amount of cash [so that] if [you] are ever robbed with a weapon, you have something to give [the thief]” (survey #25). After questioning the writer about this response, it became apparent that this person learned of this tip from two other participants in this survey. The idea is that the assailant will be less violent if he receives some money.

How Much Should the Traveler Study the Culture Prior to Arrival?

Thirteen people said that the traveler should study the culture as much as possible by learning about the politics, history, religion and laws. Ignorance of the law is a weak defense in any country. One person thought that “the amount of study depends on what part of Africa the traveler is going to. If the traveler is going to a Westernized part of Africa, studying the culture is less imperative. However, if a traveler is going to a tribe with little Western influence, more study is important” (survey #20). Even “if you don’t [study the culture], you will learn so much along the way” (survey #30). While not ideal, it is better to learn late rather than never.

How Much of the Native Language Should a Person Learn Before Arriving?

While a traveler should learn as much about the culture as possible, thirteen people said that only basic phrases are required before arriving in Africa. Seven people thought that it would be sufficient to simply be ready to learn while there. This would obviously vary depending on the length of stay and location of travel. People in many areas speak English, so further training would be unnecessary; however, “it is still thoughtful to be able to communicate in [the native language]” (survey #25). When people do not speak English, a translator may be arranged “in most African countries” (survey #15).

It is unnecessary to spend weeks studying the native language. Learning the nuances and body language involved in greetings encourages relationships built on learning the language with a local person. Oregon State University has a program that pairs international students with native speakers, resulting in new friendships.

If You Have Worked with Short Term Teams While in Africa, What Actions Make the Group's Presence Harder on You?

Thirteen of the participants had worked with short term teams while in Africa. Nine respondents said that cultural rudeness made the group's presence harder on them, when people "do not listen to advice about ... how to respect the culture" (survey #2). Many responses focused on people not listening to the leader, thinking that they knew better than someone who has spent a great deal of time in Africa. Some people will "impose their cultural views on the community" (survey #25). Many Americans have great national pride and try to impose their lifestyle onto others, but do not realize that their ways are not always best. This "American Superman syndrome (here I am, to the rescue, to solve your problems my way)" does not gain a person any respect, nor does it ever change the culture, and should be avoided (survey #15).

In Your Experience, What Causes a Person to Not Enjoy Their Trip?

High expectations or inflexibility were the main causes that a person fails to enjoy their experience (n=16). The pace of life in Africa is different than in America, so people can become frustrated that they did not accomplish their expectations. The people on "short term missions don't get to see the results of their work much of the time" (survey #14). Their trip might plant the seed, but a tree takes months and years to grow. Instead of going to Africa with a mentality of fixing problems, people should travel with an expectation to simply love and help those in need.

Sometimes people hold "too tightly to things that are 'basic needs and rights'" (survey #1). Going to Africa means that you are trading the comforts and conveniences of America, including "consistent electricity, an uncorrupt government ... an effective medical system, police system, emergency services, etc" for an adventure and to help others (survey #1). For example,

in Senegal, policemen need no probable cause to pull over any car. They simply stand on the side of the road and wave vehicles toward them as they please. Because their salaries are minimal, they often ask for bribes. Organizations have different policies on paying bribes. Some missionaries in Senegal never paid bribes, which led to some difficult situations. Travelers should ask about what to do in those situations, or if at all possible, just let their guides do all of the talking.

Sickness often results in a bad experience (n=5). The Mayo Clinic states that “nothing can ruin a vacation or business trip more quickly than loose stools and abdominal cramps”. The most common cause of traveler’s diarrhea is “ingesting food or water that’s contaminated with organisms from feces.” The best ways to prevent diarrhea include washing your hands, not buying food from street vendors, avoiding unpasteurized milk, avoiding undercooked meat and fish, eating well-cooked foods that are served hot, and choosing fruits and vegetables that you can peel yourself, because many sliced fruits were probably washed in tap water. Also, travelers should not drink the local water unless it has been boiled for five to 10 minutes. Ice cubes or any juices made with tap water should be avoided. Finally, it is suggested that travelers do not swim in contaminated water, and do not open their mouths while showering (Diseases and Conditions 2009). People may forget to take their medications, which would also lead to sickness.

Fear can be crippling. Simply “allowing fear/anxiety to outweigh the adventure” can cause a person to miss the excitement of a trip to Africa (survey #18). One could be “overwhelmed by the differences between our countries, [which] could cause too much anxiety and possible danger” (survey #16). While Africa can be dangerous, most people leave the continent physically unscathed and emotionally scarred. According to one survey, “violent theft is not that common” (survey #34). This depends on the area, so travelers should ask either before or upon arrival.

What Does Being Culturally Sensitive Mean to You?

Cultural sensitivity means respect. Respect does not always mean understanding. Often travelers may never understand why they should act a certain way, but respect compels participation. One example from a traveler to Kenya discussed meal traditions. Guests are given the best seats in the house, but in America it is polite to allow others to sit in those seats. So when an American wants to honor a Kenyan by declining the seat, it is disrespecting the culture (survey #20).

Respect involves acting and dressing in a non-offensive manner (n=8). The “dress code is a major thing for females” (survey #14). While western women generally receive grace regarding their dress in Africa, it is most respectful to follow the customs of the people. When in doubt, the hosts will know what is proper. It is important to research this topic before packing. If all else fails, wearing more rather than less is safe.

Cultural sensitivity also means “not imposing Western beliefs on the people, but instead trying to learn as much as possible about their culture while in their country” (survey #25). The focus of traveling should be learning, not teaching (n=5). Before teaching someone a new skill, it is important to learn about their current skills; they may already know a better method. Regarding projects in Africa, ownership is extremely important for success. The nationals must be involved throughout the whole process, which means that Westerners must learn what the people have, want, and need. Only then will the local people truly benefit from a traveler’s presence.

Another important topic deals with sharing. One respondent said that “the many areas where cultures are quite different will give you opportunities for conversation as you share with each other about the differences, and also will give you opportunities to show practical love as you serve” (survey #30). Sharing involves mutual respect and striving for understanding, and is the best method of helping others. Sharing, rather than giving, benefits all parties involved.

What Do You Have to Say to People About Being Culturally Considerate?

All 21 respondents said that it is important to be culturally considerate. Cultural consideration simply “starts at home” (survey #32). A respectful and considerate person at home often is respectful and considerate abroad.

What Qualities Do You See in a Person Who Really Enjoys Their Trip?

Several qualities were pervasive in the responses; 11 people said that a person should be willing to interact and learn; nine said compassionate, easy going, open minded, confident, positive, and looking to have a good time. Team players make it easier on others. These qualities are inherent in a person that makes people feel comfortable, and who enjoys working hard, but not at the expense of a relationship. Projects often take much longer than anticipated and require multiple teams over several months. Instead of straining the locals and long-term residents’ patience, a traveler should have a “willingness to work hard” and a “desire to serve,” but also be “flexible [and] caring” (survey #25). The person is always more important than the task (survey #20). A person looking to have a good time and “squeeze ‘the most’ out of the opportunity” will enjoy the experience (survey #2). Attitude plays a huge role. Many of the events a person may encounter could either be a fun memory or an awful experience, depending on the person’s outlook.

Rank the Top Three Qualities You Would Like to See in a Person Volunteering With a Humanitarian Project?

Several people simply selected three of the choices as the most important by placing X’s next to them. The most common response was flexibility (n=20). The second was humility (n=17), and the third was patience (n=12). Work ethic, responsibility, strength, and creativity were ranked low priorities. Flexibility, humility, and patience are all passive qualities, while work ethic, responsibility, strength and creativity are more action oriented. A flexible person will work on the most necessary task, even if unplanned and undesirable. A humble person willingly learns and practices a new culture while sharing personal views and beliefs. A patient person willingly

cares for and waits on others, but is also persistent while striving toward a goal. These qualities are not mutually exclusive of the more active qualities, but, according to the surveys, received more emphasis. When there is a choice between patience or having a good work ethic, patience should prevail. When choosing between humility and strength, humility should be paramount.

General Comments:

“Embrace the experience,” said respondent #1. “Take memories with you, more than physical souvenirs... Tell people back home about your experience. Allow it to change you and change the people around you.” The second survey asked people to “be honest about [their] motivation.”

Respondent 12 said to “take lots of pictures and keep a travel journal-the memories will be richer when you return home.” Survey 28 simply reminded people “not to over-generalize about people, places and experiences.” Surveys 16 and 31 discussed the topic of reverse discrimination, where “because [they] were white and American, [they] were treated like royalty” (survey #16). Finally, survey 33 addressed the important point that rather than setting your own goals while in Africa, it may be useful to “find out the expectations of those you are assisting...” This reduces the chance of disappointment with the amount of work completed, and will ensure that all actions directly benefit the people they are visiting.

Results

The pamphlet is shown below in paragraph format. The restriction that all of the information must fit on one page double-sided was difficult to manage, but forced critical choices to achieve conciseness. Organizations are encouraged to modify the sections to fit their needs, possibly adding specific customs or greetings to learn.

I’m Traveling to Africa Soon! What Now?

In this exciting time of your life, you may be wondering how to prepare and what to expect from the upcoming journey. This pamphlet highlights the most important topics and provides

information from 21 people who have spent between one week and 19 years in various parts of Africa. It will not teach you everything you should know before leaving, but it is a good start. If you have any questions about these subjects, please contact the organization that is sending you or anyone who has spent time in Africa serving the people.

Do I Need To Get Immunized?

Yes! You should see your doctor or visit the local Public Health Department ASAP. Different countries require different shots, and some areas require malaria pills. Know before you go.

How Should I Physically Prepare?

To enjoy the journey, you should exercise and eat a balanced diet. The preparation may depend on the type of work you will be doing. If you expect to walk around cities or between villages, then begin a walking regimen. If you expect to be on a construction team, exercise so that you could build a house before departure. Do not expect to be able to do more than you can right now. Also, rest right before your trip. A healthy immune system will be extremely helpful, and a rested body may diminish jet lag.

How Should I Emotionally Prepare?

Traveling to Africa will challenge your beliefs, dreams, and preconceived notions. Let go of unrealistic expectations and allow yourself to enjoy anything that may happen. Expect everything to take longer than it might in America, and do not be disappointed if your project is not completed by the time you leave. You may see people experiencing great hardship. Bond with your team, as they will be your main support network when times get tough and you cannot call home.

How Should I Pack?

Lightly! Be sure you pack everything you need. This includes your prescriptions, sunscreen, bug spray, and APPROPRIATE clothing, both for the weather and for local customs. This will likely

require meeting with someone who has gone before you or an email to your host for suggestions; they will know best. Plan on leaving toiletries, gadgets, and even clothing with your hosts. It will be most appreciated!

How Can I Stay Healthy?

Liquid hand sanitizer is useful when soap is not available. Error on the side of caution and assume all non-bottled water and ice is contaminated, only drinking it after you have confirmed its purity. Watch out for inadvertent ingestion of tainted water, such as running your toothbrush under the tap water, opening your mouth in a shower, or swimming in contaminated water. Do not eat washed fruits, because the cleansing water may be contaminated. Be vigilant. If at all possible, do not eat undercooked or cold food, but never be disrespectful when someone offers you a meal. Discuss meal etiquette with your host before attending an event.

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What About Language Barriers?

Many areas of Africa speak English as a second language. For places that do not, you will likely be provided a translator. While it is not necessary to become fluent in the local dialect or prepare

beforehand, it is extremely important to learn basic greetings while you are there. This does not mean that you have to remember everything and have a perfect accent, but it does mean that you try your best to remember both the words and the body language. The local people will appreciate your effort, and you may brighten your host's day with some hilarious mistakes!

How Can I Best Help the People?

Know that you can only do so much in a short amount of time, so be flexible. You are not Superman. The people do not need you to save them or fix all of their problems, but rather to simply share your life with them. Instead of imposing your culture and beliefs on the people, learn from them and appreciate what they offer you. If you will be working on a construction project, remember one word: Ownership. The people need to have ownership of the project, or else it will fail shortly after you leave. Do not assume that you know the community's problems, and do not insist that your solutions are best. If you truly want progress to be made, the work will need to be a collaborative experience that allows the community to direct the project.

How Can I Best Help My Host?

Be flexible and always remain keenly interested, curious, and respectful. You will likely be a guest in a person's home or community building, so thank them by helping as much as possible and focusing not on your own needs, but on others. It is not always possible in Africa to maintain your hygiene or comfort level as you would at home. Trust that your hosts are doing everything they can to take care of you and be grateful for their hospitality.

How Can I Have a Good Time?

As with most situations, you need to TRY to have a good time! Do not expect a vacation when you travel to Africa on a humanitarian mission. You will not have amenities equivalent to your home, and rarely feel as relaxed as you do in your own bed. If you go into the experience expecting to be uncomfortable, then you will be pleasantly surprised with the many experiences

that await you. Do not let fear or anxiety keep you from enjoying new foods or experiences. If your guides say that there is no danger, then trust them.

What About Cultural Considerations?

Each culture is different, even from one village to the next. Be aware that actions Americans deem respectful may be rude or inappropriate, so do your best to conform and fit in. This will require discussions with your host about proper conduct. If you are confused about how to address a situation, mimic your host or a person of similar status. Remember that you are a guest in their society, so never try to change their customs or traditions. Your experience in Africa is an opportunity to *share* your life and friendship with amazing people. Give America a good name.

What Can I Expect When I Return Home?

Reverse culture shock is common. After seeing extreme poverty and sickness, you may feel new emotions when you see a nice car, a huge house, or even when you purchase a cup of coffee that costs more than a week's wages in Africa. Expect to be changed. Expect to grow.

Where Can I Turn for More Info?

Anyone who has been to Africa would likely love to meet with you to talk about your trip and answer your questions. Ask the organization that is sending you for local contacts. They will be a useful resource for information that will be necessary for your upcoming trip. For more in depth reading, here are a few resources:

Online

travel.state.gov cdc.gov/travel cia.gov Search: World Factbook

Books

Foster, Dean. *The Global Etiquette Guide to Africa and the Middle East: everything you need to know for business and travel success*. Wiley, 2002. Print.

Mortenson, Greg, and David O. Relin. *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations One School at a Time*. New York: Viking, 2006. Print.

Look for these at your local library.

And finally ... BE EXCITED! Africa is an amazing place full of adventure and promise. Let it change your life.

Conclusion

Traveling to Africa is no small task. The adventurer must physically and emotionally prepare themselves for high heat, long walks, heart-breaking sights and frustrating situations. They must stay alert when out and about, and should expect to learn some new words and accept new customs. They must learn to be culturally considerate, respecting different people and traditions and attempting to understand the motives, but also realizing that some of the more bizarre actions they witness may never be completely understood. They must be flexible above all else, simply going with the flow and expecting the unexpected, rather than pushing deadlines and angering the locals. They must humble themselves and expect to come back changed; one respondent said it best: A person who has been to Africa is like a cheddar cheese that has been aged. That person and their fellow “sharp cheddars” that traveled with them are still cheeses, but they are now different than the mild cheeses back in America (survey #13). When that person returns to America, they will feel that they are different than everyone else, and they will be. The aging process often causes travelers returning home to experience reverse culture shock. While traveling to Africa may be difficult, it will surely make a person stronger and more flexible when they return. It is an experience unlike any other, and I hope that my work might make that experience more powerful for anyone that reads the accompanying pamphlet. Africa changed me, and I cannot wait to return.

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Appendix**Final Pamphlet**

See next two pages.

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For a digital copy of this form, please contact Brad Converse at bradconverse@gmail.com



Traveling to Africa: An Orientation

Oregon State University



I'm Traveling to Africa Soon! What Now?

In this exciting time of your life, you may be wondering how to prepare and what to expect from the upcoming journey. This pamphlet highlights the most important topics and provides information from 21 people who have spent between one week and 19 years in various parts of Africa. It will not teach you everything you should know before leaving, but it is a good start. If you have any questions about these subjects, please contact the organization that is sending you or anyone who has spent time in Africa serving the people.

Do I Need To Get Immunized?

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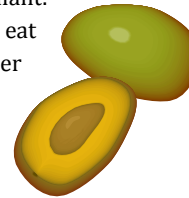
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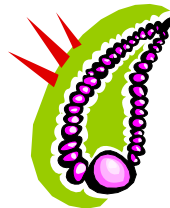
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Responses

Code	Age	Gender	Nationality	How many years, months, or weeks did you stay in Africa?
(1)	30	F	Caucasian	1 year
(2)	46	F	US	19 years, 2 months
(3)	48	M	US	19 years
(7)	21	M	American	Less than 2 weeks.
(9)	29	F	American	Approximately one week.
(12)	45	F	USA	I have visited Kenya twice. The first time for ten days and the second time for three weeks. Both trips were teaching and working with teachers in Nairobi slum schools.
(13)	56	F	USA	? I've visited Africa 5 times, each for 3 weeks - 1 month.
(14)	52	F	American	3 weeks- 2 different trips
(15)	70	M	USA of English/Dutch decent	Two months on two occasions ten years apart
(16)	47	F	American	One month
(17)	47	M	Caucasian	3 Weeks x 3 (9 wks total)
(18)	47	F	Caucasian	3 Weeks x 3 (9 wks total)
(20)	22	F	Caucasian	I stayed in Nairobi, Kenya for 2 months.
(25)	21	F	Caucasian	3 weeks, then 2 years later I stayed 2 months.
(28)	38	F	USA and Irish	About 10 months over 2 trips
(29)	66	M	Caucasian/USA	2+ weeks in 2008; I will be spending a month starting next week: Feb.8 through March 3, 2011
(30)	35	F	American	2 weeks
(31)	64	M	USA	2 years Malawi 86-88 6 weeks The Gambia 6 weeks Ethiopia 30 Countries total
(32)	63	F	American	2 yrs Malawi, 1 month Mozambique
(33)	66	M	USA	3 1/2 weeks
(34)	56	F	U.S.	I have visited Africa about 25 times over the last 13 years, usually staying for about ten days at a time.

Code	How should someone physically prepare to travel on a short term trip to Africa?	How should someone emotionally prepare to experience Africa?
(1)	Be fit, excess weight will make for a less comfortable experience. Take necessary medical precautions (i.e. vaccinations, malaria). If you are prone to have a sensitive stomach, eat yogurt or other food that will help with a change in diet.	Expect things to be culturally different than you are used to. Educate yourself on the history, political and religious undertones of the culture. Arrive with an open mind. Let the locals teach you, do not be the all-knowing Westerner and come in trying to change things. Practice patience! Develop your skills in humility, graciousness, and kindness. Be aware of how loud you are in public places, how you may stand out.
(2)	Try to be in good health. Get up to date on relevant travel booster shots. Purchase necessary items like sunscreen, bug-spray, etc.	Pray! Familiarize yourself as much as possible with what you are going to experience. Read material about the effects of culture shock and reverse culture shock.
(3)	Eat well, exercise	Pray and meet with others who have gone or going with (as in a team)
(7)	One should get the appropriate shots	<p>One's emotional preparation to experiencing Africa depends on the purpose of the trip. Traveling for vacation purposes – One should expect to see poverty and corruption. However, one traveling to Africa for a vacation may not need to emotionally prepare too much</p> <p>Mission Purposes – Whether one is traveling with a church or for an organization, if one expects to work with other Africans, there are a few things that a visitor should consider. Especially if one is of a different race or ethnicity (ie. Caucasian), they should learn about the culture of the area that they are visiting. With my experience, projects rarely run very smoothly due to an array of complications. Some complications may include: Heat, differing opinions, cultural roles, language barriers, logistics, and individual personalities.</p>

(9)	<p>The requisite shots, obviously, as well as generally trying to improve one's health (eat your veggies, etc.) in order to have the best possible experience while in country.</p>	<p>I don't know that anyone can completely prepare to see what it is they'll be seeing. A lot depends on what the trip is going to entail. A member of a 20-person team that will be sharing the Gospel in the slums of Nairobi will need to emotionally bond with his or her team members, as well as preparing to see horrifying example of sickness and pain. A solo traveler spending time at a reasonably well-funded school is going to need to emotionally prepare for an unwarranted but real feeling of abandonment and loneliness that will come with being "one of a kind," if you will.</p>
(12)	<p>Be sure to have your immunizations current. The hours on the airplane are long so I taking a sleep aid during the nighttime portion of a flight can help a traveler get more rest. It is also important to drink a large amount of bottled water to stay hydrated. Be sure to check the weather before your trip. Summer in the United States is winter in Kenya and layers of clothing are convenient even though the temperatures are still mild. Have a way to keep important papers, cash, etc. on your person in a secure way. Know the rate of exchange and get some local currency as soon as possible. If you are Caucasian, be prepared to have some people try to take advantage of you. In retail markets, when someone quotes you a price for something, offer them half.</p>	<p>It is important to keep an open mind. Even though travelers might have some goals or reasons for going to Africa, I think it is beneficial not to have an agenda of how you want things to go. Be a guest in the country and let others be your host. Try not to compare the people, their living conditions, their ways of life, etc. to your own. Accept that there are differences in cultures and not necessarily better or worse ways of living. This, of course, does not include injustices or cruelties – they are always to be condemned. Choose to let go of your expectations and just enjoy the ride, like an adventure down a river you've never been down. Allow wonder and curiosity to predominate your experience. Of course, all of this is assuming you have planned your trip with a reputable and trustworthy person or outfit.</p>

(13)	<p>How should someone physically prepare to travel on a short term trip to Africa? It depends on what the short term trip consists of. If it involves much walking or physical exertion, then being physically 'up to the task' is important. It's foolish to think that one can 'take on' help with construction of a building, when one wouldn't be fit to do that at home. The most important, though, is being physically well-rested prior to a trip. A strong immune system is vital.</p>	<p>It's important to fix in one's mind, that upon leaving the USA, one cannot expect anything to be the same. In fact, nothing is ever the same ... that's part of the reason to travel. People have different customs, expectations, and even 'time clocks'. The food is not the same -- sometimes that's the adventure. And not everyone loves Americans as much as we love ourselves. Not everyone appreciates our 'we can fix your problems' mentality.</p>
(14)	<p>Get all the required immunizations. Bring clothes and other items that you can leave behind. Certain clothing for women might be highly suggested.</p>	<p>Let go of expectations of what you think the trip will do for you. Be flexible. Read the testimonies of those who have gone before you.</p>
(15)	<p>Make the effort to be as fit as possible with a regimen of walking, etc. several weeks prior to the trip. Also bring appropriate inoculations up-to-date including tetanus and malaria.</p>	<p>Discuss conditions, etc. of the country with persons who have recently been there.</p>
(16)	<p>Get the required immunizations; research the climate and terrain so that you are not surprised by what you find.</p>	<p>Research the parts of the continent that you will be visiting so that you are familiar with what you will encounter-culture, poverty, facilities, etc.</p>
(17)	<p>Get the proper shots and medication for your trip. Take time to rest up for your transition to that time zone and jet lag.</p>	<p>Have an adventuresome heart, free yourself from certain expectations. Mentally prepare yourself to be flexible, and don't have a concrete agenda.</p>
(18)	<p>Get any required shots or medications...your doctor or county health department can tell you what is necessary and, in most cases, administer it. Do this ASAP...if you wait until too close to travel time, you may not have time to get in the recommended doses. Take any medications, first aid products, sunscreen, bug repellent that you might need with you. In some areas items are available, but not in all...so bring what you might need (you can always leave what you don't use for use by those in need).</p>	<p>Know that mixed in with the adventure and amazing opportunities, there will be many moments of feeling inadequate, fearful, vulnerable, useless, homesick...etc. It might be helpful to find a passage of scripture or a promise that you can turn to in the low times that will encourage you and remind you of the reasons for the trip and bring encouragement in those moments.</p>

(20)	Train to be able to walk at least 1/2 mile easily. Also be prepared to eat a lot of starches-potatoes, flour products, green bananas, beans, rice, etc.	PRAY!!! Ask God to prepare your heart to see the people the way he sees them. Also, learn about the struggles the people face most commonly. Realize that you will never be fully prepared; some things will still catch you off-guard.
(25)	I don't think much physical preparedness is necessary - besides the packing and preparing for jet lag. If you were going to be part of a work team, then yes some physical strength building might be necessary.	Emotionally, I think people should prepare for the sights they will see when they get to Africa. So research about what the slums or the living conditions of the people might look like so nothing will be a shock.
(28)	Get all your immunizations taken care of well in advance, they take longer than you might think. It always helps to be in decent shape whenever you travel so stick to or develop an exercise routine. Keep your bags as small and light as possible. You can likely purchase real necessities in any big city, maybe with the exception of good sunscreen & specific medications. Otherwise, if you really need it you can likely get it there. You will be happier with less.	It is always kind of stressful to take any trip far from home. I would say spend time with friends and family, read books on history, environment, culture and politics and try to cultivate flexibility in your outlook.
(29)	If first time, get the necessary vaccines and shots depending on the region to which you travel; make sure Passport is updated and driver licenses or picture ID—also either obtain travel visa as you land at airport or obtain prior to trip (if you can). Make sure you have specific travel plans and places to stay—don't take chance; pack as lightly as one can;	I think it is imperative to read up on the African culture(s)—get a feel for the customs and life styles: how to greet people, physically and verbally; what and how to dress appropriately. Be open to accepting inconveniences—like limited bathrooms, water, electricity
(30)	Being physically ready is important due to the trekking around that one does while there. However, I think being emotionally ready is far more important!	Read, question people that have gone before... Journal everyday... Remember for a lifetime!
(31)	Learn welcome customs Respect tremendous diversity of tribes within country Use local transportation	Open-minded, curious, ready for adventure Ready for new foods, stark latrines, resthouses w/ bed and one lightbulb Ready/accepting of wonderful friends to beggars

(32)	Health awareness-health kit and recommended shots Good health	Expect adventure and new opportunities we are sharing our lives-beliefs, traditions, meals, education, skills. We are not giving them our expertise.
(33)	1. get on the internet and study the areas/cities you will visit (weather, culture, economics, terrain, religions, government, historic sites, foods, etc). There is a ton of stuff you can easily access on the internet. Surf around. The more you know, the less you will be surprised. 2. Go to the immunologist early and get your shots and discuss disease and how to be prepared. In Corvallis, Dr. Patel is very good. 3. Find out about customary dress and then pack accordingly. Don't take more stuff than you need. 4 Read some history. Know how the country has changed in the last 60 years and why and how. Know something about what the people have been exposed to. Good and not so good. 5 Talk to someone who has been there, if you can.	-What is the difference between physical preparedness and emotional preparedness. Not sure I know. If you are informed about the history, culture and what to expect, I assume you will be emotionally ready to handle it. The hardest thing to handle, I think, is the (apparent) poverty and poor living conditions.
(34)	There are immunizations needed depending on which country you are visiting. Malaria is a concern in many African countries and you may need medication for that. Climate and living conditions vary but generally speaking, are more challenging than we are accustomed to, so it is important to be in good physical condition. If you have allergies, and/or need prescription meds. Bring all you need with you.	Again, this varies widely, but in many parts of Africa, poverty is widespread. It is important to be prepared for sometimes extreme poverty, and need. Education is key. Also understanding that your presence there can do very little to change that immediately.

Code	What precautions should the traveler take in regard to safety?	How much should the traveler study the culture prior to arrival?
(1)	Register with the Embassy, they will share current alerts relevant to where you are traveling. Take only the most essential valuables with you. Keep in mind even simple things we take for granted, an extra pair of clothes, shoes, etc can be seen as desirable and valuable. Do not flaunt western wealth.	Understand the political structure and religious frameworks. Do not assume that American standards of free speech, freedom of expression, dress, etc. will be the same abroad. Understanding religious frameworks (and there may be more than one, or a mixture) will help you understand why things are important and make you less likely to accidentally offend.
(2)	Be wise about how you carry money, cameras, etc. Do not travel into slum areas or rural areas without a trusted national person. Do not drive around a lot at night. Have a cell phone with you.	As much as possible.
(3)	Stay up on vaccines Stay alert on travel issues through the US travel website	Depends on the length of stay weeks-some good articles years-books
(7)	As a Caucasian, there was an assumption that I was wealthy. I don't know if this representative of Africa as a whole, but I had to take special precautions. Travelers should not keep valuable possessions in a visible place, carry large amounts of cash (if you need to carry a lot of cash, store it in different places on your body). Take precautions on being alone, especially at night.	There are many references that one could use to research a culture. To understand economic circumstances one could visit government websites such as www.cia.gov . In order to understand the culture, the best way to study a culture is to consult someone who has actually travelled and experienced the culture
(9)	Stay alert to ever-changing situations and pay close attention to the behavior of the native people around you. If they look calm and are going about their everyday business, you can, too. Also, stay out of the Nile.	As much as possible, but with the understanding that experience and knowledge are two very different things.
(12)	Make sure your sleeping and traveling arrangements are set. Do not go places alone. Do not store valuables in the open. Dress modestly.	As much as possible – we have a tendency to be ethnocentric and much of what we do and say can be interpreted as rude and foolish in other cultures. Be respectful.

(13)	What precautions should the traveler take in regard to safety? Also be aware of your surroundings. Keep personal items safely tucked away. (Passport, money, etc.) Don't give thieves an easy target. Be wary of traveling where the State Department has issued travel advisories. Don't pet the lions.	It's a great idea to be aware of appropriate attire and greetings. Knowing local customs and expectations is simply common courtesy.
(14)	Don't go anywhere alone. Listen to the advice of the people you are working with.	I think it is important to know the culture before you go. There are very good websites that talk about the cultures of the area you will be serving in. You want to be careful not to offend the people you are serving. Remember that what might be culturally acceptable here is not necessarily acceptable there.
(15)	Consult with expatriates in the country for their recommendations, tips, areas of concern et.	The more the better ... I suggest reading "Three Cups of Tea" by Mortenson and "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" by Kamkwamba and Mealer . . . And other nation specific resources.
(16)	Again, research the country. The U.S. State Dept. has a travel website that discusses safety recommendations	In my opinion, the culture is 3/4 of the reason to travel to Africa. The more information you have prior to your trip, the more time you can enjoy!
(17)	Don't bring expensive items with you if you do not need them. If you do need to bring valuables, be careful to not draw undue attention to them.	Some, be ready to try new things
(18)	Heed all advice given by those you are visiting. Do not assume you know better than they do what is "safe" for you.	Study it enough to know if there are certain actions, styles of dress, responses that would be offensive in the culture. Also, knowing a little about social customs would probably alleviate some of the fear, anxiety and culture shock that comes with being in such a foreign environment.

(20)	<p>Use a money belt/necklace or use a bag that has to be opened several times before someone can get to your money. Do not go out after dark without a national escorting you. Drink only bottled, sealed drinks and eat foods that have been cooked thoroughly. Get all recommended vaccines and medicines. Treat all cuts and scrapes with an antibacterial ointment and go to a doctor if it looks infected. Keep vehicular windows closed when stopped or moving slowly. Never go out alone; always go with at least one other person. Know how to defend yourself if you were to get into trouble and how to act in unsafe situations. Also, have phone numbers of people you can call if you get into trouble.</p>	<p>The amount of studying depends on what part of Africa the traveler is going to. If the traveler is going to a Westernized part of Africa, studying the culture is less imperative. However, if a traveler is going to a tribe with little Western influence, more studying is important. Overall, I believe the traveler should study current political issues, struggles that nationals commonly deal with, customs and greetings, language, and transportation.</p>
(25)	<p>It is important to stay aware of surroundings when traveling - even in groups. Also, if bringing valuables, they shouldn't be taken into the poorer regions of Nairobi if it can be helped. Also, it may sound counter-intuitive, but carrying a medium amount of cash is a good idea. If ever robbed with a weapon, you have something to give them.</p>	<p>I would study the food people eat, cultural customs that are taboo and those that are commonly practiced, the cultural values of the community and the living conditions of the area you are spending the most time in.</p>
(28)	<p>Transportation is probably the most hazardous part of travel in the places I visited in Africa. If you plan to use a motorcycle, you might want to bring a high-quality helmet and gloves. Consider your limits and allow yourself to get out of a vehicle if it feels too dangerous.</p>	<p>As much as you can.</p>
(29)	<p>Like anywhere else you go, in big crowds, watch for picket-pockets; keep money in front pocket or purse that is strapped to body. Never open wallet in crowds or where one can record credit #s. Always bring sanitizers for hygiene and germ control.</p>	<p>Much—I alluded to this above</p>
(30)	<p>Keep money in safe place. Make sure and let authorities know that you are coming. Call bank and credit cards before going to let them know you are out of the country.</p>	<p>A LOT! If you don't you will learn so much along the way.</p>

(31)	<p>Money belts</p> <p>Lock suitcase to keep everything out of sight</p> <p>Used backpack to be seen as everyday traveler</p>	<p>Minimum to moderate to appreciate culture, but not too much to diminish adventure</p> <p>Accept invitation for coffee/tea/hospitality</p>
(32)	<p>Eat cooked foods or fruits that have been peeled. Drink bottled H₂O or other beverage. No ice. Pay attention to local people-bus, parks, public areas.</p>	<p>The more the better, but this may be impossible if one visits several countries. Basic knowledge of history.</p>
(33)	<p>-Don't travel around at night unless you are accompanied by a local person. -Ask locals about safety. Find out what you can do and what is not advised. -don't intentionally draw attention to yourself. You will get a lot of attention without trying. Don't be loud, don't be demanding, be polite, say thank you and please. -Always let someone know where you are going and when you will be back.</p>	<p>-As much as they have time for. Your visit will be more fruitful and enjoyable the more you know. You cannot know too much. You at least must know the basics about the culture, government and economic conditions.</p>
(34)	<p>Any place there is extreme poverty, theft will be fairly widespread, because needs are so great. Violent theft is not that common though. Do not bring a lot of gadgets with you, ipods, computers etc. If you have a camera, keep it in a pocket. Money, passport should be kept under clothing. Do not wear new or expensive clothing or shoes. Do not go to bars, clubs at night unless with a trusted local.</p>	<p>Important to do so. It will be understood that you are a foreigner and will make mistakes but it will endear you to locals much faster if you show familiarity with some aspects of their culture.</p>

Code	How much of the native language should a person learn before arriving?	If you have worked with short term teams while in Africa, what actions make the group's presence harder on you?
(1)	As much as possible. The national language is much better to learn than the colonized language. Take the extra effort to learn as much as possible of the national language, it will help relationally. If you are unable to access the national language, be sure you have enough colonized language to communicate basic needs. Do not go into an extended trip in Africa without any common language, it will hinder your experience and make it harder for you to connect with the locals.	The sheer size of the group presents a challenge. It is easier to maneuver with a group of no more than 4 people. Additionally, the expectation that comforts will be the same in Africa as they are in modern Western cultures makes for a frustrating experience. Sanitation is different, access to electricity, water, technology, etc is all much different. If a team member is particular or a germ-a-phobe, or just too picky it makes for a miserable experience for both them, their host and the locals interacting with them. Transportation is easier as well as a smaller group does not attract as much attention and are easier to include in daily experiences, such as markets, meals, transportation, and other rituals.
(2)	This is not practical, with the exception of languages that have Rosetta Stone or class work. It is more important to be willing to "jump in" and try a bit of the language. Body Language is the MOST important.	When teams try to "fix" things without even truly understanding the nature of the problem. When people make "promises" and then leave. When teams do not listen to advice about safety, how to respect the culture, etc.
(3)	Not too much; learn once you arrive	Mostly attitudes toward the nationals that result in actions.
(7)	Again, this is circumstantial. If one is going on a short term trip, basic phrases and words will allow one to interact with people on a simple level. If one has a translator, or someone that can speak the native language, obviously they can get by with less.	N/A
(9)	Again, as much as possible, but it definitely depends on the trip's purpose.	N/A

(12)	Basic conversational words like please, thank you, hello, how are you?, how much? are a good thing to learn. It implies common courtesy.	Individuals who are sure they know a lot, demand a lot, complain a lot, and criticize differences rather than choosing to suspend the US standard for things and value a different way of living.
(13)	Depending on the country and the length of stay, it may not be vital to learn the language prior to the visit. However, while in country, always learn a few greetings and phrases. That goes a long way towards 'diplomacy'.	I'm not sure I understand this question. If it's asking me, as a group leader, what action a group member might take that would make it difficult for the group... my answer would be when an individual thinks only of himself ('it's all about me'). . 'I'm uncomfortable; I want to do this; etc' If the question is asking about someone in the group effecting the whole group's acceptance in the country ... by acting 'too American' or 'too spoiled' or 'ick, this food tastes terrible' or 'oh my, I can't sleep in bed' . . . The American prima dona syndrome is very hard to work with.
(14)	It is always a blessing to the people if you can speak in their native language. On many mission trips you will be partnering with local people who will be able to translate for you. It is important to remember that many people you may be working with are uneducated and will speak little if no English at all.	It is always difficult to be in a big group when you are clearly foreigners. You will receive lots of stares and attention because people are curious as to what you are doing there. Flexibility and compromise are huge when working in a group.
(15)	Probably not required for short term trip as English communicators are available in most African countries for assistance. . . English as a 2nd language is taught in many schools.	Along the same lines, the American Superman syndrome (here I am, to the rescue, to solve our problems my way), is also impossible to work with.
(16)	Most African's speak some English but it is good to understand the basics-this also conveys that you have tried to fit into their culture rather than the other way around	Probably the hardest action or attitude is when a team member feels and expresses that they are superior to the locals and are there to "bless them with their presence"
(17)	Maybe some phrases, but not necessary	N/A
(18)	Knowing some greetings and polite responses would be helpful...and friendly.	N/A

(20)	<p>Again, this depends on where one is traveling to in Africa and what type of work the person will be doing. English is a national language in Kenya, where I was for 2 months. If one is planning to go for just a few weeks and to work with a national the entire time he/she is there, basic language learning would be satisfactory. However, if one is going for a longer amount of time, more language learning is necessary. This would include basic greetings, the ability to ask for food/water, and the ability to ask for directions, as well as the ability to be able to understand answers to questions. Full immersion language learning is also very beneficial to someone who is planning to be in the country for an extended period of time (1 year or longer).</p>	<p>I feel one thing that made the group's presence more difficult was their inability to understand why the nationals did things the way they did. For example, Kenya is an event oriented culture and America is a time oriented culture. When short term teams would come they would want to stick to the schedule and they got frustrated when the nationals didn't stick to the schedule as closely. Another example has to do with customs. In Kenya, the nationals want their guests to sit down because of the custom of giving guests the best seat in the house. Many of the Americans did not sit down when they were offered a place to sit down. This was because American Christians want to serve their Kenyan brothers and sisters and want them to sit down. Therefore they unknowingly offended some of the Kenyan people.</p>
(25)	<p>I think it is important to know some of the basics of the language so that simple communication can be accomplished. This makes the people you are visiting feel more at ease. However, in Kenya at least, many people can speak English, but it is still thoughtful to be able to communicate in Swahili.</p>	<p>My personal experience, while living for 2 months, was that sometimes groups did not follow precautions in safety in the slums. Also, they impose their cultural views on the community.</p>
(28)	<p>If you can manage to learn greetings and numbers before you go, great. If a class is offered, take it.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
(29)	<p>It depends—in Ethiopia, the language is Ahmaric, a very difficult language. Fortunately, English is spoken throughout the country and the continent. Any words one can learn beforehand is welcomed by the native peoples.</p>	<p>Communication and timelines---- making sure action items and discussions are understood requires a lot of paraphrasing—even if they nod their heads, it may not mean they understand. Secondly, time lines are so different around the world—what we want to see done in a week here in the US might be fast if it takes a month elsewhere----</p>
(30)	<p>I did not know any.... And did fine.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

(31)	Depends; for me I'm not very good w/ languages-hasn't been a problem Listen, ask questions, be or exhibit interest in local people	Ugly Americans!
(32)	Greetings. Malawi, for example, has 23 languages. Concentrate on general knowledge.	N/A
(33)	-It isn't practical to know the language unless you are studying language. In Ethiopia, where I went, young people were eager to practice their English. But it doesn't hurt to know a few phrases just as an ice breaker and to show that you know they have a different language and are willing to make a small effort.	N/A
(34)	Greetings are important and will help you make friends. Learn more if you can- and try, even if you make mistakes it shows effort on your part.	I've been leader of teams in Africa. Actions that make groups presence harder are, lack of cultural preparation, lone rangers- those who go their own way, thinking they know best.

Code	In your experience, what causes a person to not enjoy their trip?	What does being culturally sensitive mean to you?
(1)	Holding too tightly to things that are “basic needs and rights”. We have it easy here in America, we have heat and air conditioning, access to clean water from a tap, hot water also from a tap. Consistent electricity, an uncorrupt government (by comparison), an effective medical system, police system, emergency services, etc. If you expect everything to be just as it is in America when you go to many countries in Africa, you will be disappointed. A person just needs to have an open mind and have their goal to be an observer and experience the culture on the cultures terms, not from an air conditioned bus. Many things are done in a less efficient way (by Western standards), do not get frustrated by that, try to appreciate the different pace of the culture.	Not expecting my “American” standards to be valued. Having the capability to identify a different cultural value and respect it, even if it is not in alignment with your own.
(2)	Having a "set idea" about what the trip should look like. Making judgments either on the host culture or on their home culture.	Taking the time to understand the mindset of the people you are working with and respecting them for who they are.
(3)	Being sick	Respect the host culture
(7)	I don't have an experience where someone didn't enjoy the trip, but I would assume: Unrealistic expectations, unrealistic goals, unfortunate events (theft, sickness, etc)	Respecting and embracing a culture. One who is culturally sensitive considers the cultural connotations and meanings behind their actions, and adjusting their actions to help them achieve goals, build relationships, and pursue a mutually beneficial goal. (missional perspective)

(9)	Unreasonable or unwarranted expectations. Things in life rarely go according to plan, and things in Africa? Double it.	Talking to members of a particular culture and shooting for understanding, if not total adoption or agreement. There are going to be situations with which I will never be truly comfortable (corporal punishment of high schoolers, for example). However, I understand that this form of discipline is common and expected, and that is truly intended as discipline, not as a power trip and, therefore, I'll simply remove myself from an area where it's happening. On the other hand, if I visited a country where women are killed for being "disrespectful," I'm not going to have the same understanding nature.
(12)	Unrealistic expectations and fear of the unknown.	Valuing, respecting and being patient with other cultures as much as our own - no matter how different.
(13)	The most important is a lack of patience and flexibility. If a person isn't patient and flexible, he won't be happy, nor will anyone in his group be happy.	Common courtesy. When you enter the home of a friend, you go by the friend's rules and preferences. You're a guest, not royalty. You take your shoes off before trampling on the carpet, if that's what is the norm at your friend's home. It's the same when entering a different culture or country.
(14)	Flexibility. Having expectations of things that you want to achieve. Short term missions don't get to see the results of their work much of the time.	"When in Rome, do as the Romans do". To me, it means setting aside your preconceived ideas, doing research to know what their cultural norms are and acting accordingly. Dress code is a major thing for females.
(15)	Unrealistic expectations as to conditions such as cleanliness, sanitation, modern conveniences, et.	Being respectful of the integrity of the native community . . . Embracing their point of view as being meritorious.
(16)	Without proper research into the culture and geographic aspects, one would be overwhelmed by the differences between our countries; it could cause too much anxiety and possible danger	Being culturally sensitive means respecting the people of the country you are visiting. This would include acting and dressing in a manner not offensive to the natives.

(17)	High expectations of things happening a certain way.	You are the visitor, in their world, be more involved in a learning mode rather than a teaching mode, flaunting your abilities or knowledge may not be needed.
(18)	Preconceived expectations. Allowing fear/anxiety to outweigh the adventure.	It means entering another culture with a “learner’s heart.” It also mean respecting the people and their culture.
(20)	In my experience, I think the main reason a person does not enjoy their trip is because they fail to engage and try to experience the culture. If people sit in their rooms and do not interact with the culture, they will not have a good experience. Another thing that causes a person not to enjoy his/her trip is broken expectations. Be aware of what you think you are going to do but also realize that things will be very different from what you expect so expect the unexpected.	Being culturally sensitive means to understand why people of other cultures respond and perceive their environment in the way they do. After I understand, I must then change my behavior in a way that correlates with how they respond to and perceive their environment. For example, as I stated before, in Kenya, guests are given the best seats in the house. To be culturally sensitive, one must understand that Kenyans respond to guests in the house by giving them the best seats. Then the culturally sensitive person acts on this by changing their behavior to accept the seat even though that person may not have accepted the seat in their home culture.
(25)	If people aren't able to embrace the culture and instead try to impose Western culture on the people, they will be discouraged and feel that they were not of use to the people. Also, if they don't do the research before hand and don't know the customs and parts of the language that would be helpful.	It means embracing the culture and following the practices that the culture you are now a part of follow. This includes not imposing Western beliefs on the people, but instead trying to learn as much as possible about their culture while in the country.
(28)	Being too uptight, getting trapped in overly negative thinking, expecting things to be like they are where they come from, getting overly bent out of shape by bargaining or feeling overcharged for things, being too rushed and being unwilling to change plans or expectations.	To observe, be polite and respectful, remember your economic and social position in different situations, respect local customs to whatever degree possible and have a sense of humor about yourself.

(29)	Judgment of others and their culture, and our assumptions of convenience. We have it sooo good in the US, and we often take for granted that everywhere else in the world is like the US.	Appreciating the culture, the customs, life styles and ways of life and not trying to enforce our values upon them---careful not to boast about, “in my country, we do this....” Listening is so important and acknowledging who they are as a person and culture...let them know you appreciate who they are regardless of what they have or do not have.
(30)	Lack of communication. Lack of access to phone home. Lack of internet connection.	If you're willing to learn, open your eyes and ears, and ask good questions of your international friend, you'll learn much about his or her culture, and gain new insight into your own culture as well. The many areas where cultures are quite different will give you opportunities for conversation as you share with each other about the differences, and also will give you opportunities to show practical love as you serve.
(31)	Sickness Intolerant Expecting similar accommodations as in America	Listening Respecting customs Attending local events, churches, gatherings, etc. Being polite
(32)	Unrealistic expectations, illness	If we look for similarities, we will find them and be amazed/impressed. If we look for differences, they can overwhelm us.
(33)	-not being prepared. -not having an agenda or work program in advance -not having contacts established in advance -being isolated or without activity/purpose -getting ill or experiencing digestive track issues	-not sure. -probably means not arguing about their beliefs, particularly religious. -not criticizing their government -showing interest in their culture and how things function -don't lecture or be critical. It is their country. You are a guest.
(34)	Lack of commitment before you go to doing the physical and emotional work of getting ready. Lack of desire to serve and an inability to ignore discomfort, heat, etc.	It means being aware of your surroundings and adapting your habits to fit the community, culture you find yourself in

Code	What do you have to say to people about being culturally considerate?	What qualities do you see in a person that really enjoys their trip?
(1)	It's vital for any sort of meaningful interaction with someone of a different culture. Being able to function successfully in differing cultures is a skill that takes practice, is never completed, and if done with an open mind can lead to some rewarding experiences. Not being culturally sensitive is how Americans got their bad reputation abroad, it leads to a negative experience for all involved.	Easy going, this seems to be key and consistent across the various cultures I have interacted with. There is value in sharing your culture with those around you, but being able to adjust, and adapt is so, so helpful in enjoying a trip. I think this is also true of everyday life at home too.
(2)	TRY! As much as possible look at your actions through their filter.	A heart for God and truly caring about what happens to His people. Flexibility! A positive attitude. Trying to squeeze "the most" out of the opportunity.
(3)	A lot! Don't be over sensitive; just be aware that things will be different	Verbal, sure of oneself, team player
(7)	If one travels to Africa with arrogance and does not consider the culture that they are visiting, they will create poor experiences for themselves that the people they interact with.	Humility, curiosity, compassion, one who reaches out and attempts to build relationships.
(9)	You're not in America. Know that, understand it, and talk to your hosts or guides as often and as respectfully as possible in an attempt to become more familiar with the culture.	Flexibility, openness, and curiosity, along with a good ol' -fashioned spirit of adventure.
(12)	See previous answers.	Open-mindedness, compassion, proper travel planning concerning the logistics of transportation and lodging, patience (because most places in the world are not as convenient or "drive-thru" as the US), and wonder.

(13)	Treat others as you would want to be treated. When a visitor from another country comes to the USA, we would like them to be considerate of the laws ... and generally go by expected behavior, including a certain respect of how things are 'run'. To me, being culturally considerate is to show the same courtesy and respect I would want a visitor to show.	Flexibility, patience, sense of humor... putting others first, or at least the well-being of the group first. A person who remembers that when away from my home, and comforts, and when traveling, I get tired and am not myself. And my traveling companions may get the same way... so let's cut each other slack, forgive and forget, and do what's best for the group. I think THAT person really enjoys the trip. A person who enjoys their trip is one who looks at the travel as a chance to learn about other people, cultures, places. And in those experiences, there may be things that are different (not better, not worse, just different). How cool to experience those things.
(14)	All cultures have their set of norms and in order to be Christ-like, we must be completely humble and be considerate to their norms. That means doing your research before you go and implementing those into your behavior. If you come and over-step cultural boundaries and offend the people you are trying to share Christ with, you will have a hard time being a witness.	A genuine love for the people, humility, selflessness, one who is a giver! One who understands that it is God's job to bring people to Himself and the success of a trip is not measured on converts or how many times you were able to share the gospel message.
(15)	Place importance on dropping western ethnocentric and egocentric inclinations.	Attitudes of gratefulness and servant-hood as opposed to self-serving
(16)	You are a visitor, allowed to enter their country by their permission and should therefore treat them with respect as stated above- this is a privilege not a RIGHT	Someone who is open to new experiences, willing to interact with the locals and explore their surroundings and someone who has adequately prepared for their trip.
(17)	Our way of day to day life may be different, it may not be better.	Adventuresome heart, willing to try something new, listen and learn about their lives and experiences.

(18)	In a foreign culture, we may see things that seem wrong, or at least inadequately done....but we need to remember that we could not possibly understand all the nuances of their culture. It is out place to observe, take part and enjoy what their culture offers. It is not our place to try to “make things better” or judge. Be a learner...and remember that they have much to offer to you.	Willingness to step out of comfort zone. Flexible. Humble...willing to learn from others.
(20)	Learn the customs of the people and try to adopt them as best you can. Use the national language if you know it. Wear the clothes. Take food and drinks that are offered to you.	Non-judgmental. Willing to go with the flow. Loves people. Thinks about the person first and the task second. Makes life fun. Willing to do things that need to be done even though they might be inadequate- pray for someone, share their testimony, etc.
(25)	Just that it is very important to practice culturally consideration and I think it can make or break a trip to Africa - for both the nationals and for the visitors.	Flexible, caring, compassionate, willingness to work hard, desire to serve - not necessarily to lead and a sense of adventure.
(28)	Don't take yourself too seriously, remember you are a visitor and try to interact with people.	Open-minded, able to laugh and appreciate the small things that make each place unique and interesting.
(29)	Appreciate others, recognize their value, and stay out of judgment.	They are eager to meet the people, visit and stay with them, see them as friends of the world (global awareness), is willing to be flexible about places to stay, food, and lodging, and simply enjoys the experience.
(30)	Helping, listening, learning without bias!	Open minded, enthusiastic, loving, excited to learn
(31)	Balancing our understanding of what to do/not do while engaging/practicing/inquiring/and politely making mistakes	Home stays Being curious/learning/pitching in Doing what local people do
(32)	It starts at home.	Life-changing Flexible Ability to consider more than one answer to a problem.

(33)	Don't be loud or brash. If you aren't sure, ask. Smiles will get you farther than frowns.	- A person who appears at ease even if it is a new situation. Able to join in. A person who asks questions. A person who is engaged. A person who is not intimidated by new situations or ambiguity. A person who can get out and around and see sites of interest and talk to people (translator may help).
(34)	This is so important. In most parts of Africa, you will stand out just by the color of your skin or by your clothing. You are being watched always. So to know the local culture and to conform to it in whatever way you can will be positive for relationships.	Someone who has prepared, is committed to serving. And is not committed to their own comfort, experience.

Code	Rank the top three qualities you would like to see in a person volunteering with a humanitarian project	General Comments
(1)	Humility Flexibility Responsibility	Embrace the experience. Take memories home with you, more than physical souvenirs. Respect the people you work with, do not exploit them. Tell people back home about your experience. Allow it to change you and change the people around you. Don't lose sight of your goal, hopefully that is to help/serve others. Do all of this while not losing yourself either. Incorporate meaningful rituals or daily habits from your experience into your daily life back home. Take the privilege we have as Americans to make a difference, in what you say, what you buy, voting on policy, etc.
(2)	Humility Flexibility Strength	Be honest about your motivation. If you understand all that is going on inside of you, you will be free to truly serve and love people. Make sure you are talking to God a lot!
(3)	Flexibility Patience Humility	Have a good/positive attitude Be aware of cultural differences and have fun working alongside nationals in the work assigned
(7)	Patience Humility Responsibility	
(9)	Flexibility Patience Humility	
(12)	Flexibility Work Ethic Humility	Take lots of pictures and keep a travel journal – the memories will be richer when you return home if you have these reminders – we think we're going to remember everything because it's so impactful, but we don't. Also, rather than buy a bunch of small commonplace trinkets, spend the same amount on something larger and special for yourself. Get small things for others...

(13)	<p>1. Patience 2. Flexibility 3. Responsibility 3.5 Humility 3.5 Work Ethic 4. Strength 4. Creativity</p> <p>In ranking these, I must add that it doesn't do a lick of good to have patience without responsibility, or to be flexible without humility. Physical strength is great at the airport for lugging around suitcases, but a patient, flexible person is a better fit in a group. That being said, I wouldn't want to travel with an irresponsible person, nor a prima-dona (non-humble). Nor would a lazy (no work ethic) team member fit well. Just to label 'patience' and 'flexibility' as #1 and #2 is deceiving, if that's all ya get in a team member.</p>	<p>It's important to know that, once you travel to a different country, you do not come back the same person. You've experienced things that cannot be replicated. Your heart has been scarred (hopefully) and will never heal. It's like the difference between mild cheddar and sharp cheddar cheese. You were once a mild cheddar, but the trip has 'aged' you ... changed you somehow into a sharp cheese. You're still cheddar cheese, and most people won't notice anything different about you. But you've changed. And the really weird thing is, you come home and can't really put a finger on what happened to you. You can't explain, but you know you aren't like the mild cheeses that you used to hang out with. The bad thing is, most of your mild cheese friends don't really care about your change... they just want you to be a regular mild cheese again. Sure, they'll look at your photos, listen to your stories, but they don't understand. The only ones that understand are your fellow cheddar team members.</p>
(14)	<p>Flexibility Patience Humility</p>	<p>I think as Americans we often believe our ways are superior and we want to go in and show them how to do things. In my opinion, it is imperative to let that go of that superiority and pride and come along side what God is doing there. Ask God to help you to be completely humble.</p>
(15)	<p>Flexibility Humility Patience</p>	<p>I find it interesting that the book "Three Cups of Tea" is now required reading for our military, CIA and state department representatives in foreign lands. The effort to avoid the "Ugly American" imagery by making clear our esteem for native peoples, respect for their wisdom and solicitation of their guidance in achieving priorities of their community; values them as coequals. This approach is more motivated by making friends than making points.</p>

(16)	Humility Responsibility Flexibility Work Ethic Strength Patience Creativity	Don't be naive-as an American you are a target for thieves, beggars, etc. A strange aspect about being in Kenya was the sense of "reverse discrimination"... because we were white and American we were treated like royalty- very humbling and a bit uncomfortable
(17)	Flexibility Work Ethic Patience	
(18)	Flexibility Work Ethic Humility	
(20)	Flexibility Humility Responsibility	x
(25)	Flexibility Patience Humility	
(28)	Humility Flexibility Creativity	Try not to over-generalize about people, places and experiences.
(29)	Flexibility Work Ethic Responsibility	listening and being a clear communicator should be added to your list above.
(30)	Flexibility Patience Humility	
(31)	Flexibility Patience Humility I'm reminded of our success in Malawi; e.g. we'd request a vehicle and it may/may not arrive for departure, but I'd never comment (complain)- just wait until it eventually arrived. What I know is that decisions about vehicles are nearly always beyond the control of local colleagues. Americans often express exasperation or complain-not appropriate. Rather, flexibility, patience, humility are appropriate.	Clues on reverse discrimination Clues on culture shock when returning home Youtube clips as examples Clues on working/visiting in Muslim or mixed Muslim culture Women often eat after men; white women (guest) often eat w/ men
(32)	Flexibility Creativity Responsibility	

(33)	Flexibility Patience Humility	In short visits, you can only do so much. Don't expect to get a lot done or everything on your list. Be satisfied with incremental progress. Build relationships for future visits by yourself or other team members. Don't push too hard. Try to find out the expectations of those you are assisting and then work on items that may meet their expectations.
(34)	Flexibility Patience Humility	