Important Names & Addresses

The Learning Abroad Center provides a full range of services from preliminary program advising to assistance with re-entry. Do not hesitate to contact any of the Learning Abroad Center staff with your questions. Prior to departure, please direct all questions to the Learning Abroad Center. Friends and family members should always contact the Learning Abroad Center, not the on-site staff, for assistance, even once you are overseas.

In the United States:
Learning Abroad Center
University of Minnesota
230 Heller Hall
271 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0430
Phone: 612.626.9000
Fax: 612.626.8009
Toll Free: 888.700.UOFM
Email: UMabroad@umn.edu
Web: www.UMabroad.umn.edu

Senegal:
Vanessa Walton, Associate Program Director
vwalton@umn.edu, 612.626.7561
Heidi Soneson, Program Director
sones001@umn.edu, 612.625.2571

Emergencies
In case of a serious emergency, contact the Learning Abroad Center at 612.626.9000. If it is after business hours, a recording will give you a number to call. The Learning Abroad Center has someone on call for emergencies and to contact the on-site administrators if needed. Once overseas, participants should contact their in-country program staff.

In Senegal
Telephone Codes
011 International access code from the US. The code from other countries will be different.
221 Senegal country code used for dialing from outside Senegal

Time Differences
Senegal is six hours ahead of Minnesota during the winter and five hours during the months when the US is on daylight savings time.

Addresses
NOTE: Please direct all pre departure questions to the Learning Abroad Center, not to the on-site staff.

Your Address in Senegal
Until you have your assigned homestays, mail should be sent to you at the address below:

On-Site Office
West African Research Center
BP 5456 Fann Residence
Dakar, Senegal

On-Site Director
Dr. Ousmane Sène
West African Research Center
BP 15635 Dakar-Fann
Dakar, Senegal
Program Emergeny Phone: 011.221.77.610.75.55
Fax: 011.33.824.20.58

On-Site Program Coordinator
Mr. Waly Faye
West African Research Center

US Embassy in Senegal
For information on the local US Embassy in Senegal, please visit the following website: http://usembassy.state.gov/

Web Addresses
Visit this website for useful health, safety, travel, development, and country web links: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/programs/africa/french-senegal.php.

Know Before You Go
Before you leave the country, make sure that you have read and understood the information in your Confirmation Checklist, Online Orientation, and the Learning Abroad Center’s policies (www.UMabroad.umn.edu/policies). These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Friends and Family Resources
Valuable resources for your friends and family members can be found at www.UMabroad.umn.edu/parents. Topics such as health and safety, program prices, logistics, and travel are discussed.
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Program Calendar

**August Language Session**

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<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 5</td>
<td>Official arrival date. Orientation and classroom phase begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Last day of pre-session program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 29</td>
<td>Official departure date.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**January Language Session**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2</td>
<td>Official arrival date. Orientation and classroom phase begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>Last day of pre-session program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>Official departure date.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Purpose of This Guide

This Program Guide provides an overview of your unique study abroad program. It contains information relevant to the program as well as specifics about the country. The Program Guide should be used in tandem with the Learning Abroad Center’s online orientation and website for information regarding registration, credit, payment, refunds, academic policies, health, safety, insurance, and cultural adjustment.

Preparation & Planning

Documents

Passport

A valid passport is required to enter your country and to re-enter the US. You also need a passport in order to receive a visa. For information on applying for a passport see the Learning Abroad Center website: www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/passports.

Visa

The intensive language programs have different visa procedures. Students on the Senegal program must complete an on-line process on the Senegal embassy’s website. Refer to the Learning Abroad Center’s Senegal program website for detailed instructions. Students on the Ecuador program can enter on a tourist visa, which will be issued upon arrival in Ecuador. Students on the India or Kenya programs must utilize Perry International’s visa services described below.

Perry International Visa Services

Participants on the India and Kenya programs must use Perry International, based in Chicago, to process their student visa. Perry’s processing fee is included in your program fee; you only need to submit payment for the actual visa. Since you need special documents from our office, which we send to Perry International for all students, you must use Perry’s services for your visa. You must submit your passport to Perry International in order to receive the student visa. Always send your passport via express mail.

Visa information is located on the Learning Abroad Center’s website. Additional information can be found on Perry International’s website at www.perrynvisa.com.

From Perry International’s website:
- click on “Visas”
- select your country
- select ‘MSID’ as your account
- print the student visa packet

Read the instructions carefully and return all requested forms and payment directly to Perry International. If you travel abroad on the wrong visa, you will be responsible for returning immediately to the US to correct your visa.

Applying for a visa can be a lengthy process. Do not delay in visiting Perry’s website to inform yourself about the visa process and begin the paperwork for your country.

If you are planning to arrive early or travel after the program, inquire with Perry International regarding any visa restrictions.

In-Country Process

Once in country, your on-site staff will give you advice about keeping your passport and visa secure. In some countries, you can carry a photocopy of the relevant pages and keep the documents themselves locked up. When you do need to carry your passport, always keep it in a money belt.

Your passport and visa are valuable documents. Do not lose them. You cannot leave your host country without them. It is always wise to have a copy of your passport and visa in a separate location and one copy at home in case your passport is lost or stolen. The process of replacing a passport is much easier if you have a copy of it. If your passport is lost or stolen, you should notify your local staff, the local police, and the US Consulate.

Travel & Visits

You are encouraged to travel during official program break periods, over holidays, or after the program is completed. During the program, travel on the weekends should be limited to nearby locations in order to ensure that you are able to maintain good rest, health, and timely completion of all coursework. Students are not permitted to travel during the program to countries currently under a US State Department Travel Warning. See http://travel.state.gov/ for the most up-to-date list. It also compromises the host family experience if you are away every weekend. Before traveling, complete the correct permission form with on-site staff and be aware of any relevant travel concerns or State Department advisories. It is important that you share with the on-site staff your travel plans, including dates, destinations, and information about how to reach you in case an emergency should arise.

If any friends or relatives wish to visit, they can only visit during official program breaks, not while classes are in session. Visits at other times interfere with your ability to focus on the program and host culture and are not allowed.

Packing

Packing is highly individual, and no single list will work for everyone. A packing list is provided in the county-specific section of this guide. The following considerations can help you pack wisely.
Packing Principles

Think about laundry. Lighter colors help you stay cool, but darker colors show dirt less; you might wish to strike a happy medium if you expect to be in hot areas. Stress lightweight fabrics that can be easily hand-washed, can hold up to repeated washing, and do not need ironing. A key question for choosing clothes: How long does it take to air dry?

Plan to be presentable. People dress nicely every day in all four countries, especially in the cities, and local students often dress well, as they are proud to be among the elite group attending university. Clean, fairly conservative western office-type apparel is appropriate. Include one or two dressy outfits for evening outings, for which people tend to dress up. Pack clothing that is relatively new, both to be sure it lasts through your time overseas and because you will feel uncomfortably out of place if you wear ripped, baggy, or faded clothes.

Be conservative. Some clothing that is common on a US campus would be considered provocative. If you wish to pack a running outfit, choose athletic pants or shorts that extend to the knee. Do not plan on using shorts except when you go to the beach. If you use tank tops, choose modest ones. Women tend to wear skirts in rural areas, and although you may wear pants without offending, in some rural settings you may look out of place.

Choose your luggage wisely. Most students prefer backpacks to suitcases. Buy a high quality backpack/daypack. Can your smaller backpack/suitcase nest inside a larger one? Will your carry-on double for weekend travel?

Anticipate possible delays (or even losses) in checked baggage when packing your carry-on. Pack in your carry-on anything that you would need during your first two or three days in country, including prescription drugs, as well as small items that are fragile, irreplaceable, or of significant monetary value. Do not take scissors, knives, etc., in your carry-on.

Remember you can buy things in country. You can purchase clothing in country, although you will not have time to devote to shopping for new items. If you have a strong brand preference, ask a returnee whether your brand is available in your country. Very tall students might find it hard to purchase clothing that is relatively new, both to be sure it lasts through your time overseas and because you will feel uncomfortably out of place if you wear ripped, baggy, or faded clothes.

You will find many clothing items to be cheaper in country than in the US. However, other products, such as batteries, personal hygiene, feminine products, etc. are often more expensive in these countries and not always readily available.

Don’t take the kitchen sink. The most consistent hindsight of returned students is “I took too much.” Be selective. No one will need all the things on the packing checklist in the Appendix. Decide what, and how much, is really essential to you. Try to get by with one large backpack and a carry-on. Many savvy travelers recommend that you pack once, try walking around the block with all your stuff, and then begin eliminating things until you can do it comfortably.

A Note on Electricity

In all four countries the supply of electricity tends to be erratic, with frequent blackouts and occasional power surges. You will need a good surge protector if you are taking a laptop computer or any other sensitive items, and if you are using a computer you should save documents frequently.

Electricity is very expensive Host families may want students to limit their use of electronic appliances in the home.

Health & Safety

Health

The website of the Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov/travel, provides extensive information and advice on immunizations and on staying healthy in your country. Keep in mind that it is illegal to ship medication overseas, and any packages that are held at customs abroad will require payment of a high import tax before they are released. Bring all necessary medication (including such items as birth control) with you to your study abroad site.

Medical facilities and health conditions are significantly less advanced than in the US. It is important that you inform yourself prior to departure what precautions to take while living abroad.

Long before travel, consult with a health provider specializing in travel medicine; most general practitioners lack the requisite knowledge. Do this as early as possible, for some immunization series begin many months before departure.

Following consultation with a travel health specialist, you will need a number of immunizations. Ensure that these are recorded in your international immunization record, a yellow card that you should keep with your passport.

The program headquarter cities have good doctors and medical facilities, and care may be quite satisfactory in some other major cities as well. Only rudimentary levels of care, at best, tend to be available in villages and small towns.

A Few Additional Tips

• Avoid eating in restaurants with poor hygiene or buying food from street vendors. Assure yourself that food is well cooked. Avoid uncooked fruits or vegetables unless you can peel them yourself.
• Wash your hands frequently.
• Tap water is not recommended. Drink boiled or bottled water (either carbonated or non-carbonated). Soft drinks are usually okay, but beware of juices that may be diluted with water.
• Ice is as unsafe as water. Never add it to drinks unless it has been made from boiled or bottled water.
• Take your own medications with you.
• If you travel to high altitudes, avoid intense exercise until you have adapted. Drink lots of liquids and eat lots of
carbohydrates. Monitor any symptoms of altitude sickness, which can include headaches and nausea.

- It is strongly recommended students bring a water purification filter.

**Malaria Prevention**

Malaria is a very serious illness. Your travel health specialist will recommend that you take a prophylactic (preventive) drug for malaria, possibly beginning before you are scheduled to arrive in country. Different medications are required for different countries so seek medical consultation. It is essential that you purchase and take the necessary medication. Without medication you will become very ill very quickly and may need hospitalization. While the medication cannot prevent you from contracting malaria, it significantly reduces the symptoms, allows you time to seek medical attention at a clinic in country, and facilitates a speedy recovery.

Speak with your US health care specialist about possible side effects and alternative anti-malarials if a change needs to be made overseas. Not all overseas physicians are aware of the different types of medications available so inform yourself before you leave. Should you experience side effects once overseas, speak with the on-site staff about possible alternative medications.

Students in the past have inquired about purchasing medication in country against malaria. In order to be protected, you must take the medication prior to your departure. Exposure to malaria-carrying mosquitoes could occur as soon as you arrive in country, and it is difficult to arrange clinic visits immediately upon arrival. Clinic visits are quite time-consuming, and medication in country can be unreliable. If you determine that your country-specific conditions require medication, purchase and take your medication while in the US.

Insect repellent with at least 21% DEET will additionally help ward against malaria-carrying mosquitoes. A new product, Ultrathon, manufactured by 3M contains 30% DEET and has been recommended by health professionals.

You should use insect repellent both during the day and especially at dusk and in the evenings. Mosquitoes carrying dengue fever are active in the day, and malaria-carrying mosquitoes are active at night.

**Medication Overseas**

Keep in mind that medication should not be shipped overseas and will likely be confiscated at customs. Students should bring any medication with them for the duration of their time abroad. CISI insurance can also assist in determining whether and how medication can be transported to another country, if necessary. Some medication and dosages that are legal in the US may not be available overseas.

**Rabies Vaccination**

Rabies vaccination is recommended but not required prior to departure. Although it is highly unlikely that you will encounter an infected animal, it is an added precaution to be protected prior to your arrival in country and will simplify medical treatment in country.

**On-Site Safety**

On-site staff receive all new or revised State Department travel advisories. The office in Minnesota forwards relevant bulletins to the in-country staff, who share them with students. Read them carefully. The most recent travel information for every country of the world is also posted at: [http://travel.state.gov/](http://travel.state.gov/). The on-site staff also keep in touch with the US Consulate in times of political unrest or natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.

Be certain to keep electronics, such as cell phones and laptops, hidden in public to avoid theft.

**Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault**

Do not tolerate behavior that feels threatening or disrespectful staff or faculty members, or homestay family members. When in any doubt, consult with an on-site staff or faculty member with whom you feel comfortable. Report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault to on-site staff immediately.

**Health Insurance**

All students enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have US health insurance. This includes students registered for education abroad. For more details and specific process information for students with University of Minnesota Student Health Insurance through the Student Health Benefits Office, visit the Learning Abroad Center’s US Insurance webpage: [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement).

In addition to your US health insurance, the University has contracted with Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) to provide comprehensive international travel, health, and security insurance. This coverage is mandatory for all students and included in the program fee. You are covered by CISI only for the dates of the program. If you plan to travel before or after your program you should extend your CISI coverage or purchase your own insurance.

CISI does not include any preventative case, and individuals are advised to consult their medical providers for any check-ups or preventative care prior to departure.

Your CISI card and insurance policy will be emailed directly to you. Carry the card with you at all times. If you have any questions or need additional information about CISI, visit the Learning Abroad Center’s insurance webpage: [www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance).

**Coordinated Flight**

Participants will receive flight information and booking instructions from Village Travel which handles flight
arrangements for the Learning Abroad Center. Students from the Twin Cities area fly in a group; students from elsewhere join that group in either a US or a European hub. Coordinated flight information will be available in mid-October for winter-break and in late April for summer. Visit Village Travel’s website at: www.villageinc.com. If you elect not to take the coordinated flight, you must arrive within six hours prior to the coordinated flight.

Always bring a copy of you itinerary and your electronic ticket number (NOT your confirmation number) with you. Some airlines and ticketing agents outside of the US will require you to show this at the airport check in.

If for any reason you choose not to book your flights through Village Travel, you must provide the Learning Abroad Center with a copy of your itinerary.

Staying after the Program

If you intend to stay after the program ends, you are responsible for your own housing and your transportation to the airport when you depart. It is not acceptable to remain in your homestay after the program, unless the on-site staff authorizes it. In all cases, you must pay for any lodging after the program ends.

For students departing on the official coordinated flight on the program end date, the on-site staff will arrange transportation to the airport for you.

Practical & Program Information

Housing Considerations

Homestays are an integral component of the learning experience. All students live and share most meals with one family. Do not ask to live independently.

Students take at least breakfast and the evening meal with their host families, and all three meals on weekends. Often distances preclude returning for the noon meal during the week. Although you generally will be expected to eat the same food as your family, we do ask the families to accommodate the dietary needs of students who have food allergies or are uncompromising vegetarians. Many students who are vegetarians in the US decide instead to relax their standards during their experience in order to minimize the inconvenience to non-vegetarian host families.

Students report that the homestays are among the richest and most challenging dimensions of the program. You will find that a tremendous amount of your language and cultural learning takes place while you are at home. Students constantly bring insights gained from their families into the academic program, and, similarly, the classroom learning helps provide tools for a successful homestay. students are placed with a variety of families in terms of family size, profession, ethnic background, etc. Not only do students speak in class about the differences among their families, but they also drop in on fellow students in their homes. Think of each visit as an important learning experience.

The stipend paid by the program to the host families is only a token gesture of appreciation for the time and expense of hosting you. The money in no way covers the cost of hosting a student nor compensates for the adjustment the family agrees to undertake in order to incorporate a student into their family.

Consult the country-specific section in this handbook for more detailed information on housing in your country.

Homestay Placement Process

The in-country staff strives to match students with families that meet as many of the characteristics as possible that students have requested on their forms. It is often not possible to find a family that meets all the criteria a student has listed.

You will receive basic information about your homestay family (name and address) approximately one week prior to the program start date, and we will send the information to your University of Minnesota email account. Last-minute changes occasionally occur.

Since you may not know much about your host family prior to departure, we encourage you to bring a range of generic gifts to give as gifts. Past students have recommended coffee table books from your home town/state, a board game, t-shirts, calendars, magnets, keychains and sweets such as jelly beans.

The in-country administrative staff will outline for you and the family your respective rights and responsibilities in the homestay. The family is told that for the most part your presence should not lead them to change their customs, operating rules, or food.

Tips for a Successful Homestay

The in-country staff seek families eager to incorporate US students into their lives. Host families are generally warm and welcoming and will want their students to participate in social events with friends and extended family. When you are placed with a family, you will probably get more than the family itself. You will get a wide range of friends, not to mention information, coaching, advice, and endless opportunities to practice your language skills. If you and the family are both willing to throw yourselves into making the experience a rich one, you are likely to look back on your homestay as a highlight of your time abroad.
A successful homestay requires consideration and cultural sensitivity. At times your cross-cultural skills and insights will be stretched to the limit. The country-specific section of this guide includes information and advice concerning homestays for your country. The in-country staff will supplement this with initial support and ongoing coaching to create a smooth linkage between students and their families. Staff are always available to assist and sort out cultural adjustment problems as they arise.

In most countries, the notion of private space and time is not as common as in the US. Spend plenty of time with your host family and do not seclude yourself in your room. This is often viewed as rude and may cause your host family to wonder if you are sick or unhappy.

You will find your homestay parents and siblings very concerned for your well-being. They will be good sources of information and advice about negotiating the transportation system, safety precautions, etc. At the same time, their concern might occasionally seem to border on over-protectiveness, especially if you are a woman. Understand that the family is not trying to control you but to fulfill its inescapable responsibilities for the welfare of its US daughter or son.

In most cases, your family will do your laundry. Since dryers are infrequent, have sufficient undergarments for the delay in receiving your items back. Keep in mind that you should rinse and clean any underwear that is soiled, as this is considered a very private matter.

Host families may not have internet access. Be aware the cost of electricity and internet use in homes can be very high. You may be asked by your host family to pay a fee for your internet use, and you should consult with the on-site staff about correct cultural protocol.

When you leave the house, it is important to let the family know where you expect to be and approximately what time you plan to return. Never stay overnight elsewhere without first notifying your family.

In case of minor illnesses, your family will help you seek medical attention. In the case of more serious problems, you and your family are expected to notify the administrative staff immediately in order to coordinate the best possible treatment.

Most families are conservative about relations between men and women. You are not allowed to have overnight guests of the opposite sex or to receive visitors in a closed bedroom.

Be judicious in your use of alcohol. Your host family and work colleagues will disapprove of substance abuse, and drunkenness could irreparably damage your relations with people who are important to you.

It is important not to abuse hospitality. Remember to ask the family for permission to bring friends, and be ready to cover extra expenses when inviting them.

Keep your room very neat and tidy and be respectful of the common spaces in the house. Since you are a guest in the home, your bedroom should be kept in a manner that shows your respect and appreciation. In most countries, the notion of personal and private space does not exist in the same manner as in the US, and your room in your host family is not the same as having your own room in the US. Do not leave your clothes strewn on the floor or leave personal belongings around the house. Do not put your shoes on furniture, including your own bed. Unfortunately, US students are often viewed as messy and disrespectful. Do your part to correct this image. Keep in mind that personal hygiene is also very important. You are a guest in their home and should present yourself with respect and cleanliness.

If you have questions about your homestay experience, speak to the on-site staff. As in the US, it is not acceptable for you to be asked, for example, to assist with caring for a host family member on a daily basis, be exposed to drunken or rude behavior, or tolerate any sexual advances. Although it is extremely rare for a host family experience to involve any of these, speak to the on-site staff if you have any concerns.

Before you go abroad it may be difficult to imagine the depth of the bonds that can develop between you and your host families. There is a special magic to friendships that cross deep cultural boundaries, and you may find the relationship with your family to be quite unlike other relationships you have experienced.

Farewells at the airport are often tear-filled on both sides. As your life becomes filled with the US hectic pace following your return, however, it can be all too easy not to take the time to keep in touch. An occasional letter, postcard, or email from you means a great deal to a family for whom you are as unforgettable as they for you. We ask you to take a few moments to write from time to time. Keep in mind, however, that host families should not be expected to host you after your experience or on future visits you may make to the host country.

Diversity & Host Country

Race & Ethnicity

Race can influence students’ perspectives on their host country. Past participants of color tell us that the differences between their experiences and those of Euro-Americans can include both advantages and disadvantages. Students of color often learn a great deal about their identity as a US citizen through an experience in a foreign country, and they sometimes find the new cultural context quite liberating. On the other hand, they occasionally encounter new forms of prejudice and discrimination. It is important that participants of all races avoid projecting American assumptions and attitudes about race onto the host culture. For example, definitions of racial categories, if they exist at all, may be very different from those in the US.
It is difficult to generalize about the overt and covert levels of racism that may or may not exist in any given culture, or to predict what a particular student’s personal experience will be. It can be said that any experience abroad will be a combination of circumstances, attitude, and coping skills. Some study abroad offices have put together resources for students of color who are preparing to study abroad. You should contact your own study abroad office or a member of the staff for additional information.

Students going to a location related to their ethnic heritage—for example, an African-American student to Kenya—might wish to examine critically their expectations in advance. If part of your reason for enrolling in this program is to explore your own identity, be careful not to romanticize what you might find. Students often discover that local people perceive them much more in terms of their American identity than their racial or ethnic background. You may gain rich insights into your roots, but do not expect members of the host society to treat you as a returning brother or sister.

**Gender**

Gender roles tend to be more rigidly defined in these countries, especially in rural areas, than they are today in the US. You may find that people respond quite differently to you depending on whether you are male or female. You may also observe a strongly gender-based division of labor in your homestay family or your agency. This sometimes challenges students’ cross-cultural understanding and skills. As in other areas, try to understand what is going on rather than to judge. It is all right to gently test the limits of gender roles—for example, if you are male to see what happens when you offer a couple of times to help with the dishes in your homestay, or if you are female to try to be more assertive than you observe among female colleagues in your agency—and be sensitive to the feedback you receive. Above all, resist any temptation to launch a one-person crusade to change things. For example, even if you feel that your homestay mother and sisters are “oppressed,” you will not be able to “liberate” them, and any attempt to do so could irreparably harm your relations with your family.

Many women experience “cat calls” and other forms of gender harassment while overseas. Be prepared in advance for this possibility and consider the following coping strategies: look straight ahead and keep walking; walk with a purpose and do not appear to be wandering without aim, walk quickly and with confidence; say “no” or “no, thank you” with conviction; consider wearing local attire to help you blend in (shaws, head scarves, etc. can reduce the possibility of intruders catching your eye and attention); develop a tough skin and do not take the matter personally; avoid walking alone or at night.

Cultural norms concerning relations between men and women, including dating, vary considerably among countries, and even from one region to another or between rural and urban settings. This topic will be included in your in-country orientation. When in doubt concerning what behavior is acceptable, consult with a trusted on-site staff or faculty member.

**Sexual Orientation**

Attitudes towards sexuality are very traditional. People are generally intolerant of different sexual preferences, and strict taboos and laws against such relationships exist. We encourage you to find out how different sexual preferences are viewed overseas and where your support may exist, so that your time overseas can be as enriching as possible. Consult with the Learning Abroad Center staff for more information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues if you have any questions.

For additional resources, you can contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at www.diversity.umn.edu.

**Disabilities**

In-country staff are more than willing to help locate personal assistance or arrange testing accommodations as needed, so long as they learn early enough of your needs. The level of physical accessibility varies from country to country. For example, wheelchair-accessible transportation or elevators may be non-existent in some sites. On the other hand, local people tend to be very supportive and will often assist you in gaining access to public transportation or buildings. It is important to consider your comfort level in asking for access assistance while abroad. For more information on access and available accommodations, contact the Learning Abroad Center.

**Diversity among Participants**

Whatever your own sexual orientation, gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or physical ability, keep in mind that you will be part of a diverse group. Some differences will be obvious or made known to you, others will not. Sensitivity to diversity within your own group will further enrich your experience abroad. Some of your most powerful learning experiences may revolve around differences within your group. Participants also come from extremely varied academic backgrounds. Majors range from the social sciences or humanities to fields such as engineering, business, or agriculture. All students are strong in some dimensions and weak in others. Be prepared to share your strengths and to draw on those of your classmates.
Academics

Hours of Student Effort
University of Minnesota policy specifies that each semester credit should reflect approximately 12.5 instructional contact hours of 60 minutes and twice that amount for out-of-classroom assignments.

Grades & Credit
All courses must be taken for A/F credit. S/N (pass/fail) registration is not permitted. The University of Minnesota’s A/F grading scale includes grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and F.

All coursework is posted on a University of Minnesota transcript approximately eight weeks after the end of the program. For non-University of Minnesota students, the Learning Abroad Center sends a transcript of work completed on the program to the address the student has specified on the Transcript Release Form. Verify that this address is the correct one. Non-University of Minnesota students can order additional copies for a charge directly from the University of Minnesota’s transcript office at: www.onestop.umn.edu/onestop/grades.html.

Incompletes
Incompletes are not allowed. Rare exceptions can be requested in cases such as serious health problems or family emergencies. These exceptions must be approved in advance by the on-site director.

Academic Rigor
Students will need to learn to function simultaneously in two cultural contexts. Local time as experienced in the village or the family may be more fluid and informal than “classroom time.” It is important to learn to flow with local time; it is equally important to retain enough structure and self-discipline in the academic part of life to avoid getting behind on assignments. Students who fail to attend class without prior permission from the on-site director will be dismissed from the program.

Grade Petitions
If you wish to question a grade issued for a particular course after the program is completed must provide evidence that the professor made an error in his/her grade calculation. The following are not reasonable grounds for grade appeal:
- Differences between US and host country educational systems
- Personal disappointment in the grade outcome
- Comparison with one’s own prior academic record/GPA
- Failure to complete one or more assignments
- Minimum grade requirement of college/department or home university (in the case of non-University of Minnesota participants)
- Health concerns/missed classes
Contact the Learning Abroad Center for a Grade Petition Form if you believe an error has occurred.

Student Grievances
Academic grievances are complaints brought by students regarding the provision of education and academic support services affecting their role as students. For grievances concerning University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center or affiliated programs offered through the Learning Abroad Center, students should make inquiries and appeals to the appropriate University officials, in the following order: the program representative in the Learning Abroad Center, the Director of the Learning Abroad Center, the Student Dispute Resolution Center, and the Office of the General Counsel. For complaints concerning non-University of Minnesota programs, students should make appeals to the program sponsor.

FERPA
It is important to be aware that the Learning Abroad Center and the Office of Student Finance, in compliance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and Regents policy, cannot share financial or academic information with a third party (including parents, spouse, guardians, etc.) without your written permission. You can download a Student Information Release Authorization at onestop.umn.edu. Complete the form and send it to OneStop Student Services, 200 Fraser Hall, 106 Pleasant St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. The Learning Abroad Center must receive a copy of a notarized Power of Attorney form in order to share any program-specific information.
Coming Home

The Re-Entry Experience

The following tend to be among the biggest issues:

- **Poverty and affluence:** Students catch many glimpses of the meaning of real poverty. You will gain a new perspective on resource use as you observe the austerity of most people’s lives in your host country. Everything is used until it is worn out, then re-used by someone else who is still poorer. Your host family may discourage you from showering more than a minute or two per day in order to conserve water, or from reading late at night because of the energy that a light bulb consumes. Things you have always taken for granted may come to seem unimaginable luxuries. Then, when you return home, you may experience a profound sense of resentment at over-consumption and waste in the US. People in the US may seem to have far too much, and their dissatisfaction about still not having enough may seem incomprehensible.

- **US influence:** Living in another country, especially a poorer one, affords many opportunities to observe the economic, political, and cultural roles the US and its corporations play on the global stage. Especially when viewed from the perspective of the poor in your host country, those roles may seem less than constructive. Upon return to the US, you may feel resentful that such issues trouble your friends and family members so much less than you think they should.

- **Ignorance and distortion:** You may find yourself intensely resentful of the US media. Coverage of the rest of the world, when it exists at all, may seem shallow and ethnocentric, and the depths of American ignorance may appall you. Remember, though, that you were probably almost equally ignorant of your future host country a year ago.

- **Social justice:** The inequalities of your host society probably hit you daily throughout your experience. Now, upon return, you will likely be more attuned to see the inequalities in our own society. You will find yourself asking why so rich a country should have the most inequitable distribution of income and wealth anywhere in the industrialized world, and you may find it strange that others here can be so oblivious to injustice.

- **Values and pace:** The experience leads many students to reexamine their own values and lifestyle. Although the slow pace of life in your host society may have been frustrating initially, you finally did learn how to just “be,” rather than always needing to “do.” Now the hectic pace of US life may well feel disconcerting, even offensive. US society may seem obsessed with productivity, leaving little time for cultivating the human relationships you have found central to your host culture. director and the program coordinator maintain frequent email communication with the staff in Minnesota.
The On-Site Experience

What happens when you suddenly lose clues and symbols that orient you to situations in everyday life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are unfamiliar? The psychological discomfort and adjustment period in a foreign country is commonly known as culture shock or cultural adjustment.

You will almost certainly experience some form of culture shock. It might hit you after two days, two weeks or two months—timing varies widely for different people. Six common phases of cultural adjustment are listed below. These may be out of order for you, one phase may last longer than another or you may skip a step entirely.

Initial Fascination: On arrival your surroundings seem glamorous and exotic, you feel like the focus of attention and activity.

Initial Culture Shock: The initial fascination and euphoria fade as you settle in and you enter an emotional decline.

Surface Adjustment: After the initial “down” (a few days to a few weeks for most), you begin to truly adjust and settle into your surroundings. Language skills begin to improve, and you’ll feel less fatigued. Often you’ll be forming a small group of friends at this stage as well.

Feelings of Isolation: Difficulties in your new culture seem to stubbornly remain and you grow frustrated with the process.

Integration/Acceptance: After continued effort you find yourself more at ease with language, friends, professional, and academic interests. The culture you are living in is more easily examined. Differences between yourself and the society you live in become understandable and you come to accept both the situation and yourself in it, allowing you to relax and feel at home.

Return Anxiety: Just when you feel at home in the new country it’s time to go. Thoughts of leaving new friends raise anxiety similar to those felt before departure. You sense that you’ve changed as a person and apprehension grows when you think about people at home that may not understand your new feelings and insights, yet you may feel guilty for wanting to stay.

A sense of isolation sets in. Boredom and a lack of motivation often follow. Unresolved personal issues often surface during this stage.

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When in any of the above phases you may experience: changes in sleeping habits, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, loneliness, depression, unexplainable crying, placing blame for difficulties on the program or host culture, homesickness, getting angry easily, increase in physical ailments or pain, compulsive eating or lack of appetite.

Other symptoms may manifest themselves as well. It is important to understand these are part of a normal process of adjustment, however, if uncomfortable feelings persist for extended periods or seem unbearable, seek assistance from your programs onsite support staff.
Intensive French in Senegal

On-Site Staff
At each site an on-site director and an administrative director or program coordinator work closely as a team to manage the program. There is also a team of support staff to assist your daily life adjustments. Both the on-site director and the program coordinator maintain frequent email communication with the staff in Minnesota.

The staff also have personal lives and should be contacted in the evenings and on weekends only in case of an emergency.

On-Site Director
The On-site Director is Dr. Ousmane Sène. Dr. Sène chaired the Department of English, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, for ten years. He received his Ph.D. in literature from the École Normale Supérieure de St. Cloud and the Université Paris III-Sorbonne. He has taught and done research on francophone and anglophone literature at several North American and European institutions including Michigan State, Oxford, Wofford, Converse, Florida-Gainesville, Loyola-Marymount, Beloit, and Minnesota. Among his special interests is the portrayal of African social, cultural, and development issues through literature. Dr. Sène is currently director of the West African Research Association, the institution housing the program in Senegal. He has been involved with the program in Senegal since 1995.

Program Coordinator
The Program Coordinator is Mr. Waly Faye. Mr. Faye assists with other aspects of administration and has an academic background in development studies.

Excursions & Social Activities
Excursions to locations of cultural interest in and around Dakar are included in the program fee. More information will be shared during your orientation in Dakar.

Schedule and Orientation
August language students will stay at a group hotel for the first night. You will receive a 2-3 day orientation to Senegal and Dakar, the language program, and its staff and faculty. Students will spend approximately 4-5 hours a day in the classroom. Assignments and activities outside of the classroom will also be incorporated.

For students who are staying in Senegal to continue with the MSID Senegal program, you will participate in the MSID orientation with all the other fall semester, spring semester, and/or academic year students. The on-site staff may ask you to facilitate or assist with different parts of orientation.

Facilities
The program is headquartered at the West African Research Center (WARC, or CROA in French). WARC occupies a one-story compound located a few miles from downtown in a well-to-do neighborhood not far from Cheikh Anta Diop University. It includes a seminar-style classroom, offices for the principal program staff, computers, a library, and a food stand where you can purchase a simple lunch to eat under the shade of a large awning in the courtyard. Senegalese employees of nearby businesses often come here to eat as well, and it is a prime space for socializing.

WARC is maintained by the West African Research Association (WARA), a consortium of US universities with research interests in the region, and also receives support from the Senegalese government. Its primary objectives are to foster research collaboration among individuals and institutions from the US and West Africa; to support researchers with a library, computer facilities, and a computer network; to create a transnational community of universities and researchers through an annual exchange scholarship program; to collect, file, and distribute research results; and to promote interdisciplinary approaches and the consideration of gender in research on West Africa and the Diaspora.

Libraries & Study Resources
Most students report that study is difficult at the homestay, where space is often at a premium, socializing is highly valued, and there is little sense of privacy.

Several other places provide good space to study. The WARC library, normally open during regular office hours, has lots of study space and is available for student use. It houses only a very small collection of materials on Africa, however. Senegalese students from the English Department of Cheikh Anta Diop University also use the WARC library.
Probably the most useful research collection in Dakar is CODESRIA, which emphasizes the social sciences; however, its open hours are limited to two afternoons per week. The program fee includes a Cheikh Anta Diop University library card. Materials do not circulate, however, and study space is at a premium.

Many students live a considerable distance from any of these study facilities. You may have to budget at least half an hour in each direction for transportation time.

Computers

There are a limited number of PCs available at WARC for student’s academic use as well as wireless access. Outside Dakar you will probably have little or no computer access, and you may need to do much of your written work by hand; write legibly. Students are encouraged to bring along an inexpensive laptop to use for completing assignments. WARC has wireless access available. Bring an adaptor to plug in your computer and keep in mind that laptops are easily stolen. Keep it well hidden when storing and traveling with it. Never put these kinds of valuables in your checked luggage.

Homestay Families

Senegalese families differ greatly from one another, just as US families do. Among the most important variables are socio-economic level, ethnic background, and rural vs. urban location. Moreover, there are huge individual variations as well. Just as two middle-class Norwegian Lutheran families in Minnesota may contrast radically with each other, so also might two middle-class, Muslim, Wolof-speaking Senegalese families.

Host family locations will be between a 15 and 45-minute walking distance from WARC. Please be prepared to do a lot of walking each day to and from classes.

A good starting point in your attempt to adapt is to understand the family structure as much as possible. Extended families are more prevalent in Senegal, especially in rural areas, than in most industrialized societies, and your family may well include not only your homestay parents and their children but grandparents, aunts and uncles, or other relatives or quasi-relatives. It may even be difficult to determine who comprises the household. You may see some family members drift in and out, perhaps staying for long periods of time and then suddenly disappearing, or perhaps sleeping in your home only on weekdays or only on weekends. Many Dakar families still consider their ancestral town or village to be home, and they may continue to visit it frequently if it is not too far. Indeed, your family may own another home in their place of origin.

Homestay families are diverse. Students learn much about Senegalese society through hearing about each other’s experiences and visiting each other’s homes. The Dakar families range from working class to upper-middle class. At one extreme, a student might have a large home with running water, several bathrooms, a telephone, and a refrigerator. At the other extreme, a home might have a squat toilet that is flushed with a bucket, a single water spigot located outdoors (with no water pressure during much of the day), a bucket for a shower, and unreliable electricity. Rural conditions are often even more simple.

Although an occasional student is placed with a Christian family or a mixed Muslim/Christian family, the great majority of the households are Muslim. More are monogamous than polygamous. A few households are small, but most consist of at least ten people. One student lived in a family of thirty, including three wives of the family patriarch.

For most Senegal host family situations, you will share your bedroom with a sibling of the same gender, you will share bathroom facilities with other members of your family, and the family will have children. You will not have air conditioning and may lack even an electric fan, so expect sleeping to be difficult at first; you will soon become more used to the heat. In early November, the temperature and humidity begin to decline.

Diets are monotonous—expect fish and rice at least once every day—and include few fruits and vegetables. People commonly eat with their fingers from a communal bowl rather than with silverware from a plate. Most families will offer a spoon to a foreigner, however. Students requiring a vegetarian homestay will most likely receive internship placements in Dakar, as most rural families cannot support vegetarian diets.

Students report that their Senegalese families generally insist on washing their clothes for them. Usually in Dakar, even in relatively poor families, a maid does everyone’s washing, including the student’s. Washing techniques are vigorous, and returnees suggest that you bring sturdy clothes. Turnaround time on your laundry may be a number of days, depending primarily on when you leave it in relation to the wash cycle.

Do not be surprised if your family wants to store your valuables for safekeeping in a room other than yours (for example, your mother’s bedroom). If that is their recommendation, it probably is safer and you will be wise to follow their advice.

Living in Senegal

Arrival

Consult the arrival section in the beginning of this packet for general information regarding arrival. Below you will find country-specific instructions.

Students traveling to Senegal may not arrive prior to the official arrival date without permission from the Learning Abroad Center. Students arriving early will be required to stay
at the orientation hotel which will cost approximately $50 per night, for safety reasons. The on-site staff will transport students from the airport to the arrival hotel.

The airport in Dakar has a central entrance area where all arrivals occur. Look for the signs in French indicating “international passports/visitors” which is the line you need to use. Occasionally, you may find that they have everyone form just one line, if there is only one flight arriving. You will need to give the immigration official a local address where you will be staying. If you have your host family address, you can give that. Otherwise, you can give the following address for the West African Research Center: Rue E X Leon Gontran Damas, Dakar.

After immigration, you will pick up your bags from the baggage carousel and exit the customs area. Since you will not have any local currency, you should refuse any assistance from the porters. You will be asked to put all your bags on an x-ray machine to be examined again as you exit the arrival area.

Once you are outside the airport, look for the sign held by our staff person. If you do not see it or if your flight arrives early, you can wait just inside the entrance to the airport, which is next to the exit for arrivals. Do not accept assistance from anyone unless they provide you with proof that they are on-site staff (they will have the sign). If a staff person does not arrive within 30 minutes of your departure from the airport, have one student go into the airport or enter the exit area for arrival and find an official airline agent to help you call Dr. Sene. If you have a cell phone with international dialing ability, you can also call Dr. Sene yourself. Do not accept cell phone use (une portable) offered by the taxi drivers or others. They will expect payment and will continue to hassle you.

You will need to provide a local address again when you depart Senegal, and you can give your host family’s address in Dakar.

Note: If you do not arrive with the coordinated flight you must arrive within six hours prior to the coordinated flight.

You will not be able to call home upon your arrival.
Telephones are not readily available, you will be exhausted, and orientation will begin quickly. Let your friends and family know that it will take several days for them to hear from you, and you are likely to contact them via email. The on-site staff will notify the Learning Abroad Center if a student does not arrive, and we will call the student’s emergency contact, as needed. Remind friends and family members not to contact the on-site staff directly. All contact should be through the Learning Abroad Center.

Orientation in Country

In most countries, you will stay as a group in a hotel or hostel for the first two to five nights. This gives you some time to recover from the trip and to begin acquainting yourselves with each other before moving to your homestays. During this time you will receive an orientation to your host country and city, the program, and its staff and faculty. You will also have some opportunities to begin acquainting yourselves with the city. When it comes time to move to your homestay, your host family will come to your hotel or another gathering point to pick you up and take you to your new home.

The in-country staff and faculty provide an orientation covering a wide variety of topics including the academic program and its courses; expectations of staff, faculty, and students; cultural differences; the homestays; health and safety; local transportation, communication systems; and other practical matters. It may also include a welcome reception or other social event, a tour of the city, and sometimes one or more additional field trips as well. Most of this orientation takes place during the first few days in country, but a few topics are deferred until students have had time to make the initial adjustment. An orientation and program schedule, as well as a handout for emergency needs, will be provided upon arrival.

Let friends and family know that it will be difficult to reach you during this orientation period. Reassure them that you will be in touch via email as frequently as possible.

Academics

One language course is taught over a 3 ½ week period and award 4 undergraduate credits. The Senegal program offers French 3015, fifth semester French language instruction. The syllabus focuses on language skill development and daily oral practice.

Communication

Students communicate with their friends and family members in the US through various means.

Let family and friends in the US know that you will not be able to contact them immediately upon your arrival in country. It will usually be several days before you have the time to make contact, and students frequently correspond most easily by email.

Email & Internet

You are not to use WARC computers for personal email or internet surfing, but you can use their wireless access with your own laptop. Your other option is to use the internet through services like Sonatel and Telecomplus or through cybercafes like Metissicana or Cyberworld. Cost is
approximately $3.00 to $4.00 per hour of connect time. It can be difficult to get a computer at certain times of day, and equipment failure and power outages are frequent. Therefore neither you nor your friends and family should count on being able to communicate consistently. MSID recommends that before going to Senegal you get a Hotmail or Yahoo address and give it to family and friends. You may use WARC’s Internet connections for academic work.

Social Media

Not all countries share the same laws about freedom of expression that we have in the US. Students should keep in mind that derogatory comments, especially on social media, can result in legal claims and have extended legal implications even after a student has returned to the United States.

Telephone

Even if your Senegalese home has a telephone, you should not make international calls. Use a Telecentre or your cell phone. International calls from Senegal to the US are far more expensive than from the US to Senegal. If you do need to call, use a public phone at a “telecentre”, give your party in the US a number to call back, and then immediately hang up and wait for the return call at the lower US calling rate. Telecentres are available throughout Senegal.

You may be able to receive phone calls in your Senegalese home, but ask before giving your phone number to people back home. Remind any potential callers in the US that Senegal is six hours ahead of Minnesota during the winter and five when the US is on daylight savings time. You may wish to arrange a monthly time for your family to call once you have settled in and have a schedule and specific location.

Use the phone sparingly even for local calls, which in Senegal carry a toll. You may only have access to a telecentre during the internship if you are in a rural area.

The program requires all students to purchase and carry cell phones while on the program. This is not only a good safety precaution, it also facilitates communication between students and program staff. On-site program staff will assist students with selecting and obtaining cell phones and service contracts. The cost of the cell phones are included in the program’s budget estimate. The service contract or minutes that are purchased by students are not included in the budget estimate.

Local cell phones cost approximately $150, and phone chips are approximately $30. Students then purchase phone cards to make calls. This allows students to receive unlimited incoming calls, including from the US and to make local calls inexpensively. Students frequently sell their cell phone to the next incoming students or independently prior to departure.

Mail

Once you have received your homestay placement, mail can be sent to that address. Otherwise, mail should be sent to the student address at WARC listed on the cover of this Guide.

Mail typically takes about 10–20 days to reach Senegal from the US and 7–10 days from Senegal to the US. Send everything first class airmail. Valuable items should be sent through Fedex or DHL to WARC; obtain a receipt and airway bill number in case they get lost. Do not attempt to send a parcel or letter by surface mail; it will take at least three months.

Fax

Because of the high cost of telephone service, faxes cost an average of about $8.00 per page to the US. Students should send faxes through commercial establishments.

Money Matters

Money & Currency Exchange

The Senegalese unit of currency is the CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine Franc), which is linked directly to the euro. Check www.xe.com for the current exchange rate.

It is recommended that you carry to Senegal $200 for your initial weeks and then use your credit card to withdraw money from ATMs. We strongly recommend taking cash and credit cards along, secured in a money belt for security reasons.

It is unnecessary to take Senegalese currency with you. The on-site staff will help you exchange money upon your arrival. Check on any service charges before deciding where you can get the best exchange rate. Banks will often post the daily exchange rate in their windows.

Wiring money can be costly and unreliable. US checks or bank drafts sent from home will require an additional fee to cash and may not arrive in time. Money orders, cashier’s checks, certified checks, and traveler’s checks are extremely difficult and expensive to cash in Senegal. Western Union has offices in Senegal, but fees apply to wire transfers.

Credit Cards

A major credit card can be good in emergency situations, but you will not use it on a daily basis to charge purchases. The types of stores, restaurants, etc. that accept credit cards are mostly upscale and of little interest students on a tight budget. American Express, VISA, and MasterCard are all options; VISA might be slightly more widely accepted than others.

You will need to know your PIN number to use any of these cards to receive cash and your card must be Cirrus-compatible. When using a credit card, remember that interest is charged and the purchase price is converted from CFA’s
to dollars based on the exchange rate the day the purchase is posted on your account in the US, not the day you make the purchase. Make arrangements for someone to pay your bill in the US while you are overseas. You should inform your bank in advance of your travel to facilitate international use.

Financial Planning

Consult the program budget sheets on the country website for recommended spending amounts and plan to bring the appropriate amount. Refer to travel guides, such as Lonely Planet, for estimated daily expenses.

Two daily meals (breakfast and dinner) during the week and all three meals on the weekend are provided by your host family. You will need to budget for your weekday lunches, bottled water, local transportation, and other miscellaneous expenses.

Personal spending habits vary too greatly to predict exactly how much it will cost you to live in your country during the program. Expenses tend to be higher in major cities than in most other locations. But wherever you are, the amount you spend will depend on your lifestyle and your own objectives in participating in this program. The big variables are optional activities such as nights out, music or dance lessons, gifts, and especially recreational travel. You should budget accordingly.

In the past, many students have found that they spent much more money than they had anticipated. When asked what they spent it on, however, most have said travel.

Climate & What to Wear

You will find it hot most of the time—and warm most of the remainder. Take at least one windbreaker or sweater with you for cooler evenings in December and January. Otherwise, prepare for short-sleeve weather. Sunscreen and one or two long-sleeve shirts are a good idea for the tropical sun. Senegal’s rainy season is between June and September. Although most of the yearly precipitation falls during these months, past students have recommended bringing rain gear.

The chart at the end of this section shows high and low temperatures and rainfall, for Dakar (central coast), Tambacounda (interior), and Zinguinchor (Casamance, near southern border). As the Dakar chart shows, it will still be quite warm if you arrive in mid-September, though the rains will be tapering off. Dakar will be quite comfortable by December, while the interior is less uncomfortable than later in the year. Nights in December and January can sometimes get chilly.

A Cautionary Note on Gift-Giving

In Senegal, phrases such as ‘ki dafa nay’ (this person is tight-fisted) or ‘ki do maye’ (this person is not generous) are frequently used to criticize the attitude of somebody who never thinks about sharing anything with others or giving part of what he has to others who have less or nothing. Giving is part and parcel of the culture, and the notion of ‘free gift’ is definitely a reality in Senegal (although modern life and glaring social inequalities tend to twist the initial intentions in such a traditional practice).

It is important to bring a gift for your host families as a symbol of you appreciation for staying in their home. These gifts don’t need to be elaborate but should demonstrate your appreciation. Calendars, local products from your state and T-shirts are appropriate.

At the same time, gift giving to strangers on the street is viewed as condescending. You should exercise discretion about gift-giving in your family or agency in order to avoid hurt feelings because of perceived inequities. You do not, however, need to be embarrassed to accept a gift from somebody you know and trust, as it may simply be a token of friendship with no strings attached, and the giver normally should not expect anything in return. Likewise, if you decide to give, your gift will be accepted without the receiver thinking about returning the courtesy.

Even though giving in Senegal does not necessarily entail reciprocation, remember that you are coming from a part of the world which is considered the richest. This results in many false assumptions, including that the US student is naturally rich. Although this may not be true for all of you, you will realize in Senegal that you are better off than many of your Senegalese neighbors or friends. They will consequently assume when you go out together for a drink or a party that you have enough money to pay and treat everybody. In order to avoid this trap graciously, learn this phrase: ‘man jangkat la amuma xalis’ (I am a student and I have no money.)

A few gifts given as tokens of friendship will certainly be very well received by the members of your host family: t-shirts, baseball caps, socks, pencils, pens, etc. They may raise expectations, and the next day some of the kids may be tempted to ask for more, but of course you will wear a nice smile and say: ‘jeex na.’ (there is no more left.).

A gift will also be appreciated by your friend when you mean it to be a true illustration of your feelings for somebody with whom you have started forging bonds of genuine friendship. Understand that by giving (without cleaning yourself out of the little you have and really need) you are not being necessarily condescending, so long as your action flows from the heart.
Introduction to Senegal

Senegal is a relatively small country. With an area of 76,000 square miles, it is smaller than Minnesota (87,000 square miles); its population of 12.5 million, however, is twice that of Minnesota. Four West African countries cover at least five times as large a land area—Niger (489,000 square miles), Mali (479,000), Mauritania (396,000), and Nigeria (357,000)—and Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Guinea are larger as well. Within West Africa its population is less than a tenth that of Nigeria, half that of Ghana, about two thirds that of Ivory Coast, and slightly smaller than those of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Yet, its historic role as the center of Francophone West Africa gives it an importance far out of proportion to its area or population.

Senegal’s economic inequalities are representative of most African countries. The cities control most of the country’s resources, health services, educational facilities, and commercial and industrial concerns are overwhelmingly located in the urban centers. Although there are many urban poor, there are almost no rural rich. Rates of illiteracy, disease, and infant mortality are far higher in the countryside than in the cities, and life expectancy is much lower.

Economy

Senegal is poor in resources compared with many African countries. Low and unreliable rainfall combines with generally low soil fertility to limit agriculture. The country has little hydroelectric potential, and except for recent gold finds it lacks the large deposits of oil, coal, diamonds, or other major minerals found elsewhere on the continent. Senegal has the second largest reserves of marble, after Italy, but they have never been developed commercially.

The country’s most significant extractive and manufacturing industries are phosphate mining, agricultural and fish processing, and manufacture of building materials.

The combination of Senegal’s consistently pro-Western foreign policy, its capitalist economic system, and its relatively good human rights record has made it something of a darling of the international aid agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and it has attracted more foreign aid than most African countries. Most, unfortunately, has come in the form of loans. Today nearly 40% of annual government revenues go to external debt service. Dependence on foreign aid—largely French—has replaced direct colonial domination.

People

Senegal’s predominant ethnic group is the Wolof, who constitute 44% of the total population. More than half the population now speaks Wolof as its first language, and over 70% as either a first or second language. Upon independence, though, Senegal chose French as its official tongue in order to avoid what could have been a politically destabilizing act of favoring one African language over another. Fewer than 15% of the country’s inhabitants, mostly among the better-educated urban sectors, speak French. Pulaar is spoken by about 26% of the population (Fulani 17%, Tukular 9%, although some would argue that these do not really constitute two distinct groups). The Diola (9%) and Mandinke (9%) both have their own languages. Other ethnic groups include the Serrer (17%, mostly Wolof-speaking), Europeans and Lebanese (1%), and other (2%).

The country’s population of 12 million is predominantly Muslim (92%); the others follow indigenous beliefs or are Christian (mostly Roman Catholic). Most people adhere to one or another of the five Muslim brotherhoods, the two most important of which are the Mouride brotherhood (headquartered in Touba, a pilgrimage destination well worth a visit) and the Tijaniyya (headquartered in Tivaouane, just outside Thiès). The brotherhoods wield considerable economic, political, and social influence. On the whole they can be viewed as a force for stability. At the same time, they are perhaps the most powerful Senegalese institutions relatively free of government control.

Senegal’s school system is inadequate to serve the expanding population, and illiteracy remains widespread. The country has two universities. Université Cheikh Anta Diop was founded as the University of Dakar in 1957. Université Gaston Berger opened in Saint Louis in 1993. University students and graduates have become increasingly disaffected as the job market fails to expand fast enough to provide employment for them.

Senegal has been more successful at AIDS prevention than most African countries, for a variety of medical and cultural reasons, so that seriopositivity rates are apparently not much higher than in US cities. Thus, Senegal does not face the crushing AIDS burden faced by countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana.
**Food**

In the rural areas, breakfast still consists of leftovers from the previous night’s dinner, or millet porridge with milk. Villagers tend to eat more locally grown cereals, whereas city dwellers are accustomed to rice imported from Asia. The most common dish today in the cities, especially at lunch time, is **ceebujën**, cooked rice accompanied by fish and vegetables stewed in a tomato sauce. It is considered to be a national dish, along with **yassa**, chicken marinated in lemon juice over steamed rice. **Mafe**, a peanut butter sauce over steamed rice, is also very common. Peanut and palm oils serve widely for cooking. All dishes include fish or meat as the primary ingredient. Vegetables and fruit are very scarce during the dry fall season. Vegetarians should be prepared for a diet of mostly rice with a very small amount of vegetables and plan to supplement their diet with fruits purchased from local markets. It is also wise to bring along vitamins and granola bars.

After meals, plain water is the main thirst quencher. For visitors, there are industrially made soda drinks or, more commonly, soft drinks made from local products, especially ginger or **bissap**. The latter is extracted from red hibiscus blossoms. After meals, guests are often treated to the Senegalese ritual of **attaya**—three cups of strong, sweet tea.

**Living in Dakar**

The French founded Dakar on the strategic Cape Verde peninsula in 1857. Construction of jetties and piers in various periods since then have gradually made Dakar into West Africa’s best harbor and naval base. When West Africa’s first railway connected it to Saint Louis in 1885, Dakar began to handle most of the imports and exports even from the Senegal River Valley, and Saint Louis rapidly deteriorated as a port. But Dakar’s real growth from village to metropolis began in 1904, when it displaced Saint Louis as capital of the still-new West Africa Federation. The opening in 1923 of the railroad to Bamako (capital of today’s Mali) on the Niger River further consolidated Dakar’s position as the major urban center of the region.

Like so many cities in the Global South, Dakar has grown fast. From 1,600 inhabitants in 1878 it grew to 18,000 in 1904, 93,000 in 1936, and 800,000 in 1976. Today it exceeds two million, making it the third largest city in West Africa after Lagos (Nigeria) and Abidjan (Ivory Coast). It has acquired such status symbols as traffic jams and pollution.

Dakar remains a city of contrasts: businessmen and tourists, European clothes and traditional dress, colonial-style villas and modern skyscrapers, supermarkets and small shops, posh residential areas and shantytowns.

Visit the State Department’s website on Senegal for more information: [travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1013.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1013.html).

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**Tips from Students**

Past students have compiled the following list of additional information:

- Especially if you are female, expect to be asked constantly whether you are married.
- As a foreigner, you are likely to be perceived as rich. By Senegalese standards, you probably are, even if you think of yourself as a poor student. Be prepared to be asked for things, including help to get to the US or to obtain a US visa.
- The concept of Dutch treat does not exist in Senegal. If you invite someone to join you—even for your own birthday party—it will be assumed that you are paying.
- Avoid contact with street hustlers. Any response will likely set you up for an unforgettable experience.
- It is rude to turn down food or gifts when offered in your family (although not by vendors). If you do not want something, make a plausible excuse for not accepting it.
- People in Dakar are very well dressed. Pack nice clothing and leave behind excessive amounts of scruffy clothes.
- The Senegalese diet is very repetitive. Bring multi-vitamins.
- Wear conservative dress. Clothing that is too short or revealing will encourage unwanted attention.
- If you are having issues with your host family that can’t be resolved or make you uncomfortable, tell the on-site staff.
- Smart phones were helpful for keeping in contact with family when WiFi was available. Be sure to check settings so you aren’t using data international. Don’t be flashy with smart phone use as it can make you a target for theft.
## Temperature (°F) & Rainfall (inches) In Dakar

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Appendix

Packing Checklist

The following is a list developed by past Intensive French in Senegal students and in-country staff. Adapt it to suit your own style and priorities. You will not need all the items on the packing list, they are only suggestions.

Clothing
- 1 pair of comfortable shoes to walk in over long distances
- 1 pair of sandals
- 2 dress outfits
- 7 pairs of underwear, durable bras
- Lightweight socks
- T-shirts
- Tank tops
- Skirts/dresses at knee-length or longer
- 3–4 pairs of pants (jeans, khakis, etc.)
- 1–2 long-sleeve lightweight shirts
- Several short-sleeve shirts
- 1 long-sleeve warm top
- Sweat pants (light-weight)
- Shorts (hiking/sport style) for beach and sports wear
- Bathing suit
- Bandanas or handkerchiefs
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Lightweight sweater
- Lightweight long-sleeve, long-leg pajamas
- Sun hat/cap
- Scarf and knit hat for chilly weather

Household/Personal Items
- Money belt containing passport, international immunization record, credit card, cash card, traveler’s checks, any dollars you are taking in cash, etc.
- 1 or 2 towels and washcloths
- Umbrella
- Travel alarm
- Digital camera with extra batteries (recharging is only possible with a voltage converter)
- Film or digital flashcards (most film/batteries/developing are available in country)
- Ziplock plastic baggies
- Flashlight
- 1 or 2 water bottles
- Sewing kit, safety pins
- Wristwatch
- Music player
- Electric converter and adapter if you are taking electrical items *Please be aware, electricity is very expensive and host families may want to limit the use of electric appliances
- Contact information of friends/family/academic contacts
- Guide book (e.g. Lonely Planet or Rough Guide)
- Pocket knife
- Photographs of friends and family, your house, your community, etc.
- Locks for luggage
- Zip/flash drive

Health Items & Toiletries
- A full supply of prescription drugs in original bottles (in case customs needs documentation); include one prescription for bacterial dysentery and directions for its use
- First aid kit
- Insect repellent (at least 21% DEET)
- Anti-itch gel for mosquito bites
- Condoms, birth control
- Tampons (expensive or unavailable in country)
- Bladder infection medication, yeast infection medication
- Anti-diarrheal medicine
- Pepto Bismol or similar stomach settler
- Laxatives
- Small packages of tissue or toilet paper
- Pain medicines
- Sunscreen (high SPF)
- Aloe vera gel for sunburns
- Sunglasses
- Lip balm with sunscreen
☐ Vitamins
☐ Hand sanitizer
☐ Eye drops
☐ Ear plugs
☐ All contact lens materials needed for your stay
☐ An extra pair of glasses and a copy of your prescription
☐ Sanitary moist wipes
☐ Toiletries: soap, deodorant, shampoo, and toothpaste are all easily available in country (but take enough for first few weeks); dental floss (take enough for your stay), nail clippers, toothbrush, hairbrush or comb, razor
☐ Thermometer to detect a fever. In hot climates, it is very difficult to assess a fever independently.
☐ Granola bars
☐ Water filter/purifier, iodine tablets