



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER WELCOME PACK



**Working To Eradicate Social Risk And Economic
Vulnerability In Communities**

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WELCOME TO CAMEROON!! AFRICA IN MINIATURE!!

Congratulations!!!

You are going to be in one of the most exciting countries in Africa. You are going to have some of the best days of your life. You will discover a new world and new people in our country. In these pages you will find some information about this adventure that is just beginning.

To avoid complications and to make your experience as pleasant as possible you should read this booklet now, as a means to prepare you for your stay and as a survival guide during your stay in Cameroon.

You are welcome to Cameroon and Social Development International (SODEIT). We are happy that you have chosen to spend some of your precious time volunteering with our organization. We hope you will have a productive, memorable and fun time with us and we will do everything we can to assure that happens.

This pack was written by the Founder and support came from a Canadian couple Mathew and Michelle who spent six months in Buea, Cameroon. It is intended to help you become familiar with Cameroon, the South West Region and SODEIT in general. Wherever you are coming from, life in Cameroon will present many new and exciting differences and the more you know before you come, the more comfortable you will be during your stay, less cultural shock(s) and thus become a cultural ambassador. There's no way to put everything into the pack, but we think the big pictures are covered. If you, have things to add or revise in this welcome manual, your contributions will be highly appreciated—just let the volunteer coordinator know.

Once again, welcome to “Africa in Miniature”-Cameroon, have a wonderful stay and thank you for your time! Have fun and achieve your objective(s).

The Republic of Cameroon/Republique du Cameroun is bilingual with French being the dominant language in the former French territories and English/Pidgin English being spoken in the former British territories.

There are 10 Regions (Provinces until 2009) in Cameroon. Eight of the Regions are Francophone and two are Anglophone Southwest Region (SWR) and the Northwest Region (NWR). The total population of Cameroon is around 20 million. The two largest cities are Yaoundé with about 1.9 million inhabitants and Douala with more than 2 million. The major touristic regions in Cameroon are South West, Littoral, East, West, North West and Northern regions.

I. TRAVELLING PREPARATION

Planning Your Trip

You will want to start planning your trip well in advance of your desired departure date. International tickets are typically cheaper the earlier you purchase them (Check flying info. below).

Required Documentation

- Valid Passport
- Cameroonian Visa
- Yellow Fever card

In most cases, you will also need an invitation letter from SODEIT for stays over 30 days.

Health Matters

Get all your immunizations in advance before coming to Cameroon. You will want to plan months ahead of time since some of the vaccines are a series. Yellow Fever is required. You must show your card at immigrations when coming off the airplane in Douala airport.

Check out the CDC website for the latest in recommended vaccines.

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/cameroon.htm>

Typically, you will need to make sure your polio and MMR are up to date. Your tetanus vaccine should be less than 5 years old. Yellow fever, typhoid, hepatitis A, and meningitis will be needed. If you have never had chicken pox, the vaccine is worth getting. You may be exposed to people here with chicken pox. Additionally, you will want to make sure you have completed your hepatitis B series.

Occasionally people bring post-exposure HIV antivirals with them. It is easier to start taking them right away if you have an accidental needle stick, sexual encounter or other potential exposure.

Visas

Before traveling, obtain your visa at the nearest Cameroonian embassy or consulate in your country or a nearby country where there is Cameroon diplomatic mission, and be sure to receive all of the necessary vaccinations. Yellow fever vaccination is compulsory and immigration officers do check your vaccination booklet for it.

Before filling for visa make sure you have taken your yellow fever vaccination and other essentials if any. Check Cameroon Diplomatic mission website and make contact with them, links below:

Passport/Visa Requirements

- Is a visa required?: Yes
- Allocation of Tourist/Short/long stay Visa: Before you depart
- Duration of visa: 1 – 6 months
- Cost of Tourist Visa: Varies but you can expect to pay \$150
- Tourist Visa Extension: Possible for up to one year
- Cost of Visa Extension: Starting at \$100 - \$500
- Passport validation: 6 months required before expiry
- Return/onward flight ticket: Required
- Confirmation of Funds: May be required

There are 3 major types of visas

- Tourist (1 month)
- Short Stay (3 month)
- Long Stay (6 month)

If you are staying longer than your visa, you can get an extension, which is basically just another visa. This can be a pain and will involve additional money (US\$ 100 –US\$ 500). Our advice would be to make sure you either have your ticket within those set times or know what your options are and the costs involved for either buying a return ticket or altering the return date.

You will also have to get a Letter of Invite from SODEIT if you are planning on being here longer than 30 days. The Director will be happy to get that for you, but you'll have to let them know. Be prepared for the Letter of Invite to take about a week to be written, stamped and officiated.

For more information visit the websites of Cameroon Diplomatic representation abroad:

- Canada <http://www.hc-cameroon-ottawa.org/>
- USA <http://www.ambacam-usa.org/>
- UK <http://www.cameroonhighcommission.co.uk/>
- Netherlands <http://www.cameroon-embassy.nl/>
- Saudi Arabia for Middle East and Arab States <http://ambacamriyad.org.sa/>
- Germany <http://www.ambacam.de/>
- France <http://www.ambacamfrance.org/>
- Italy <http://www.cameroonembassy.it/>

Flying Information

Volunteers and visitors will fly into **Douala International Airport (DLA)**. Major airlines serving DLA Include **Air France, Air Brussels, Kenya Airlines, South Africa Airlines, Swiss Air and Ethiopian Airlines**. From the USA, Delta partners with Air France and United/Continental partners with Brussels. For prices and options check out

Fly for Good: (<http://flyforgood.net>)

Kayak: (<http://www.kayak.com>)

SKY Scanner (skyscanner.net)

OPodo (<http://opodo.com>)

Voyama (<http://www.vayama.com>)

Before leaving your country, you will need your passport, visa and yellow fever card. You cannot buy your visa after landing in the Douala airport. Proof of yellow fever vaccination will be required before exiting the airport.

Insurance

No matter how prepared or informed you are, things can and do go wrong. To help keep you safe and healthy, we require all volunteers to purchase travel insurance. Click here to find insurance information with our insurance partners and collaborators.

- **Volunteer/Student Card** <http://www.volunteercard.net>
- **INext** <http://www.inext.com>

Home Government Registration

Please register with your home government international cooperation/foreign affairs/home affairs office registration and host Country Embassy if any before your depart.

Most volunteers can register with their government's Department of International Affairs/Cooperation/Home affairs (or equivalent). If your country offers this, you are expected to register with your government before departure. By registering, your government can contact and assist you in an emergency, such as a natural disaster or civil unrest, or inform you of a family emergency at home.

Some Links:

[Registration for Canadian Citizens](#)

[Registration for American Citizens](#)

[Registration for Australian Citizens](#)

[Registration for UK Citizens](#)

[Registration for Irish Citizens](#)

Arrival (Douala International Airport)

Coming out of Immigration: Make sure to have your yellow fever card and your baggage claim stubs on hand when you get off of the plane.

There will be MANY people trying to help you with your bags so don't let ANYONE carry your bags unless they have a sign with your name on it or a picture of you.

Occasionally, visitors have been hassled by customs officials wanting money to let you pass through customs. You should never have to pay more than 10,000 XAF (\$20), depending on what you are carrying. If you don't have anything valuable just tell the officials that you have clothing in your suitcase and they should let you pass. Our advice is to try to keep a low profile. Pack in normal suitcases or duffels. Avoid cardboard boxes that seem to draw more attention from customs.

Look like a —poor student/volunteer traveler rather than a wealthy businessman or woman. Once you've collected your luggage, it will be opened by custom officers to check for commercial goods. Some people get through unchecked if the officers are too busy to look on your side. Use caution when allowing others to help you collect and check your bags. Some people may claim to be customs officials; however, this can be a way to extract a bribe from unsuspecting passengers.

Arriving in an African airport can at times be intimidating, especially at night, since it looks quite chaotic and taxi drivers will fight to get you in their car. Make sure you have a reliable person picking you up as well as some numbers to call just in case.

Budgeting for Your Trip

The following are just ideas of what you will want to budget per month for your stay in Buea. This will vary from person to person, depending on what kind of traveler you are. Some extra things you may want to plan for might include travel outside of Buea, stays in nicer hotels to treat yourself,, gifts for your Cameroonian hosts (if staying with a family), and maybe a little extra in case you decide to extend your stay and need to purchase a visa extension. Also, there are really nice restaurants and shopping in Douala and Yaoundé—if you plan to visit, you may find yourself spending outside your budget, so plan for this.

Amounts are denoted in USD.

- Food \$100 month, variable could be more or less depending on personal choices;
- Cooking gas \$5 month- variable- could be more or less depending on amount of cooking you do;
- Week end excursions transportation \$ 10 - 30 per week-end
- Taxis \$30 month variable, depending on desire to travel around;
- Dining out \$50 month, variable, depending on frequency and choices;
- Street food meals are \$0.50-\$1.00. Meat dishes range \$2.50- \$5.00;
- Dining in nicer restaurants can be \$5 – \$10 per meal;
- Snacks ranging 10-20 cents per snack. (peanuts, plantain chips, fruit slices, coconut, boiled eggs, etc);

- Internet Maximum of \$50 month for month of unlimited. (You can also "pay as you go" which can be less). Cyber cafes are scattered around town and can cost about \$1 per 2 hours;
- Phone \$10-\$20 per month, depending on texting or calling.

Cash

We wouldn't advise bringing lots of cash into the country; probably enough for getting food in the airports and maybe a \$150 besides that. It's a bit frustrating to convert dollars or Euros into CFA. If you do want to get money converted, have it in 100 form, crisp and new-looking, and not any older than 2003.

If you choose to bring money, it is recommended that you open a local account at the SCB/BICEC Banks rather than store money in your room. Alternatively, if you have an account that has a Visa/master credit/debit card attached, you can withdraw money at the local ATM machines. There are several ATMs points in Buea, Limbe and other towns in Cameroon for visa & master cards. You will want to check with your bank to see how much they will charge you per transaction. If you take larger amounts out at one time, it works fairly well. Your friends or family back home can add money to the account if needed.

II. CAMEROON

Cameroon

National and Regional Capitals



Cameroon's estimated 250 ethnic groups form five large regional-cultural groups: western highlanders (or grassfielders), including the Bamileke, Bamoun, and many smaller entities in the Northwest (est. 38% of population); coastal tropical forest peoples, including the Bassa, Douala, and many smaller entities in

the Southwest (12%); **southern tropical forest peoples**, including the Beti, Bulu (subgroup of Beti), Fang (subgroup of Beti), and Pygmies (officially called Bakas) (18%); **predominantly Islamic peoples** of the northern semi-arid regions (the Sahel) and central highlands, including the Fulani, also known as Peuhl in French (14%); and **the "Kirdi", non-Islamic or recently Islamic peoples** of the northern desert and central highlands (18%).

The people concentrated in the **southwest and northwest regions**--around Buea and Bamenda -- use standard **English and "pidgin," as well as their local languages**. In the three Northern regions -- Adamaoua, Garoua, and Maroua -- either French or Fulfulde, the language of the Fulani, is widely spoken. Elsewhere, French is the principal second language, although pidgin and some local languages such as Ewondo, the dialect of a Beti clan from the Yaoundé area, also are widely spoken.

Although **Yaoundé is Cameroon's capital, Douala is the largest city, main seaport, and main industrial and commercial center**. A larger sea port is in construction in Kribi, Edea and Limbe/Tiko natural sea ports are under consideration for construction.

The western highlands are the most fertile in Cameroon and have a relatively healthy environment in higher altitudes. This region is densely populated and has intensive agriculture, commerce, cohesive communities, and historical emigration pressures. **From here, Bantu migrations into eastern, southern, and central Africa are believed to have originated about 2,000 years ago**. Bamileke people from this area have in recent years migrated to towns elsewhere in Cameroon, such as the coastal provinces, where they form much of the business community. About 77,000 non-Africans, including more than 6,000 French and 1,000 U. S. citizens, reside in Cameroon.

Official Name: Republic of Cameroon

Area: 475,442 km²

Coasts: 402 Km

Population: 19.8 million

Country Capital: Yaoundé (1 915 000 inhabitants)

Currency: francs CFA

Official Language: English and French

Official Time: GMT +1 hour

Buea: 175 000 inhabitants

Motto: Peace, Work, Fatherland

It is Cameroon!!

Cameroon is located in Central Africa. The Pacific Ocean to the South, Nigeria and Chad to the North, and the Central African Republic to the East, border it.

Cameroon is divided into 10 regions. Cameroon has a population of 19.5 million inhabitants. **Our national capital, Yaoundé, is located in the Center region. The largest cities are Douala (Littoral), Maroua (Far North). English and French are the country's official language; people also speak their vernacular language and pidgin, which is derived from English.**

Once again, welcome to "Africa in Miniature"-Cameroon, have a wonderful stay and thank you for your time! Have fun and achieve your tasks/objective(s). The Republic of Cameroon/Republique du Cameroun is bilingual with French being the dominant language in the former French territories and English/Pidgin English being spoken in the former British territories. There are 10 Regions (Provinces until 2009) in Cameroon. Eight of the Regions are Francophone and two are Anglophone Southwest (SW) and the Northwest (NW). The total population of Cameroon is around 20 million. The two largest cities are Yaoundé with about 1.9 million inhabitants and Douala with more than 2 million.

Time

Cameroon does not observe daylight savings time. Time is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) plus one hour.

Currency

Central African Franc (CFA or XAF). Exchange rates vary but recently have been fluctuating between 450-500 CFA = 1 USD. The CFA is tied to the Euro, so one Euro is always 656 CFA.

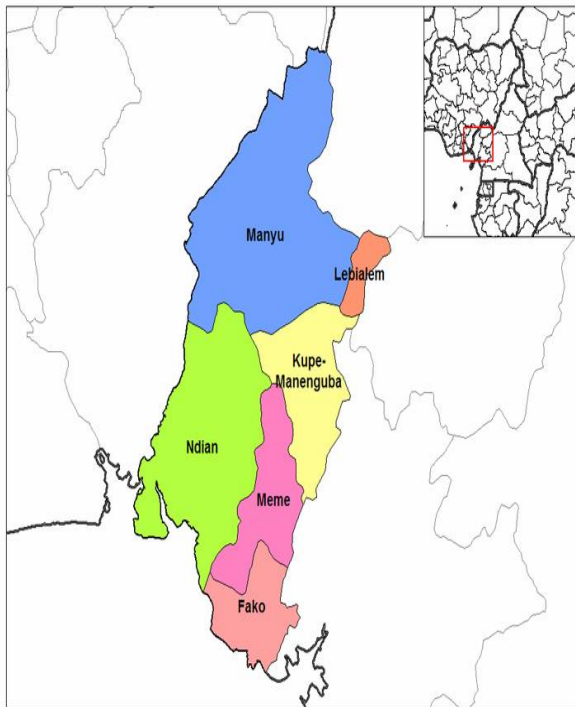
To find other currency exchange rates, visit www.xe.com

Weights and Measures

Cameroon uses the Metric system.

South West Region (SWR)

Population of the region is about 1.8 million. Major communities are Kumba, Buea and Limbé – are major touristic towns in Cameroon -Buea is the Regional capital hosting the Governor of the Region and other major regional delegations of Cameroon government Ministries, Mamfe a border division with Nigeria.



The South West Province created in 1972 which is the present South West Region by presidential decree no.: 2008/376 of November 12, 2008; organizing the administrative units in the Republic of Cameroon. This region occupies a surface area of about 24 910 km Sq. It represents 5.2% of the surface area of the country, with Mount Cameroon occupying about 1 750 km sq. The population of the South West Region estimated as per 2007 to be 1 349 685 inhabitants being 7.5% of the national population of which 1 036 196 inhabitants (76.8%) are in the rural areas. The average population density of the region is 53 inhabitant/km sq, but this population is unequally distributed. The zones/areas with number density:

- Mundeba, Ndian with less than 5 inhabitants per km sq.
- Akwaya, mamfe, Nguti with average density of between 5_-15 inhabitants per km sq.
- Liabeliam division and Tiko subdivision, has a density of 100-200 inhabitants per km sq.
- Limbe and muyuka has a density above 200 inhabitants per km sq.
- Buea subdivision with a population of more 75 000 inhabitants.

The Southwest Region (SWR) and Northwest Region (NWR) regions of Cameroon are Anglophone. There are many Francophones as well because of regional integration. It is helpful to know French in certain situations, especially when dealing with law enforcement officers who are mostly Francophones. If you don't speak French, you will get along fine. Pidgin English is also spoken in the SW and NW. It is the common street language and it will be helpful to know some. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of resources out there, but google around and see what you can find. You will think that you sound ridiculous speaking Pidgin and you will be corrected. People will laugh at you constantly. Pidgin really is the language of the market and street and people will appreciate the fact that you are trying to speak it.

General Information on Fako Division

Capital of the Division of Fako is Limbe, Inhabitants Population about 500,000 (Buea itself is over 100 00)

Climate

The climate is lukewarm/tropical coastal. Usually the temperature goes from 18°C to 24°C. Hard rain periods:

Usually March to September and harsh dry seasons from October to March

Business Time Schedules

Shops: 8:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Offices: 8:00 am to 3:30pm

Banks: 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. & 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Cyber cafes: 8:30 AM to 10:00PM

Markets: 6:00am to 6:00pm

FAKO Division AND BUEA Sub Division

The City is located in the south western belt of the country and under the administrative jurisdiction of Fako Division in the South west Region of Cameroon.

With its privileged geographic location and pleasant climate, the area offers beautiful landscapes like forests, mountains, valleys and dusks of great color. Buea itself has adapted its layout to a quite broken and steep topography, allowing therefore a great opening to the landscape and an urban plot of great interest. It is considered like a terminal city, and due to bad roads, not very accessible. It is a rural area with much potential for development for it is richly endowed by nature. The distance via land from Douala's international airport is at least 1 hour by car due to traffic and poorly constructed roads. It is however a good tourist area and the people have a very friendly culture with a population over 100 000 inhabitants.

Limbe

The distance from Buea to Limbe is about 20 kilometers. In a private car it can take about 30 minutes. Via local transportation (Buses) perhaps about 40 minutes. You can take a taxi from Mile 17 to the center of Limbe (mile two/Texaco) and then from there you take another taxi into other parts of town and toward the beaches which are closest to farthest: Mile 6, Madison Park, Bimbina and Seme Beach. The cost is between 500-1000 CFA to go onto the beach. In most places this assures you some supervision.

The beaches are not safe at night unless you are staying at a hotel on the beach. In town there is a craft market where they have quite a few very nice souvenirs. (A little pricy, but quality stuff).

Limbe is also home to a botanical garden and Wildlife Centre as well as several good restaurants. Arne's Restaurant at the Wild Life Centre is a favorite. Another lovely place to stay for a weekend or have a meal is the Bird Watchers Club on the bay and Miramar Hotel in the Botanical Gardens which also has an Olympic sized swimming pool. The Zoo and Botanical cost 100FCFA entrance fee. Transport from Mile 4 Bus park to Zoo /Botanical garden is 200FCFA; from mile two 100/200FCFA.

Buea

Buea is located about 2,800 feet up the side of Mt Cameroon and about 70 kilometers from Douala or about a 90 minute drive from the airport in Douala (in good weather and normal traffic). Limbé, a

beautiful volcanic black sand beach town is about 30/40 minutes drive from Buea. Chariot Hotel in Buea has a nice Olympic sized swimming pool, so you do not need to be in Limbe/Kribi all the time to swim.

Mount Cameroon

At 4040 meters (13,255 feet) it is the tallest mountain in West and Central Africa. It is also an active volcano. The last eruption was in 2000, but as recently as February of 2012, there has been volcanic activity sending rocks and debris flying at the summit.

The best time of year to hike the mountain is December through April, though the season is officially late September through May. To avoid rain, the best month is January. It costs about 50,000 CFA (\$100) per person for a party of five. This includes for the permit to be on the mountain, the guide, porters, and a cook for the group. This does not include renting a sleeping bag, mat, and tent. There are different length trips. The normal amount is 3 days, but they also have the 2 day (which is more intense) and 5 day (which takes you further behind the mountain and comes out near Limbé). It does get cold on the mountain (10-18 C/50-66 F) so you would want to bring jackets, wind breakers, gloves, hats and whatever else will keep you warm. During the day it can get very hot so also have t-shirts. It's nice to have a small backpack to carry your essentials for the day along with a big backpack that the porters will carry. Bringing water bottles, walking sticks, etc. is also a good thing.

Note: If you are not the type of person that likes to hike you can just enjoy the view of the mountain from anywhere in Buea.

Security in Buea

Unlike Douala/Yaoundé and other regional towns, Buea is a safe place. Everybody knows each other and attacking Westerners is not on the agenda. Few cases of pickpockets are known in Taxis. Petty theft, on the contrary, is quite common and aimed at everyone, not necessarily at white people. For example, local people do not leave their laundry outside after sunset, since "insects" could come and take it. The best advice is to take as good care of your property as you would in Europe, to lock your door when you are not around and not to flash your tempting electronics unless you are using it.

A quite common trick is to apply "white prices", although after a while Westerners learn the correct price. Always count your change, even in banks or at the post office, everybody does it.

Money talks

It is engrained in the local culture to borrow things from each other – in the sense that if today you are able to lend, tomorrow you can also borrow, so you may encounter people asking you to lend them your property/money. It is up to you to accept or refuse, depending on the trust this person inspires in you. Giving back can be slower than you expect it and some people are easily prone to forget it.

Many people run after each single CFA 100 coin, so they'll always be grateful if you give them something or invite them. Needs are endless and accepting every plea can take a big toll on your budget. People talk more openly about money issues than in Western countries, since they all struggle, it is not a shame to express the concern and ask you to do "what you can do" since you are anyway richer than them. It can sometimes get overwhelming depending on how sensitive you are. Again, you can always refuse politely.

When you are in a bar or restaurant, it is normal that the richest person around the table picks up the note/bill, and very often it will be you. If you tell someone: "Let's have a beer", you are inviting the person. Sharing bills is not in the local culture.

Children don't beg Westerners for money or pens, a more common behavior in tourist areas. Although eating huge servings at meals, they are always hungry for a food different from corn fou-fou, Bakweeri

bible, and they will always look at you with imploring eyes if you eat something in front of them. Sharing food is part of the culture, so you'll appear mean if you never give anything.

Weather

The area is tropical and humid all year round. The dry season may not have much rain, but the humidity will still be apparent and keeps things relatively green. Dry season is typically from December through February. Intermittent rains begin March to May and the rainy season comes June through October, though there is less rain in September and October.

Local Transport

Traveling within Buea costs no more than 200 CFA. (In some extreme cases or late at night it might cost 250 - 300 CFA.) Taxis are constantly running up and down the main road of Buea. It is easy to get one. Just stand alongside the road on the correct side for the direction of your travel and put your hand out. You will share a taxi with up to 4 or more passengers (2 in the front seat and 3 in the back).

For longer distances, there are mini buses that you can take. The coordinator or other volunteers you meet in Buea will be around to give you the ins and outs of bus travel. It is an experience! If you are taking a taxi a longer distance, say to the rural settings of Buea or to Limbe they may put 4 passengers in the back seat and two in front at times three with the driver making four back and four front especially travelling to the rural areas. It is negotiable; you can pay for the seats and be comfortable.

Water

Most places in Buea have running water, although it is usually not on all day. You will get used to filling up buckets when it is on and you generally won't have a problem. Official advice is that you should treat your water in some way to prevent water-borne illnesses. You can bring or buy a water filter or use someone else's, boil water or use chemicals to treat the water.

Most places in Buea do not have a water heater, unless you are staying at select hotels. There are water coils used for heating buckets of water for bathing though the coils are inexpensive, usually about 1 000 CFA (\$2) and well worth it.

Electricity

Electricity (Surge protectors, transformers, electrical type, voltage converters, power savers). Voltage in Cameroon is 220V-240V/50 hz. The good news is that converters are cheap and easy to find. The power in Buea is generally pretty steady but can be finicky at times.

You will want to use a voltage regulator, **Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS)** in case of power surges. This is especially important for computers, MP3 players and hair styling devices. Regulators are available in Cameroon for about 25,000 – 50 000 CFA (US\$ 50 – US\$ 100).

A Regulator will actually change the amount of electricity coming out of the outlet.

An Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) will automatically change the amount of electricity coming out of the outlet and keep power for about 30 - 45 minutes when electricity goes off.

Only a **regulator** will protect your appliances from being fried with wrong voltage supply and keep your appliances from exploding when there is a current surge.

Food in Buea

Overall, there is less diversity than in Western countries, and most of the food is quite compact, starchy and cooked with a lot of oil. People who enjoy high food standards and food variety are advised to lower their expectations during the length of their stay.

It is fair to say that white people eat everyday without a second thought a lot of delicious food that is only served for special occasions on an average Cameroonian table. Not every Cameroonian is having 3 meals a day; the big meal is dinner, while breakfast most often comprises leftovers from the previous night. Fish and meat are not eaten every day and bread is a luxury people will envy you for. **There is a local equivalent to Nutella called Tartina, where groundnuts make the taste slightly sourer. To make a child happy, give him/her a slice of bread with Tartina or a mango.**

The staple food in this part of Cameroon is kwaccoco and mbanga soup-(made from coco yam, fish and palm nuts).

Some other typical meals you'll eat in Buea include:

- Boiled plantain with n'dole (cooked bananas and leaves cooked with groundnuts)
- Rice and beans
 - maize meal with boiled green leaves "corn fou-fou with n'djama n'djama"
- Rice and vegetable stew or tomato sauce or beans sauce or vegetable sauce
- Water fou-fou (cassava / manioc) with boiled leaves
- Achu with spicy sauce (pounded cocoyams, a very sticky texture)
- Barbecue fish with fried potatoes
- Soya (Cow meat on a stick, barbecued)
- Omelet. A local version is an omelet with fried spaghettis.
- Chicken. Local chicken run around free during 3 months, therefore their meat is far firmer than our industrial ones.
- Boiled or barbecue corn
- Chicken Chips in the university restaurant and small hotels around.

Note: Some of these dishes are eaten with the hands, although people will always provide forks and spoons on request. Always eat with your right hand since the left hand is used for some more intimate places (see hygiene below). You'll be provided with some water to wash your hand before starting the meal.

Aside from the basic items you can find everywhere, like tomatoes, onions, Maggi or salt, below is a list of items you can find or not find in BUEA.

Find:

- Golden apple, a luxury fruit here
- Excellent mangoes, papayas, guavas, bananas, passion fruit, avocado, pineapple, watermelon, etc.
- Sweet potatoes
- Green beans
- White bread
- Margarine
- Yogurt with added sugar
- Spaghettis
- Local honey
- Ginger, parsley, basil
- Processed, industrial cheese imported from Denmark, or cheese cubes such as La Vache qui Rit
- Candy
- Biscuits
- Industrial mayonnaise
- Condensed milk
- Bottled water
- Coca Cola, Sprite, Fanta, and the equivalent local brand

- Soda water.
- Excellent beers served in 0.65l bottles
- Palm wine
- Wine and spirits, only in wine shops/supermarkets. The person who buys it first will comment on the taste.
- Butter
- Mustard, Ketchup
- Cream
- Liquid milk. Powder milk is everywhere
- Good cheese (usually found at import or foreign 'supermarkets')
- Brown, whole wheat bread
- Marmalade (although we can arrange buying some jars from an affiliated NGO on the road from Douala; flavors are mangoes, banana, pineapple-ginger)
- Plain yogurt you could use to cook sauces
- Peanut butter
- Pizza
- Sushi (just kidding!!)

Fruits and Vegetables

Cameroon is blessed to have a tremendous variety of fresh, tropical fruits available for prices much, much cheaper than what you would pay in your home country. Be sure to take advantage of this delicious and healthy opportunity

Health in Buea

Buea has got 3 good hospitals operating with local and Western staff. These hospitals do perform all medical acts including surgery, in hygienic conditions. However, they request advance payment to perform. There are few mosquitoes in Buea due to its height and temperate climate. However, mosquitoes are a pest in the lower regions, especially in Douala, and we advise you to consult your general practitioner at home and follow his advice for malaria prophylaxis.

In spite of few mosquitoes in Buea, make sure to bring enough bug spray as midges are in abundance and their bites can be even more uncomfortable than a mosquito bite.

STDs and HVI/AIDS are very high here due to ignorance and some beliefs, so using condoms is a must.

Get all your immunizations in advance before coming to Cameroon. You will want to plan months ahead of time since some of the vaccines are a series. Yellow Fever is required. You must show your card at immigrations when coming off the airplane in Douala airport.

Check out the CDC website for the latest in recommended vaccines.

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/cameroon.htm>

Typically, you will need to make sure your polio and MMR are up to date. Your tetanus vaccine should be less than 5 years old. Yellow fever, typhoid, hepatitis A, and meningitis will be needed. If you have never had chicken pox, the vaccine is worth getting. You may be exposed to people here with chicken pox. Additionally, you will want to make sure you have completed your hepatitis B series. Occasionally people bring post-exposure HIV antivirals with them. It is easier to start taking them right away if you have an accidental needle stick, sexual encounter or other potential exposure.

Post exposure HIV prophylaxis IS available here though if you have an HIV exposure.

Malaria prophylaxis is recommended as malaria is considered endemic here (year round). Most people choose doxycycline, Malarone, or Lariam (mefloquin). Only doxycycline is readily available here. Mefloquine is another option, however, many health risks have said to be related. Talk to your doctor about the best option for you. Coartem, an anti-malaria medication is also available here, but it may be helpful to bring some with you. Coartem is not a preventative medicine-you take it once you suspect you are getting sick from malaria. It is a good idea to carry Coartem with you while traveling in Cameroon, in case you get sick. You will of course, also want to make sure you have enough prescription medication for your stay, such as asthma medicine, birth control pills, high blood pressure medications, contacts and solution, etc. If you wear glasses, it may also be a good idea to bring a second pair, just in case of a broken lens or frame.

Some people bring a first aid kit containing things they often use for personal symptom relief. Things like Tylenol, Advil, bandages, band-aids, allergy relief, antibiotic ointment, anti-itch creamed. Bring your own mosquito repellent and sun tan lotion. Although not necessary, you can bring a mosquito net if you like or purchase one here. There may not always be a net depending on where you are staying.

You are almost guaranteed to contract some kind of stomach bug or form of diarrhea while here. Just plan on it happening. Most cases are not serious, but it's always wise to check with a doctor if symptoms persist longer than 3-5 days or is accompanied by a fever. You may want to bring some anti-diarrheal for traveling. You will also want to have a Pepto medicine in your kit. The most important thing to remember when you have diarrhea is to make sure you get plenty of clean water. Gatorade or Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) are also good.

Buea Health Care Centers

Buea is home to several quality health care centers that will take good care of you should you come down with something.

- The 7th day Adventist Health Centre - Buea has been serving the community since 1971 when it opened as a small dispensary (clinic). 7th Day has an excellent American doctor on site.

Phone: +237-3332-2270

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Buea-Seventh-day-Adventist-Hospital/131587239127>

- Cameroon Baptist Hospital in Mutengene is about 5 miles outside of Buea.

Phone: +237-3348-1262

<http://www.cbchealthservices.org/html/bhm.html>

- Government Regional Reference Hospital of Buea in Clerks Quarters on Long Street.
- Mount Mary Hospital (Catholic institution.)
- Solidarity Clinic (Private)

There are many smaller clinics run by a vast array of health workers. Traditional medicine is still practiced, including a strong underlying belief in witchcraft. Chinese medicine and natural remedies are also touted in the area for those not satisfied with 'white man medicine'.

About Sanitation and Hygiene

The average Cameroonian doesn't have access to a Western-style bathroom. The standard facilities include a pit toilet without toilet paper – you wipe yourself with a hand and water, then wash your hand. Bucket showers are the most common way of washing.

Western-style bathrooms include a wash basin, a flush toilet and a shower in the same room. There is no warm water from the tap but you can warm water with a coil in a bucket then shower yourself with it.

Despite these uncomfortable conditions and the muddy roads, personal hygiene is important and most people are very clean. Cleanliness of clothes and shoes is also very important. Dirty clothes and shoes will drastically demean your credibility and many Westerners are not taking this aspect of things seriously enough. Traveling to Africa doesn't mean you should only pack your oldest, worn-out clothes and never wash them.

Find:

- Soap
- Deodorant
- Tooth brush and tooth paste
- Body lotion (although probably not your favorite brand)
- Sanitary pads (but they are very thick and therefore very uncomfortable)
- Razor blades (one can go to the barber)
- Toilet paper
- Tissues
- Washing/laundry powder
- Liquid soap for cleaning the dishes

Not find:

- Tampons
- Make-up or shampoo for white people
- * Gotten from Douala or Yaoundé even Limbe at times.

III. WHAT TO PACK?

This may vary based on length of stay and volunteer position.

Useful items to bring along:

- A laptop since computers are scarce, slow and can be virus-infected. Power cuts are quite common and frustrating when one needs to work. You should definitely consider buying a power stabilizer/regulator/UPS for your Laptop costing on average 25 000 FCFA to 50 000FCFA (equivalent US\$ 50 to 100). Interns and volunteers in the past have had their computers ruined from low voltage or power surges, and you do not want this to happen to you, too. The price of a stabilizer is much easier to afford than a brand new computer.
- A USB key, very important to transfer files from one machine to another since there is no local network or Internet in offices
- A torch/flashlight with enough spare batteries. Batteries can be bought here but they usually come from Nigeria and the quality isn't up to Western standards
- A Swiss army knife
- Enough clothes. Unlike Asia, buying clothes here isn't cheaper than in your country and you'll mostly find second-hand pieces. You can however buy material and pay a dressmaker to sew traditional African clothing for you. DO wear knee-length or long pants and skirts, DON'T take shorts or mini-skirts. Buea still has a village mentality and showing your thighs is no better than flashing your underwear. It is also not advisable to wear skimpy tops revealing your belly button.
- Warm clothing. Buea is surprisingly cool at night.
- During the rainy season, a strong umbrella, Gum boot, rain coat will prove invaluable

- Closed, waterproof shoes for the rainy season. DO take smart shoes and the gear to wash them, as you'll be judged by the care you take of your shoes. Women should avoid high heels due to the road conditions.
- A digital camera including the connection cable to download the pictures into a computer and send them through Internet.
- Water purifying tablets. Many previous volunteers have been drinking tap water without being sick; however, each person being more or less sensitive, we recommend you boil or purify your water before drinking it. A filter can be useful during some field trips in remote places but the expense may be too high in regard of the usage.
- Your personal pharmacy
- Mosquito net /Spray
- Plastic flip-flops for the shower
- A camping sheet for non-hygienic places
- A good sleeping bag if you want to avoid the local sheets and blankets
- Bath towel (can be bought here but of bad quality)
- Condoms

Clothing

Tips:

Take note: Cameroonians dress well and they take particular notice of whether or not your shoes are clean. Dress nicely here unless you are going to be out in the bush. Since you will most likely be washing your clothes by hand you will want things that won't stretch (or that you don't mind be stretched) because you will be wringing the clothing out.

You can buy clothing here too, so if you're clothes get ruined you're not stranded. In general, when you visit protocol or people in high or government positions, it is considered respectful for women to wear a skirt or a dress. Cameroon has great used jeans and they are very inexpensive. If you dig your denim, maybe bring one pair of jeans and buy some here to take home.

Likewise, it is also a really cool thing to have clothes made by a tailor here. Western clothing is equally acceptable as traditional African wear, and there are tailors everywhere. You can bring a few items and get some things made while you're here---it's a great souvenir to take home and one that won't just sit on a shelf. Try to bring mostly dark colored clothing. Whites and light colors tend to get discolored.

Items:

- Couple of nice shirts that can either be for casual wear or for church or events;
- Pants - quick dry pants preferable since during the rainy season your clothing takes forever (3-4 days) to dry and will still smell like mildew;
- Comfortable shoes since you will likely be walking a lot around town;
- Underwear- whatever you want to bring;
- Shower shoes (flip flops, Crocs). You can buy some really cheap flip flops in the market here and they work pretty good;
- A couple of skirts/dresses for women. Knee length (at the shortest). As with the pants and shirts, you want skirts that dry fast and don't get misshaped with wringing;
- Socks- 5 pairs would probably be sufficient and if you need more you can buy them in the market. You will need them if you climb the mountain;
- Rain jacket/gear (especially if you're here from June-August) Golashes/rainboots/GUMboots. For rainy season, although these are heavy in luggage. If you don't bring any, you might be able to find some used ones in the market. It will be worth it;

- Sweater/wind breaker/jacket. Even though it's Africa, Buea does get cold due to the mountain so it's nice to have a sweater and if you are planning on climbing the mountain it can get below freezing;
- Warm hat if you're climbing the mountain;
- Tennis shoes;

Toiletries

Tips:

You can honestly find anything in Cameroon if you only know where to look, so don't worry if you forgot something. It's just that a lot of items are easier to bring than to hunt for once you get here.

Items:

- Toothpaste/ Toothbrush;
- Toothbrush case to keep the bugs off your toothbrush;
- Deodorant;
- Q-tips;
- Tweezers;
- Fingernail clippers;
- Tampons or pads (you can find them here but they are pricy) (Diva cup is also an option, which you cannot find here, but just keep in mind that if you are staying with a family, you may find yourself in an awkward conversation when it's time to boil it on their stove);
- Soap, shower gel;
- Shampoo, conditioner (leave in conditioner is especially nice for after a beach day);
- Razors (If you're picky about razors bring 2+ from home and get the replaceable razor ends);
- Shaving Gel/cream (It's a life saver, but you can get by w/out it!);
- Hand sanitizer;
- Any meds that you need to take. (Meds here are fairly cheap but just in case);
- Shoes (You can find them here but for women sizes smaller than a 7 you will have a harder time finding shoes unless it's flip flops);
- Tiny sewing kit.

Bedding

Tips:

Check with your housing situation to see if you need to bring anything, but the following items are a good guideline. If you plan on climbing the mountain, there are sleeping bags available for rent if you don't feel like toting one around.

Items:

- Blanket (Fleece) - It does get kind of cold in the raining season;
- Sheets;
- Pillow case;
- Towel (backpacking towels, aka quick dry towels work GREAT!) Sleeping Bag/Sleep sheet/Sleeping Pad.

Miscellaneous

- Miscellaneous Items you should bring:
- Books/Magazines (There are a couple of libraries in Buea, but that's rare. In general;

- Cameroon is not a reading environment.) Many volunteers also bring e-readers, like Kindles
- and Nooks;
- Alarm clock (although most phones have alarms on them);
- Water proof/resistant watch;
- Journal;
- Headlamp/flashlight with batteries (this is a must have!);
- Money pouch;
- Pictures of your family, friends, and life. Cameroonians will love to hear about them;
- Water bottle;
- Laundry bag.

Items That You *Might* Want To Bring...

- Backpacking water filter or chemicals;
- Ziploc bags (Pack things in them and then you can use them for storage);
- French-English, English-French dictionary;
- Computer (There are internet cafés if you want to pay for internet, but you can also buy an internet key to use where you live.);
- French press or gravity filter and coffee if you are an addict and room deodorizers;
- High quality chef's knife (If you are here for an extended stay and do a lot of cooking);
- Moist towelettes-antibacterial---can't explain how useful these will be!

Welcome to **SODEIT**! If you have received this volunteer handbook from us, you know by now a little about us and our community and have some belief that we are an organization you share an interest with.

IV. FOOD

Market

Although there are grocery stores mini supermarkets in Buea, three markets.

- Buea/Molyko: Saturday and Tuesday from 6 AM to 6 PM
- Buea Town: Monday and Friday from 6 AM to 6 PM
- Muea: Sunday and Thursday from 6 AM to 6 PM

It is a good idea to know some Pidgin when you go to the market. It will win you some respect. Also, it is quite imperative to bargain with the vendors on any item that isn't marked with a written price. If you don't bargain with them, you will not only lose your money, but you will lose their respect. It is a really good idea to go to the market with a local to have them show you the process and so that you can learn the correct prices. Other volunteers who have been here for a while are also a good resource.

The larger cities like Yaoundé and Douala have big supermarkets and lots of white-man stores', but you can pretty much find everything you need in Buea, if you just know where to look.

Produce

The SWR is the breadbasket of Cameroon. So many things grow easily here and there is always enough food for everyone. All of the following can be found in Buea when they are in season:

Tomatoes, cucumbers, celery, lettuce, potatoes, okra, onions, sweet potatoes, chili peppers, Irish potatoes, papaya, guava, bananas, plantain, pomelo, grapefruit, African apples, oranges, mangoes, etc.

You can always find produce sold on the side of the road, but you will usually get better prices at the market.

Meat

All meat markets in Cameroon are open air except for fish markets or cold stores which sell frozen fish. There is a good meat market in Clerks Quarters neighborhood. Although you can find meat for sale in other places, the Clerk's Quarters market is probably the most hygienic and consistent. You can buy beef, pork, goat, chicken, and occasionally other bush meat.

Speaking of bush meat, there is a large selection available, but please be responsible when buying. Know whether or not what you buy is endangered or not. Cane rats, guinea pigs and porcupines are raised and legal, but the primate and elephant bush meat trade is very real here and buying the meat is illegal and adds to declining numbers of already endangered species. We will even go as far as to say that you should discourage Cameroonians from this terrible practice if you see it as well.

Street Food

There are plenty of street food options for those coming with an open mind. The cost is minimal and the food can be quite good. Often there are little kiosks that cook a few buckets of food in the morning and sell a dish for less than 500 CFA per meal. Examples are corn/beans, rice and beans, puff-puff and beans, spaghetti omelets, omelet sandwiches, fish fritters, snail kabobs, roasted corn on the cob, grilled meat, pepper soup, and other cooked foods. Street food can be delicious, but like anything, can also be a source of food borne illnesses. Just use caution—if the vendors seem clean and conscientious about hygiene, you should be okay.

Restaurants

There are also a bit fancier restaurants for a sit-down meal. Buea is home to many good restaurants. They serve either local dishes or European dishes like chicken and French fries or fried plantains, fried rice, and some even serve pizza, salads, and burgers.

V.CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

People generally greet more than in Western countries, you are often greeted on the street by people to whom you were not introduced. Don't hesitate to reply, these people just want to be welcoming. The most common greeting is a handshake, although it is not too vigorous. Common terms include Good morning, Bonjour, etc. People always enquire how you are doing, if you are enjoying Cameroon, if you slept well, etc. The best answer is "fine."

Men often shake hands with everyone when entering a home, greeting a group or leaving. Women most often offer handshakes as well, but they can kiss each other on the cheek if they are acquainted. It is customary to address people by a title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Mola, Doctor, among others) when being introduced. First names are not used between strangers.

Also, it is common to be addressed by your skin color or ethnicity. Please don't take offense to this, it is not meant to be disrespectful. Usually, it is meant as a friendly greeting. So, you should not be surprised, and try not to be offended, when you are referred to as 'white man' or 'American'.

Eating

Good manners and courtesy when eating are important to Cameroon. Pleasant conversation is welcome at the table, as it simulates a feeling of goodwill. People usually heavily load their plates and do not take a second helping as it is deemed to be impolite. In a group, it is impolite to take anything to eat without first offering it to others. In restaurants, a 10% tip is included in the bill; if not, it should be left at the table.

Transportation and communications means being unreliable, people can show up at meal time without being impolite. It is the tradition to give them food. Western people are famous for not sharing their food.

If drinking palm wine, always hold your glass with your right hand, as this traditional beverage has deeper meaning than solely quenching your thirst.

Gestures

Politeness and proper etiquette are emphasized in Cameroon. It is improper to put one's feet on furniture when visiting. In front of traditional rulers, crossing one's leg is very impolite, although this rule is not very strict for foreigners. Yawning in the presence of strangers or in a group is impolite because it is a sign of hunger. A person is an important gesture of goodwill and will open many doors.

VI. THE PEOPLE

General Attitudes

Cameroonians value courtesy and smiles. It is not impolite to be late for an appointment, especially in rural areas where transportation is scarce and unreliable. People are used, if not happy, to waiting. For example, an official meeting called for 9:00 am will start earliest at 10:00 am or even later.

Cameroonians are proud of their history of democracy and independence.

Religion

Cameroon is a free country in terms of worship but Christians are predominant in the southern areas especially the Catholic faith, while Muslim religions dominate in the Northern part of the country.

People are fervent worshippers and many go to church every Sunday. Church service, which can last more than 2 hours, is always lively with drums and choral singing. Aside from Catholics, Presbyterians and Baptists are fairly represented. Expect to often be asked what your religion is and if you go to church. You'll face incomprehension if you say you don't believe in God. Try to remember that, whatever your personal views may be, it is important to be courteous and respectful when presenting what you believe and listening to the beliefs of others. This is especially important in Cameroon, where religion and faith are so predominant and valued.

Money

The Cameroon currency is the "frs" CFA Coins: 10, 25, 50, 100 and 500 francs CFA
Bills: 500, 1000, 5.000, and 10.00 francs CFA.

VII. GENERAL INFORMATION

Euro is the easiest currency to carry with you, preferably to dollars. You can exchange money in any bank, money houses or even on the streets. Always check that the correct rate is applied, and remember the CFA has a fixed rate to the euro.

Cash withdrawal machines (ATM) are only available in big cities. The closest machines are in Buea and Limbe. There are also four ATM Machines (Visa card and master card) in Buea with BICEC, SCB banks and TOTAL Fuel Station.

Visa card is the only accepted credit/debit card, but very few places such as Western standards hotels accept master card in the big towns. Diners Club or American Express are not accepted at all.

Travelers' checks will only be accepted in banks in the big towns, they are not a reliable way to carry your travel money. Money transfer companies such as [Western Union](#), [Money express](#) and [Money Gram](#) are available in every little town. The most common banknote is the CFA 1000 note. Change is very scarce, so try and keep small notes and coins if you need to pay for a small purchase. The CFA 10,000 note will prove quite difficult to break unless you are in an expensive restaurant or a supermarket. [Bartering](#) is the norm in local markets and almost all street side shops. It is not usually considered rude. Bigger stores will most often have fixed prices. Do not be afraid to offer a lower price than what you are quoted, as you will likely be told an initially inflated price as a result of being a foreigner/white.

PRICE LIST

Prices for goods and service vary considerably depending of the city and the store. Please note that things bought out of the shop can always be bargained. Here is a partial list of "average" prices:

ITEMS	FCFA
Beer in restaurant or bar	550 to 700
FCFA Margarine 1kg	1,500
Bread (loaf) 50, 75, 100, 300	FCFA Meat (one Kg) 2, 500
Candy bar 200	FCFA ; Milk (1KG): 2, 800
Cigarettes (box of 20)	200 to 300
Newspaper	500
Coffee (cup)	150
Coffee 1kg	4 000
1 egg	50 to 75
Nescafe 1kg	3 500
Eggs (one tray 30)	1,900
Honey 0.25 kg	1 500
Haircut	500
One hour of Internet	Usually 200/300
4 mangoes	200
Phone (all local calls)	100
1 orange	50 to 100
Breakfast	600
1 pawpaw	100 to 300
Lunch at Restaurant	1000 to 2 500
1 pine apple	200 to 500
Dinner at Restaurant	1000 to 2 500
1 water Mellon	200 to 500
Soft Drinks Bottle/ Can	300 to 700
1 coconut	200 to 400
Liter of cooking oil	1 500
Rice 5 kg	5 000 to 6 000
Chocolate spread 0.25 kg	500 to 4 000
Spaghetti 5 kg	4 000 to 5 000
Mayonnaise spread 0.25kg	1 500 to 3 500

It is always advisable to ask your house help in the case of self catering accommodation or family host for price list of essentials you need as first time shopper in Cameroon. Show the list to SDI administrator to verify prices and the necessity of the goods. If possible go to the market alongside house help/host family to get familiar to bargaining and your local market situation.

Taxes

You have to pay in most of the things and services the VAT. (Sales tax) is 19.25%.

VIII. TRANSPORT, TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Computer

It's very convenient to have a computer (laptop or net book recommended) so that you can do all your writing/blogging/tweeting/watching movies in your room etc. on it. If privacy is not your concern then it's not necessary. Basically it's up to you whether you bring one or not. There are cyber cafes that you can go to use their computers, but of course you will have to pay to do that. Most computers should be fine with the 220V, but it's always good to use a regulator, just to be safe. SODEIT have internet in the office that you are welcome to use office hours.

Flash Drives

It is nice to have one of these especially if you need print documents or to get pictures from others computers. The only problem is that there are many viruses going around so you will want to make sure you are careful with where you plug in the drive. If you only have a PC, you might want to ask your friend with a Mac to erase your flash drive after plugging it into a high-risk computer like a PC at the print shop. Some anti-virus programs scan and clean your flash each time you put it in to your own computer as well. Make sure you have an anti-virus program on your computer. Assume that every computer is infected with a virus.

If you need to print things out, there are little print shops along the road where you can print out documents and get photocopies made. Printing costs 50-100 CFA per page for black and white and photocopies cost 25 CFA per page. Color, of course will cost a little more (150 – 500FCFA per page). You can also get photos printed out at photo shops and some documentation shops.

Internet

Internet speeds continue to improve and costs continue to drop. There are two main options:

1. There are several cyber cafés around. It cost about 200 CFA/hr and the service is kind of slow at most, although some are decent. You will also be able to use the internet at SODEIT during business hours.
2. If you would like internet where you are staying or portable internet, you can buy an internet USB from MTN, Camtel, Ringo, Set Mobile, Orange. You buy the USB stick and then add minutes to it. Depending on how much you want to use you will add about 5,000-15,000 CFA with it being about the same cost as a cyber café per hour. Of the four options Ringo and Orange is said to be the fastest for the Buea area, although some volunteers have not had good luck with them. If you plan on traveling a lot around Cameroon, one of the other options would be better, as Ringo is only available in larger cities for now. The price of a USB usually ranges from 10,000 CFA to 40,000 CFA with Camtel usually being the most expensive USB available. There are often promotions and it might be worth waiting a few weeks for 10-20,000 CFA off.

Cell Phones

You can buy a cell phone here for about 10,000 – 20,000 CFA. If you bring a phone with you, you will have to be sure to have it unlocked. You can purchase a SIM card for Orange or MTN at the cost of about 1000 CFA (\$2) if you bring your phone and it is unlocked.

There are four main phone companies:

MTN, Orange, Set Mobile and Camtel (most people use MTN and/or Orange)

Depending on usages, you can spend up to 10,000 CFA/month. Texting is cheaper than calling, so a majority of people do that. It costs about 100-200 CFA/minute to talk on the phone. About 50-100 CFA per text or SMS. Incoming calls are free. —Beeping/flash is a phenomenon you will quickly become

familiar with when you arrive. This is when someone calls you but hangs up before you can answer with the idea that you will call them back and they will not have to pay.

For international calls, like calling family overseas, Skype to Skype is free. You just need Internet. Otherwise, you can set up Skype accounts to have unlimited minutes to call the U.S. per month. Your family can call you – remember, free incoming. Call boxes are businesses that have landline phones where you can also call internationally—they are actually less expensive than domestic calls in Cameroon (no, it doesn't make any sense!).

Post Office/Mailing information

Normally packages will take about 4-5 weeks to reach you. It's sometimes free to get padded envelopes, but with boxes you normally have to pay about 1500 CFA to get them out of the post office. The address to have your mail sent to is:

-Your Name-

C/O Social Development International (SODEIT)

P.O. Box 44, Buea, SWR, Cameroon, AFRICA

*Packages seem to come faster and without being opened if you have family and friends write "God Bless" or some other religious phrase on it like "In Jesus Name". To send letters out it costs about 450-500 CFA and it takes just about the same amount of time to get back to the USA/your country as it does to get here (3 weeks).

If your family or friends are sending anything valuable, they should get the package insured or use DHL/EMS/UPS services. If they insure it, tell them not to write exactly what the item is on the insurance slip. For instance, if someone mails you a hard drive, have them list something like "info storage" as opposed to harddrive. Be ambiguous and there is less chance of someone helping themselves to your stuff.

As well, if it is something valuable, have them place the item inside something not valuable, like a can of coffee or package of toilet paper. The Buea post office is better than most in Cameroon, but sometimes postal employees will tear openings in the side of the box just to peek in and see if there's anything good in it.

It also helps to become friends with the postal workers at the post office. If they know and like you, they will look out for your packages and maybe take you dancing if you're lucky!!

Taxi

Taxi Normal fare: 200 fcfa Monday through Sunday: 6:00 am to 7:59 pm and 250 fcfa 08:00pm to 5: 59 am. Short distances you can negotiate for 100/150 fcfa day time. You can hire taxi or private cabs for a day or per hour or per trip.

Going Around

Buea subdivision is built on hilly ground and comprises several neighborhoods perched on distinct hills. There is no proper center, however three locations stand out: Buea, which is the administrative center, where all ministries administrations and Banks are (BICEC, NFC, SCB) with a ATM Visa Card system. Molyko, a university residential area where you can get everything (Banks, shops, play grounds, library. Cvber cafes, Bars, restaurants etc).

Limbe, the commercial and touristic center where the open-air market, a supermarket and many banks (Union, SGBC, Afriland First) with an ATM Visa Card system are located; Limbe Squares, a funky place with most Hotels, Night Clubs, bars and restaurants.

The walk from one hill to the other is pleasant when the weather is nice, however most people take a taxi. The ride costs 200 FCFA, a price that can increase when the night has fallen. A ride in a taxi can be

an interesting experience for unaccustomed Westerners: the driver will move around picking passengers, unless on hire.

Two passengers in front seat and 4 at the back seat. It is quite common that a passenger sits on the gear stick and moves his/her bottom when necessary.

The roads are paved with tar, and their quality is manageable. However, the cars always manage to climb up no matter how loaded they are.

Limbe - Buea Road and surrounding villages taxis

Two passengers in front and 4 behind. But you can hire for trip(s) or per hour.

It is also feasible to take motorcycles, which are more frequent and fast. Sometimes, only bikes can bring you where you intend to go unless you have a private car. However, a bike can slip more easily on the mud during the rainy season, and nobody wears a helmet, so taking a bike is your responsibility when you have alternative means of transport.

Telephone

National code to call into Cameroon is +237.

To call from Cameroon into your country, enter 00 or + then the national code and the number.

There are no proper automatic telephone booths but you'll find everywhere places where you can call locally, nationally and internationally. The minimum fare for local calls is CFA 100 in a public phone, for national and international calls the minimum fare depends of the destination.

For international calls

Types International code, Country Code, Area Code, and Local number

Camtel Fixed phone 00237 333 2/ 33 /43

MTN cell phone 00237 77 5 5

Orange cell phone 00237 99 6 6

Camtel cell phone 00237 222/ 33 2/33 22/33

Set Mobile 00237 98 99

We advise you to get a local chip for your cell phone, which will spare you expensive roaming costs on your Western package. This can cost you at most US\$ 30 for a start.

Internet access

Most Cameroonian offices don't have direct internet access, everybody goes to the cybercafé. BUEA has more than 10 reliable cybercafés, in Molyko, Buea Town, Muea, Bolifamba, bokwango, Bonduma, Great soppo, Small soppo and in Bongo Square, Clerks quarter open from 8 am to 9 pm, Monday through Saturday. In Molyko, 2/3 cybercafés also open on Sunday from 10 am to 8 pm. Speed is not high debut. It is possible to buy access for 1 hour, 30mn, 15mn or even 5 minutes just to check your emails.

It is advisable to use a gmail email account as this is the fastest website. Don't forget to take a USB key (called here "flash key") and laptop if you want to send files or pictures home.

The phone and internet companies, MTN and ORANGE, CAMTEL and RINGO offers a 'highspeed' wireless

Sexual Harassment

service that can be accessed at a few locations throughout Buea. It is called "MTN Hotspot" "ORANGE Wireless" "CAMTEL FIXED". Look for a sign with this name outside of larger establishments such as the Chariot Hotel. This will likely be the fastest internet you find, although keep in mind internet in Cameroon (including Hotspot) often experiences technical difficulties and service failures.

IX. PEACE, SAFETY AND SECURITY

Cameroon is a peaceful country for the most part, although there are some political hot pockets and topics of contention. You should visit the state department website for Cameroon for the latest travel updates (USA citizens) at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1081.html

Other countries also have similar advisory websites. It is wise to register with the state department and your embassy in Cameroon before traveling.

Crime

Buea is fairly safe, but just like any other town there can be problems. Most are just crimes of opportunity. So, there can be pick pocketing and break-ins, but basically if you use common sense and are aware of the things around you, you'll be fine! Normally it's best not to go too far off the main streets after dark and to not be out later than 10:00 pm. Being in groups is better.

When going to the market only take what money you need. In taxis keep bags closed and be aware if your pockets are loose enough to drop things into the seats. Taxi scams are big here...beware and ask your coordinator/colleagues for details and tips on how to be safe.

Here we will make a special note about sexual harassment, with the prelude that above all, you should trust your gut instinct and do what feels right to you. SODEIT management, volunteers, and staff abide by a written policy of tolerating no harassment and no sexual harassment embedded in our Volunteer management pack.

However, here are some things to keep in mind about Cameroon in general:

- In general Cameroonians are nice, hospitable, congenial and generous. That being said, female volunteers will find that Cameroonian men are, shall we say, "quite amorous". As a woman and an interesting outsider, you should be prepared for several marriage proposals a day, constant whistling, inquiries from men of all ages, propositions, and occasional groping (although groping doesn't happen in the SWR as much as some of the other regions.) About 90% of this behavior is due to the fact that men notice you are different and they just want to interact with you in some way.

- Cameroonians are fun and flirty, so if you participate in a playful yet firm manner, they will smile, say they are going to marry you and eventually you will part with a new friend and ally. Usually the fastest way to ward off unwanted attention is to accept the marriage proposal and request a date for the wedding. This scares the men and they don't know how to react and they usually flee!
- Occasionally, you will experience more irritating behavior, which is best to counter with a serious attitude—make it known that their behavior is not ok with you. Especially in the SWR, the men are pretty decent and it is really just the interaction they are after. In the Littoral, West, Center and East Provinces, the men are slightly more aggressive and you should prepare for it mentally if travelling to those regions.
- Male volunteers may encounter similar situations with women as well, but not to the same extent. Countering it in the same manner will usually take care of it.

Besides sexual harassment, just keep in mind that when adults or children shout "white man" when you walk by, they too, are really just wanting to have that interaction with someone different than them (even black foreigners will often get "white man" comments). On some days it won't bother you. Other days it will. If you can try to keep a smile on your face and maybe stop to have a conversation with whoever is shouting, you may well wind up with a better outlook and a new friend.

Also keep in mind that personal space is smaller in Cameroon. In the Grand South of Cameroon, people like to touch. Holding hands (men too), secret handshakes, arms around the shoulders, people moving hair out of your face, two people sharing one bus or taxi seat...all these things are common. Believe it or not, you will start to get used to it. Try not to take offense to it and go with the flow. In the three Northern regions, things are generally calmer and there is not so much touching.

X. VOLUNTEERS BOARD AND LODGING

There are a variety of options for housing depending on length of stay, assignment, and personal preference. You will want to discuss the details with the director when your visit dates are set.

Remember, you may not always have electricity supply or running water, so mentally prepared!!!!

Our organization offers volunteers/interns the following accommodation options:

1. **Family Home stay:** Volunteers/interns will live with one of our selected local families and which will allow for a better cultural immersion through the sharing of daily activities and dishes. The family will provide minimum 2 meals a day for the volunteers which will be included in the monthly costs.
2. **Volunteer guest house:** Our organization will provide an equipped self catering house with basic facilities. The rooms are dormitory style and volunteers will be sharing a room for two/one room to one depending on preference. The utilities include:
 - Toiletries and coffee items
 - Kitchen utensils and appliances
 - Home furniture
 - Housemate services for including laundry, cleaning of the apartment and cooking if you prefer.
3. **Self contained house:** In base of personal preferences, our organization staff will assist volunteers in locating an apartment or house for individual lodging. Prices range from \$100-\$600 per month.
4. **Hotels/Motels/ Church mission guest houses:** If the volunteer desires SDI can allocate local hotels with fair amenities and clean facilities for about \$6 dollars a day but meals are not included. Guest houses offer smaller rooms for about \$10 - 50 dollars a day. Meals are not included in the above lodging options and additional expenses will apply.

Laundry

Most volunteers hand-wash their clothes in buckets; laundry soap is easily available in the shops.

If you desperately hate scrubbing your own laundry, there are people around willing to wash them for you for a small fee. You will have to work out an acceptable arrangement when you arrive. There are also a couple of pressing shops that may or may not do laundry but the cost might be pricy. Self catering apartment volunteers have a house help/mate to do their laundry and cleaning.

XI. EXPECTATIONS

Expectations SODEIT has of Volunteers

The staff and management at SODEIT is very grateful and excited to have you choose our organization to work with. We will do everything we can to assure that your stay in Buea and your volunteer experience is a great one. In return, here are some expectations we have of you while you are with us:

- Volunteers shall work toward the vision and mission of SODEIT and act in a professional manner in doing so;
- Volunteers shall abide by SODEIT volunteers policies and procedures (the Volunteers P&P manual is available from management), such as, but not limited to, zero tolerance of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment, maintenance of a drug free workplace, respect for gender issues, and internet policy;
- When dealing with the internal and external beneficiaries, volunteers shall be respectful, honest and courteous. They give accurate information and prompt attention, and observe fairness and equity in their dealings with others;
- Working hours at SODEIT are Monday-Friday from 8am-4pm with an hour lunch break from 12-1pm. Work days may vary depending on individual assignments and travel may be required. We understand that you are a non-paid volunteer and that you may need a flexible schedule periodically in order to engage in other activities—we only ask that you communicate your schedule requests effectively in order for staff and volunteer schedules to coordinate;
- Volunteers shall complete an exit evaluation form at the end of their time with SODEIT for the purpose of our organization to continue to improve the experiences of volunteers to come.

Expectations Volunteers Should Have of SODEIT

- Staff and management will abide by all SODEIT Volunteers policy and procedures, such as but not limited to zero tolerance of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment,
- Maintenance of a Drug free workplace, respect for gender issues, and internet policy. (Volunteers P&P manual is available from management.);
- Staff and management will act as friends to the volunteers, offering advice and assistance in making their stay in Buea a successful one;
- Staff and management will communicate openly with volunteers;
- Staff and management will do their best to accommodate volunteer job requests and include volunteers in as many appropriate related activities as possible.

Job Assignments

As you may well already know, SODEIT is active in the following areas of intervention:

- Agricultural and rural entrepreneurship Projects with sub areas of environmental sustainability education, and mini-live stock farming;
- Children education;
- Community health education;
- Citizen led monitoring and advocacy
- Teenage mothers and women empowerment;
- Micro-finance ;
- Education and training;

All programs have an underlying goal of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

We try to maintain a focus in these areas so as to be more effective in our impact. If you have received this volunteer handbook, you and SODEIT have together decided that you possess the interest, skills, desire and enthusiasm that SODEIT is looking for in order to fulfill their vision and mission. SODEIT will do everything possible in order to make sure your volunteer experience a meaningful one to you, while at the same time, one that will also be advantageous to the program goals.

During the volunteer application process, volunteers are encouraged to be as precise as to what specific jobs, goals, and/or experience they are looking for at SODEIT. We will work to match these requests but we ask the volunteers to maintain an open mind about the experience. There may be unrequested but necessary tasks involved with your job assignment (i.e. paperwork), but be assured that every experience will give you insight into SODEIT as an organization and the larger development context as well.

In the past we have entertained volunteers in the areas of gender and women empowerment, sustainable environmental projects, agriculture, health, micro-financing projects, organizational development, orphans and vulnerable children education, baseline studies, and communications projects, among others. We highly value the diverse sets of skills and interests that volunteers bring and are open and excited about hearing your requests and ideas.

Evaluation

As part of SODEIT's effort to continue to improve our volunteer program, we ask that volunteers fill out an exit evaluation form at the end of their stay. This evaluation will help us know what we are doing right and what we need to do better. Our volunteers' satisfaction with their assignments/objectives is paramount to us.

XII. SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEERING/INTERNSHIP

To be successful volunteering/internship with your placement, you need to be able to motivate yourself. Regardless of the institution and program, to get the most out of your time abroad you need to quickly get to know the placement. Find out where you can be of the most help and jump right in.

Sometimes you might be the only person working on your particular project. You will have to decide what to do and how to do it. While our Coordinators and local staff are a great resource for getting ideas and talking about your plans, you shouldn't be surprised when they leave the big decisions up to you. Successful SODEIT Volunteers all have one thing in common: they take advantage of this freedom to design really excellent projects or manage existing ones and are capable of working hard without a great deal of supervision.

Be Open-minded!

In Cameroon, things might not always happen the way you expect them to, or in the time frame that you would hope. It is of utmost importance that you come to Cameroon knowing that things may get done more slowly than you would expect in your home country, and may require much following up and reminding of another person. Further, a different logic is employed than what you may be used to (ex. being late is okay, or making excuses is a common response to one's mistakes) and so clear communication will help to minimize the problems that may come from this. Almost more importantly, a volunteer would do well to practice patience, and try to understand their frustrations as being a result of cultural differences. It is okay to encourage accountability and responsibility from Cameroonians, but being patient and letting some things go will make your time in Cameroon much more enjoyable.

It is a fine balance between pressing for important things to be done, and being patient and open-minded with everything else that may not be managed the way you would like.

Attitudes and Activities

This outline details the rules of behavior that is expected of SODEIT volunteers, not only by SODEIT as a volunteer placement organization, but also by our Project Coordinators, the local host families and especially, the projects that we work with. Volunteers are required to:

- Travel with an open mind; be respectful to the culture and customs of the community you are volunteering in. This means practicing patience and understanding;
- Recognize SODEIT representatives and their community and should act accordingly. Remember this is a chance to be an ambassador of your community/country;
- Follow the rules, advice and policies set by the Project. Sightseeing and side trips are strictly limited to weekends. Work schedule is pre-determined by SODEIT and you cannot make changes to this schedule.; Request for days off, or time away from the project are based on the sole discretion of SODEIT and partner. Any disregard for the work schedule will result in the immediate termination of your program placement.
- Be aware of the potential hazards of becoming involved in a sexual relationship with local people in the Community which you are volunteering. (ie: HIV, STDs, etc)
- Acknowledge that possession of illegal substances is a grave violation of SODEIT policy, and if discovered will result in the immediate cancellation of your program. Participants are cautioned that the possession of drugs is often dealt with severe punishment by host country law enforcement;
- Understand the alcohol consumption is not permitted in the host family, at the project site or at the local SODEIT offices. Responsible consumption is expected, gross misbehavior will result in the termination of your program;
- Treat all people with respect and dignity, especially the elders of the community;
- Dress properly with regard to the local culture, as well as weather conditions. Realize what is socially acceptable in western countries, can be considered offensive in others;
- Avoid all political demonstrations and activities. Remember you are guests in the host community and subject to local laws and punishment;
- Acknowledge the program and accommodations provided are customized for you and not changeable in community without approval and consent of SODEIT and ;
- Advise the host family and SODEIT Coordinator(s) of weekend travel/activity plans.

During the Placement

You should be:

- **PROACTIVE** - Jump in and maintain a positive attitude.
- **RESPECTFUL** - Remember that the local people you are working with, side by side, do so with little or no salary. They do this work because they believe in it. There are times when you may not agree with or understand the organizations decisions or direction. Although your suggestions are always welcome, your faith, respect and consideration for their long term work and commitment is appreciated.
- **CONSIDERATE** – Respect those around you and be a reliable worker at the program site. Tell your host family if you will be late. Advise SODEIT Coordinators if you are sick and cannot work.
- **PATIENT** - Life in your host country moves slower than one might be used to. Relax and enjoy the slow pace. Remember, not everything is as organized and predictable as life in the western world.
- **FLEXIBLE** - Plans change, roads get flooded, and electricity goes out. Realize that not everything goes as

planned, but good intention is always there.

- **FRIENDLY** - In order to truly help someone you must get to know them. Do not be afraid to make friends with the local people. Smile, wave and see how fast you are welcomed into the community.
- **TOLERANT** - The food, the culture, the smells and the sounds will be unfamiliar to you at first. We recommend that you dive in and experience life head-on. You will be surprised at how quickly you will adapt.

You must:

- Respect the policies of the community and the rules of the host family/volunteers guest apartment in which you are staying.
- Ask permission before inviting guest to the home stay. (family host accommodation only)
- Be aware that overnight guests are not allowed. If so ask for advice. (family host accommodation only)
- Respect the accommodation, and pay for any damage you may cause.
- Keep your room clean and neat. Offer to help with chores around the home. (family host accommodation only)
- Not smoke or use alcohol in your accommodation. (family host accommodation only)
- Self catering accommodations do not leave your apartment/room to your house help/technicians. They can be smart at times.

CONDITIONS

In order to provide you with the very best service, we require that you read our policies understand the terms and conditions of volunteering with SODEIT

- You must be 17yrs old to participate. Children accompanying their parent/legal guardian must be 12yrs old.
- Travel insurance and medical coverage is not included in the program cost. These are the responsibility of the volunteer/intern.
- SODEIT is not responsible for loss of property, personal injury, illness, accident, delay or expense sustained by the volunteer while participating in our program.
- SODEIT and its agents are not responsible for any financial obligations or liabilities the participant may incur including damages to property, or injury to others while participating on this program.
- SODEIT is not responsible for the cost of extra activities (sightseeing, language class etc) incurred during the course of your program.
- Daily transportation costs are the volunteers' responsibility, although we try to confirm accommodations within walking distance to work site or bus transportation (very cheap in each community).
- Volunteers agree to follow the laws of the host country, the policies of the community in which they volunteer, and/or the rules of the host family, failure to do so will result in the termination of your program and forfeiture of all program fees.
- A non-refundable deposit/administration fee of \$100 is required along with your application. Program costs paid in US dollars only; board and lodge cost \$300 per month. We begin the confirmation process once the deposit is received. Final payment is due 6 weeks prior to departure. Volunteers agree that no part of the program fee is refundable once the program has commenced.
- Cancellations must be received in writing. No refunds are issued for cancellations received less than 14 days prior to departure.

Note: Volunteer contribution cost is subject to change without warning. Once the deposit is received, the program fee cost is guaranteed and will not change.

- What to Do -

- **Register on our partners platform**
Register as an Omprakash Volunteer at www.omprakash.org/volunteerregistration
- **Update Volunteer Activity**
- **Write a Volunteer Story**
- **Share Media**
- **Review our cause**

Why write stories?

Your volunteer experience has the power to inspire others. Potential volunteers want to read real stories from legitimate sources. Who is any more real than you? By writing stories you promote our cause and boost credibility.

Welcome to our crew,

SODEIT CAMEROON ASSOCIATION NGO,

Working to eradicate social risk and economic vulnerability in communities

And... Who is going to be your Buddy?

**Buea is looking forward to being with you as much as possible, and
your reception committee will be:**

Sulaiman TURAY **Tel.:** +237 69 957 6066 or +237 67 450 5791

Michael Khalil Sydney **Tel.:** +237 67 463 3918

Ndobe Esemé Clovis **Tel.:** +237 67 483 8313 or +237 69 179 5228

Kumji Hannah Nemusa **Tel.:** +237 6 9 129 7531 or +237 67 421 3909

COME ON...

BUEA IS WAITING FOR YOU! WELCOME TO BUEA, CAMEROON!!!