Intensive Swahili in Kenya
PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2015–16

AFRICA &
THE MIDDLE EAST
STUDY ABROAD

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER
University of Minnesota
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: UMabroad.umn.edu

Jessica Hartnett, Associate Program Director
hart0581@umn.edu, 612.626.6380

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chuber@umn.edu, 612.624.4525

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 Kenya

Telephone Codes
011 International access code from the US. The code from other countries will probably be different.
254 Kenya’s country code used for dialing from outside Kenya.
20 Nairobi city code. Not necessary for calls within Nairobi. Cell phones have a different code.
000 International access code from Kenya.

Time Differences
Kenya is nine hours ahead of Minnesota during the winter and eight hours ahead 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 the on-site staff.

Your Address in Kenya
During your stay in Nairobi, mail should be sent to you at the following address:
Your name (clearly spelled out)
c/o MSID Kenya
PO Box 66731
00800 Westlands
Nairobi, Kenya

On-Site Office
Jabavu Road
PCEA Jabavu Road Flats
Block C, House No: 1
Hurlingham
Nairobi, Kenya
Emergency Phone: (254) 72.898.6411
Phone: (254.20) 272.4288 / 272.5954

On-Site Director
Dr. Mohamud Jama
PO Box 13804,
00800 Westlands
Nairobi, Kenya

On-Site Program Coordinator
Mr. Khalif Maalim
c/o MSID PO Box 66731
00800 Westlands
Nairobi, Kenya

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

Web Addresses
Visit your MSID country website for useful health, safety, travel, development, and country web links: UMabroad.umn.edu

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 (UMabroad.umn.edu/students/policies). These materials will guide you on a safe and successful learning abroad experience.

Program Health & Safety
Program health and safety information is available at http://global.umn.edu/gosafe/index.html.
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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: 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.perryvisa.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

Try to get by with one large backpack and a carry-on. A few additional tips include:

- Avoid eating in restaurants with poor hygiene or buying food from street vendors. Assume 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 food.

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. Assume 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 food.
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: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance/ushealthinsurancerequirement](http://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 care, 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: [UMabroad.umn.edu/students/healthsafety/intlhealthinsurance](http://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
Keep your room very neat and tidy and be respectful of family for permission to bring friends, and be ready to cover drunkenness could irreparably damage your relations with work colleagues will disapprove of substance abuse, and be judicious in your use of alcohol. Your host family and the opposite sex or to receive visitors in a closed bedroom. You are not allowed to have overnight guests of women. You are not allowed to have overnight guests of the opposite sex or to receive visitors in a closed bedroom.

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 (shawls, 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 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 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.
Cultural Adjustment

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.

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.

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**Cultural Adjustment Curve**

Adjusted from Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn (1963)
Intensive Swahili in Kenya

On-Site Staff

At each site an on-site director and a 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.

Kenya has two main staff members who oversee the program:

**Director**

The Director of the program in Kenya is Mohamud Jama. Dr. Jama received his Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Washington State University. He is an associate Professor and the former Director of the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. He has been principal investigator on dozens of projects and papers in the areas of environmental economics, agriculture, land use, and economic policy. He has served as consultant for the World Bank, the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, and the United Nations Development Program's Africa 2000 Network project, and he is on the board of directors of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). He is also a National Governing Council member of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Kenya Secretariat. Dr. Jama has taught courses for the School for International Training and has been with MSID-Kenya since 1996.

**Program Coordinator**

The Program Coordinator is Mohamud Khalif Maalim. Khalif has a Diploma in Ranch Management from Egerton University, Kenya, and completed a Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management in 2008 from the University of Nairobi. Before coming to MSID, Khalif worked for eighteen years with community development projects in the public sector, the financial sector, and an international nongovernmental organization. He worked with Kenyan communities to establish cooperatives and group ranches, and has also worked as a branch manager of a parastatal (quasi-governmental) organization, the Agricultural Finance Corporation. Immediately before coming to MSID he served as assistant director of the International Islamic Relief Organization. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. Khalif has been with MSID–Kenya since 2001.

Facilities

The office has a small library, computer room, and study space. Classes meet nearby at the former campus of Nazarene University. The on-site orientation includes activities designed to familiarize students with the resources of various libraries and research centers in Nairobi.

Computers

Kenya has twelve computers available for student coursework use only. You are encouraged to bring along an inexpensive PC (not Mac) laptop to use for completing assignments, and the Kenya program office has wireless internet access. 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

Kenyan families differ greatly one from another. Among the most important variables are socioeconomic level, religion, ethnic background, and rural vs. urban location.

A good starting point in your attempt to adapt is to understand the family structure as well as possible. Extended families are much more prevalent in Kenya, 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, uncles, or other relatives or quasi-relatives. In some cases it may even be difficult to determine who comprises the household. You may see some family members drifting 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 Nairobi 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 still own another home in their place of origin. Most Kenyan families are Christian—often with elements of traditional African religions mixed in. The main exceptions are along the coast and in northern Kenya, where the majority are Muslim. Many families are quite fundamentalist and deeply involved in their church. You may be asked very directly about your religious life and beliefs. ("Are you saved?" “Do you go to church?”) Your family may expect you to accompany them to church for worship. This should be viewed as part of a homestay family routine, like any other, and is to be respected. Some students have nonetheless found it to be a source of some discomfort. It is acceptable to establish some limits to your participation, but always do so in a manner that makes clear your respect for the family’s religious commitment.
Most Kenyan families are quite patriarchal. There is typically a distinct distance between the father (the head of the family) and the rest of the household members, especially the children. American students often find it hard to adjust to what they perceive as gender inequities in their families. For example, the mother and her daughters may work constantly while the father and his sons expect to be waited on. Try to accept this; any attempt on your part to change it will cause unending friction.

Polygamy is common among the Muslims of the coast and some interior tribes. If your homestay family is polygamous, you will be assigned to one wife as your homestay mother.

On the surface, many urban families will seem roughly similar to western families, but you will discover more and more difference as you get deeper into the homestay experience. Rural families on the whole will be considerably more traditional. Families will not impose traditions on the students, but students will be expected to learn to accept some of the cultural routines of eating, sleeping arrangements, socializing, etc.

Placements can vary from a home with telephone, satellite television, several cars, and your own room with private shower, to a simple home with no running water, a pit toilet, an open cooking fire, and a shared bedroom. This variety is an educational opportunity. Try to visit some of your classmates’ homes to gain comparative insights into Kenyan family life. Students living under the most basic conditions, incidentally, often turn out to be the happiest with their homestays.

Although diet varies from one tribe to another, by far the most common meal consists of maize meal (ugali) and vegetables. Meat is also comparatively cheap and popular. Some vegetarian students have chosen to relax their dietary habits during their stay in Kenya; however, it is possible to sustain vegetarian standards in your homestay if it is important to you.

Upon arrival at the airport you will go through customs. You will need your passport with the visa you received from Perry stamped inside and a completed form that you will receive during the flight. After clearing customs, you will be directed to pick up any checked luggage.

If you arrive with the group, there will be a person carrying an “MSID” sign waiting for you as you depart from the luggage area to take you to the orientation location, where you will spend the first couple of nights.

If for any reason you will not be arriving as planned and you are not able to communicate with the staff in Kenya or the University of Minnesota about this, or if you are not able to locate the staff at the airport, call Khalif’s cell phone number (722.301.159), and he will be able to make the necessary arrangements for you to be picked up.

Note: If you do not arrive with the coordinated flight, you must arrive no more than 6 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 may 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

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. 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.

Schedule and Orientation

Students will stay at a group hotel for the first night. 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 Kenya to continue with the MSID Kenya program, you will participate in the MSID orientation with all the other fall semester and/or academic year students. The on-site staff may ask you to facilitate or assist with different parts of orientation.
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**

**Language of Instruction**

Kenya can accommodate different levels of Swahili, and offers the following language course:

- Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced Swahili (One language course is taught over a 31/2 week period and awards 4 undergraduate credits.

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

**Communication**

Students communicate with their friends and family members in the US through various means. Students are required to purchase cell phones in country, which allows for unlimited incoming calls, including from the US, text messages, and local calls.

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**

Internet cafés are available in a number of Kenyan cities and cost one to three shillings per minute (20–25 minutes for $1). All personal student email must be done at internet cafés and not on the MSID program computers.

**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 Kenyan home has a telephone, you will not be allowed to make international calls. You may be able to receive calls. There are many bureaus from where you can make international calls at reasonable cost. 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. In many rural settings it is impossible to receive phone calls. Generally you should share your homestay phone number with your parents only. Most homestay parents do not like excessive use of their private home phones (which are usually in their bedrooms), whether to receive or call out. Moreover, even for local calls there is a toll, so use the phone sparingly.

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.

There are two major service providers for cell phones, SAFARICOM and AIRTEL. A number of different plans are available. Rather than opting for the type of service that carries a monthly charge, most students instead purchase “Scratch Cards” for a specified number of minutes. Although most students use cell phones only within Kenya, a few have also called the US. Unfortunately, costs are exorbitant—about 1,000 shillings ($13.50) for three minutes during low-rate hours. International calls can be made cheaply via the Internet from a internet café.

**Mail**

Mail can be sent to your host family’s address once you receive it. Otherwise, mail should be sent to the on-site office on the cover of this Guide.

Mail takes about two weeks to reach Kenya from the US. It is advisable to send everything first class airmail. Any valuable items should be registered; obtain a receipt and airway bill number, which can assist in tracing packages should they get lost. Do not attempt to send a parcel or letter by surface mail; it would take at least 3 months. Mail whose contents are liable to customs duty (tax) will have to be received in Nairobi where duty is normally collected. An advice slip is posted to the recipient to come to Nairobi to declare the item to be duty paid. Make sure friends and family indicate on the parcels, “Contents are of no commercial value.” This may help the authorities decide whether or not to charge duty on parcels.

**Fax**

Faxes cost an average of about $3.00 per page at the Post Office or EXTELECOM. It is best to produce fax messages as a word document and then send them directly from the computer to the fax machine instead of first printing them out.
Money Matters

Money & Currency Exchange

The shilling (Ksh.) is the monetary unit in Kenya. It is based on a decimal system. Coins are in 50-cent and 1, 5, 10, 20 and 40-shilling denominations. Notes are in 50-, 100-, 200-, 500- and 1,000-shilling denominations. Check the current exchange rate at www.xe.com as rates change frequently.

Past students have recommended that you carry a debit card to withdraw shillings from ATMs. You should inform your bank in advance of your travel to facilitate international use. The exchange rate on such cards tends to be a bit better than on cash or traveler's checks. ATMs may be hard to find outside Nairobi and Mombasa. Moreover, a lost or stolen ATM card can take longer to replace than traveler's checks. Thus it is a good idea to take at least some money in the form of traveler's checks, and probably a small amount of cash in dollars as well. You can exchange money for a nominal fee at a local bank (not all banks handle foreign currency, however), an exchange office, or the Nairobi airport. When exchanging US currency, the exchange rate will be less favorable if you are exchanging bills that are $20 or less. Be sure to carry all cash, traveler's checks, debit cards, and credit cards in your money belt except what you might need during the day. Upon your arrival, Kenya staff will help you exchange your US dollars for shillings.

Wiring money can be costly, and the money can get lost. US checks or bank drafts sent from home require an additional fee to cash and may not arrive in time. Money orders, cashier's checks, and certified checks are extremely difficult to cash in Kenya. Students can open bank accounts in Kenya, but only in Kenyan shillings.

Warning: Thousands of fake US dollars are in circulation in Africa, and many are found in Kenya. Students are warned not to accept change in small denominations from non-bank outlets.

Credit Cards

It is strongly suggested that you carry a major credit card in your name, which you can use to charge items and to receive cash advance in an emergency situation. Students report that Visa is the card most widely accepted in Kenya, although many places also take American Express or Mastercard. As with your ATM card, you must inform your bank in advance of your travel to facilitate international use, and your card must be Cirrus or Plus compatible (check the back of the card for the symbols). Credit card advances are accessible, but there are fees to consider. You will need to know your PIN number, and in order to receive cash advances from a local bank, you will need to show your passport. Remember that credit card cash advances accrue interest from the moment you take them, even if you pay off your card monthly and do not have to pay interest on purchases.

Although many establishments oriented to tourists or the Kenyan middle and upper classes accept credit cards, do not expect to use one for purchases as routinely as you might in the US. Street markets and the more inexpensive sorts of hotels, restaurants, and shops that students on a tight budget patronize typically do not accept credit cards. Be certain to make arrangements for someone to pay your credit card bill in the US while you are overseas. Alternatively, you may be able to avoid interest charges by pre-paying to build up a positive balance in your credit card account.

Financial Planning

Please consult the program budget sheets on the website for recommended spending amounts and plan to bring the appropriate amount. Review 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 ($2-$5 per day), 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

Except when you are climbing mountains, you will find it mild to hot everywhere in Kenya, as well as in areas you are likely to travel to in adjacent countries. You might wish to take one light sweater and one light jacket with you for cooler nights in Nairobi or other highland locations, but you should generally prepare for short-sleeve weather. You will need rain gear, including a good pair of “mudder” boots, for the wet season. If you want to climb Kilimanjaro or Mount Kenya you will need warm clothing. You are able to rent a sweater for the wet season. If you want to climb Kilimanjaro or Mount Kenya you will need warm clothing. You are able to rent a sweater and a jacket for a few dollars a day, but take your own cap, gloves, and long underwear with you.

Water is scarce in much of Kenya. The greatest rainfalls tend to occur in the higher southwest area of the country and along the southern portion of the coast. In general, rainfall decreases from south to north both on the coast and in the highlands. The dry north is Kenya's portion of the Sahel, the vast semi-arid transition belt between the Sahara to the north and areas of higher rainfall to the south. As everywhere in the Sahel—which stretches across the entire continent from the

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Atlantic to the Indian Ocean—rainfall is not only low but highly unreliable.

Within the southwest, the hills and mountains are better watered on the whole than the plateaus or the Rift Valley. It is not only that more rain tends to fall at higher elevations, but also that evapotranspiration is slower here than lower down. A little rain can go a long way in the cooler highlands.

Contrasting with most of Kenya, the extreme south of the country, like Tanzania beyond it, has a single wet season from December to March.

The temperature and rainfall tables on the chart at the end of this section compare Kenya’s two largest cities: Nairobi (5,000 ft.) and Mombasa (sea level). Because the coast is so humid, the difference in temperature between them actually feels greater than it appears to be from the charts.

A Cautionary Note on Gift-Giving

Use restraint in gift-giving. You run the risk of seeming the condescending, rich American, of causing resentments over inequities in your giving, or of giving things of little use to the recipients. Never give gifts to strangers. Avoid giving expensive gifts; it is the thought that counts to Kenyans, not the value of the item. In general, a gift to a whole family or an agency is better than individual gifts, especially when it is hard to know where the family ends and who might be offended through exclusion. For a Nairobi family, some symbolic remembrance from your home might be appropriate (e.g. a plate with something from your state, pens and pencils, or a coffee table book or a calendar with nice photos). By all means do give appropriate gifts when the situation calls for it of Kenyans as well as you—for example, a birthday party for a child in your family.

Remember that the greatest gifts you can give are nonmaterial: your friendship, your empathy, and your work. A part of such gifts should take the form of keeping in touch after your return to the US.

Introduction to Kenya

Kenya is located on the equator on the east coast of Africa. It borders Ethiopia and Sudan in the north, Uganda and Lake Victoria in the west, Tanzania in the south, and the Indian Ocean and Somalia in the east. Kenya covers an area of 225,000 square miles, about 84% of the size of Texas.

A network of roads of varying quality connects Kenya with its eastern African neighbors of Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia; railroads still run to Uganda and Tanzania as well. Southward, roads and rails can take travelers all the way to Cape Town at the southern tip of the continent. Surface travel to the west and north is more difficult. Although the Nile River is navigable from Uganda to its mouth in Egypt, the civil war in the southern Sudan has greatly decreased its use, and surface travel to northern Africa is now mostly unfeasible except via the Red Sea. To the west, the road system through the Congo rainforest has deteriorated so badly under conditions of persistent civil war that land travel to West Africa is virtually nonexistent.

Economy

On the whole, Kenya lacks the oil or major mineral deposits that help many African nations earn foreign exchange, and much of the country is poor in agricultural resources as well. On the other hand, the good soils and abundant moisture of the more favored highland areas would be the envy of many tropical countries. And any catalog of resources could not fail to note the game reserves and beaches that make Kenya a leading tourist destination.

As is true throughout Africa, most of Kenya’s population is engaged in agriculture. Yet, agriculture and stock raising account for less than 30% of the country’s gross domestic product. Besides the two major export crops, coffee and tea, Kenya’s principal agricultural products include maize, wheat, sugarcane, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, beef, pork, poultry, and eggs. Rural life is very tough, and were it not for the hard work of Kenya’s farmers the country would be far from food self-sufficiency.

Industry contributes a further 18% of the gross domestic product. Kenyan factories produce mostly small-scale consumer goods (plastics, furniture, batteries, textiles, soap, cigarettes, flour). Agricultural processing and oil refining are other significant industries. Production is overwhelmingly for the domestic market and has traditionally depended on high tariff barriers to protect it from goods produced in the industrialized countries. Many industries are suffering due to free trade.

The most unusual feature of Kenya’s economy compared with many African countries is the large role of the service sector, which accounts for more than half the gross domestic product. The reason is tourism, which contributes over a quarter of Kenya’s foreign exchange—more than the two leading exports, tea and coffee, combined. The number of
tourists visiting Kenya per year grew from 684,000 in 2003 to 1.2 million in 2007. Unfortunately, tourism plummeted in 2008. Conferences cancelled and business travel also declined, resulting in a significant revenue loss for the country. Several factors contributed to the dramatic decline including the post-election violence that followed the December 2007 controversial presidential election and the global financial crisis.

People

In the 1970s Kenya had what experts believed to be the highest rate of population growth in the world. Thanks mostly to an astonishing birth rate of over 50 per thousand population; its natural increase was about 3.8% per year—which meant that the population was doubling approximately every 18 years. Although population continues to expand rapidly, the birth rate has declined notably in recent years to an estimated 55 per thousand (compared with 41 for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and 15 for the US); its death rate is 14 per thousand (compared with 16 and 9 respectively). At the current growth rate the doubling time is now approximately 33 years.

Death rates are rising in the short run because of widespread AIDS. Unlike the many African countries that initially denied they had an AIDS problem, Kenya launched a massive public education program early to alert the population to the danger and recommend safety measures. A traveler in the country will be impressed by the number of AIDS billboards in a multitude of languages. Although the AIDS epidemic still reaches alarming proportions, as a result of the educational campaign the rate of infection is growing somewhat more slowly than in many African countries.

Over half of all Kenyans speak languages belonging to the Bantu family (much as French, German, and English all belong to the Indo-European family); most of the remainder speaks Nilotic languages. Speakers of Cushitic languages, which some linguists classify as Hamitic, constitute only about 3% of the population. The Maasai and the Turkana speak blended Nilotic-Cushitic languages.

If you randomly selected any pair of Kenyans, the odds are strong that they would be unable to communicate with each other in the first language of either. However, they might be able to resort to Swahili, or Kiswahili, as it is locally known. Swahili serves as a common second language for millions of Kenyans who do not share a maternal tongue. Indeed, it has become a lingua franca not only for Kenya but also for much of the rest of East Africa. It is the official national language of neighboring Tanzania and one of two official languages in Kenya.

Kenya’s other official national language is English. Even though it carries a certain stigma as the tongue of the European colonialists, it represents neutral ground in the competition among the various African languages, none of which would be acceptable as a national language to speakers of other tongues.

The majority of Kenyans are Christians. About 40% belong to various Protestant churches and 30% are Roman Catholic. Many Catholics and Protestants alike are quite fundamentalist, and MSID students often are astonished at the depth of religiosity in their host families.

The 6% or so of the population that is Muslim lives mostly along the coast and in the northeast, although mosques are a common sight throughout the country. The Asian community includes not only Muslims but also Hindus and Sikhs.

Most of the rest of the population follows indigenous belief systems or nontraditional Christian beliefs. But the clean categories of the statistics are misleading, for they imply that everyone in the population adheres to one, and only one, religion. Actually, many people blend two belief systems into one, sometimes holding apparently incompatible beliefs side by side. People who claim to be Christian or Muslim, for example, may also subscribe to some traditional animist beliefs. The same individual might go to church on Sunday morning and then to a divining ceremony in the afternoon.

Living in Nairobi

From its founding as a collection of shacks along the new railway in the late nineteenth century, Nairobi grew quickly. It received a huge boost when the colonial government moved the capital of British Kenya from Mombasa in 1907. Its growth has continued unabated since then to its present population of some 2.9 million.

Traffic jams and skyscrapers contrast sharply with vast peripheral shantytowns. The financial and administrative portions of downtown look like their counterparts in an industrialized country. Smartly dressed office employees on the way to work reinforce that impression. But the beggars, street vendors, and con artists remind you that this is a developing country—as does the kaleidoscope of sounds, colors, and movement that mark the traditional market area immediately adjacent to the financial sector.

Nairobi’s rapid growth has strained its infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people in shantytowns lack running water and sewers. Power outages, brownouts, and surges occur with some frequency; a surge protector for any electronic equipment is a must. Infuriating traffic jams develop at rush hour or when it rains hard. Smog becomes worse each year.

In addition to the nation’s political capital, Nairobi is also its industrial, commercial, financial, administrative, and cultural center. It houses a large proportion of Kenya’s factories as well as the headquarters of most businesses, whether foreign or Kenyan-owned. Nairobi also has Kenya’s finest museums and other cultural attractions.
In effect, Nairobi is the capital not only of Kenya but also of East Africa. Daily flights connect it to Europe, Asia, and countries in other parts of Africa; moreover, travelers bound for other East African countries often must fly by way of Nairobi. Many international agencies have their East African headquarters offices here.

**Tips from Students**

Past students have compiled the following list of additional information:

- Be mindful of safety when you travel through the city and always keep careful watch for your belongings.
- As a foreigner, you are likely to be perceived as rich. Even if you think of yourself as a poor student, you probably are rich by Kenyan standards. Be prepared to be asked for things, including help to get to the US or to obtain a US visa.
- Avoid contact with street hustlers. Any response will likely set you up for an unforgettable experience.
- The Kenya staff are very helpful. Turn to them for guidance on safe travel, both locally and during the breaks.
- Pack a few nice outfits incase you want to go out with your host family or friends.
## Temperature (°F) & Rainfall (inches) in Nairobi

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<tr>
<th>Nairobi</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
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<th>Dec</th>
<th>Year</th>
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Appendix

Packing Checklist
The following is a list developed by past MSID 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 walking shoes
- 1 pair of comfortable walking sandals
- 2–3 pairs of flip-flops
- 1 pair of dress shoes
- 1 dress outfits
- 7 pairs of underwear, durable bras
- Lightweight socks
- T-shirts, pack more t-shirts than tank tops
- Tank tops, thick straps
- Skirts/dresses that extend below the knee
- 2 pairs of pants for ladies, 3–4 pairs of pants for men (jeans, khakis, etc.)
- 3 pairs of capris for ladies
- 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
- Fleece jacket or lining or lightweight sweater
- Lightweight long-sleeve, long-leg pajamas
- Sun hat/cap

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 towel and washcloths
- Compactable umbrella
- Travel alarm
- Camera with extra batteries
- Cord to connect your camera to your computer
- 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
- Contact information of friends/family/academic contacts
- Guide book (e.g. Lonely Planet or Rough Guide)
- Pocket knife (large enough to peel fruit with)
- Photographs of friends and family, your house, your community, etc.
- Duct tape or packing tape
- Locks for luggage
- Zip/flash drive
- Rolls of quarters
- Bilingual dictionary
- Notarized copy of passport
- Journal

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 misquito bites
- Condoms, birth control
- Tampons (expensive or unavailable in country) or Diva cup
- 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
- Eye drops
- Ear plugs
- Sunglasses
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Vitamins
- Hand sanitizer
- 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