DAKAR, SÉNÉGAL

2018/2019 Cultural Guidebook

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS
More in Four. More in a Lifetime.
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INTRODUCTION TO THE SÉNÉGAL PROGRAM GUIDEBOOK

With your departure for Sénégal approaching, many of you have begun to wonder what it’s going to be like living and studying in Dakar. As you prepare for your upcoming experience in Sénégal, you’re probably trying to imagine what’s in store for you. Will the family you’ll be living with accept you just as you are now, or will you need to make some adjustments in order to fit into your new household? Is there anything that you are forgetting to do before you leave? Will your French be good enough to allow you to do well in your classes and to meet people outside of class? And just how much should you plan to pack in your suitcases? Hopefully, this guidebook can begin to answer these and other questions. We recommend that you read it carefully before you depart and refer to it during your stay in Sénégal.

The information that follows is a collection of advice from former participants. The Center for International Programs staff and your Resident Director on site have added practical information as well. All information was accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of printing. We recognize that there might be some necessary changes in the program made on site. If you have updated information upon your return from Sénégal, please let us know. When you return, we would greatly appreciate it if you could help us update this guidebook for the next year's participants.

In collecting suggestions from former participants for this guide, the best piece of advice continues to be: "Expect the unexpected.” Ultimately, no written materials or any orientation will fully prepare you for what lies ahead. The best way to prepare is to continue to consider how your culture has shaped your perceptions, and then commit yourself to keeping an open mind, remaining flexible, and being patient with others and yourself as you adjust to your new environment.

We would like to thank the former participants who have spent time talking about their experiences and helping with the editing process!
BEFORE YOU GO...PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION TO SÉNÉGAL

The Republic of Sénégal is the westernmost country on the African continent. Mauritania lies to the north, Mali is on the eastern border and Guinea and Guinea-Bissau are on the southern border. The north is characterized by open savannah and semi-desert, while the south has a thicker, lusher savannah, with some foothills in the southeast.

The country is comprised of 10 administrative regions: Dakar, Diourbel, Fatick, Kaolack, Kolda, Louga, St. Louis, Tambacounda, Theis and Ziguinchor. Independent of the French since 1960, Sénégal was operated as a multiparty democracy under Leopold Senghor, the first president. Twenty-one years later, Senghor’s Prime Minister, Abdou Douf, was elected president. He, in turn, enjoyed twenty years in office. Senegal’s fourth and current president, Macky Sall took office in April 2012 after fairly peaceful elections.

One of the most important Sénégalese values is the concept of ‘teranga.’ Teranga is a Wolof term which translates loosely as "hospitality" in English. You’ll hear many people speak about Sénégalese hospitality with pride and notice the importance placed on social relations. As a guest in the country of Sénégal, you may notice that most people treat you with the honor and respect offered to a valued guest, especially if you make efforts to learn social customs and Wolof.

One of the first Sénégalese customs you’ll encounter is ataya, tea drinking. It is quite a different practice than what is common here in the U.S. A traditional "tea time" usually consists of three cups of tea, the first being quite bitter and each one thereafter becoming progressively sweeter. You might be offered tea every time you visit someone’s home and after meals. Tea time can last for hours and is a time for savoring conversation as well as tea.

You’ll be exposed to multiple cultural influences in Dakar (much like here in the U.S.). Although the Sénégalese gained independence from the French decades ago, their influence is still strong. French remains the official language and is used at the university as well as in the government sector. However, about 80% of Dakar’s residents speak Wolof, one of Sénégal’s many ethnic languages. The Wolof people, who make up about 36% of the population, were some of the first Africans to come into contact with European traders. It is the Wolof culture that influences the urban and rural cultures of Sénégal most. You may speak more Wolof than French on a daily basis.

The other major ethnic groups of Sénégal include the Serer, Fulani (Pulaar), Tukulor, Diola, Malinke, and Soninke, each one with a distinctive language and culture. Such diversity among people has prevented any one group from taking control of the entire region. However, during the 20th century,
two ties emerged that connect these various groups: the influence of Islam and the impact of French language, culture, education, and political systems.

Since independence Sénégal’s political system has evolved from a one-party state to a multi-party republic with a solid reputation for a liberal and peaceful approach to democracy. Former presidents enjoyed lengthy administrations: 1961 to 1980 for Leopold Senghor, 1981 to 2000 for Abdou Diouf and 2000 to 2012 for Abdoulaye Wade. During the March 2012 presidential run-off elections, Macky Sall, of the Alliance for the Republic (APR), defeated incumbent Abdoulaye Wade. For nearly one year prior to the February presidential elections, youth and other political activists mobilized the public and protested on the 23rd of each month against Wade’s bid for a third term, wide-spread corruption, high unemployment and the high cost of living for the average citizen-the Mouvment du 23 Juin (M23). Sall’s inauguration and promise to be “president of all Sénégalaise” has ushered in an atmosphere of hope and empowerment that may be reinforced with the July 2012 National Assembly elections. More recently, protesters have taken to the streets to call out Sall’s reaction to political dissent (several opponents have been imprisoned).

Nearly 90% of Sénégalaise citizens are Muslims. Christians (mostly Catholics) and people who follow traditional religions each make up about 5% of the population. People of different religious faiths have historically coexisted fairly peacefully in Sénégal and have been known to participate in each other’s ceremonies and rituals. Some families may have both Muslim and Christian members.

**PROGRAM CALENDAR**

**September 9th 2018:** Students arrive in Dakar  
**September 10th:** Orientation & Wolof begin  
**Friday, 18 December:** Holiday break begins

Monday, 7 January 2019: LT & ET academic program resumes  
**1 March:** LT academic program ends, last day to submit ICRP  
**1 March:** LT students’ last day in homestay, first possible return date  
**2 June** Extended-term students depart

**GETTING THERE**

**PASSPORTS AND VISAS**

You will need a valid passport and documents for the student visa in order to enter the country. The Center for International Programs works with participants to process the student visa.

In Dakar you should carry a copy of your passport with you at all times (not the actual document). You’ll need your passport when you travel out of Dakar and to change money. If you lose your
passport, take a photocopy with you to the U.S. Embassy ([http://dakar.usembassy.gov/index.html](http://dakar.usembassy.gov/index.html)), located on Route des Almadies. The telephone is (221) 33-879-4000.

Once you begin classes at the university, you will be issued a student I.D. This will allow you to receive discounts if you go to Goreé Island and possibly other points of interest.

**FLIGHT CONNECTIONS**

International flights require at least 2 hours to complete security checks, process documents and board. It is your responsibility to be in the boarding area at the appropriate time. Should you miss a connection, please note that you must be re-routed by an airline representative at the airport. Neither Travel Leaders nor Kalamazoo College can alter your airline tickets at that point. Once airline personnel re-arrange your travel itinerary, provide Rama Sow, ACI Experience Senegal Coordinator, with the changes so she knows of your delay and she can give you new arrival instructions. You may call Ms. Sow at the Baobab Center, 011. 221. 33. 825. 3637 or on her cell phone, 011. 221. 77. 644.8917.

If you are unable to contact Ms. Sow, contact the CIP or a member of the CIP staff (contact information can be found in the CONTACT INFORMATION section), and we will assist you in informing the on-site personnel of your situation.

**AIRPORT SECURITY**

Federally mandated airport security regulations require more time to properly screen travelers and their luggage. Participants are advised to contact the airline to find out how early to arrive at the airport. Airlines are also randomly searching checked and carry-on luggage. Keep boarding passes and your identification (passport) easily accessible. For further information on security measures, see the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) or the Federal Aviation Administration website at [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov).

**PREPARATION**

**MONEY AND CREDIT CARDS**

The currency in Sénégal is the CFA franc, which is fixed against the Euro. You can check with any bank or app/website for the current exchange rate.

Former students recommend taking $1,500 - $2,500 for personal expenses. To ensure that you have enough funds to cover medical expenses, you may need to bring at least $2,000. If you plan on traveling extensively to other African countries by air, you'll want to bring about $2,000 - $3,000. Travel within Sénégal is very economical- $50 to get to most destinations. Nightlife, travel to other countries and buying western products are much more expensive.
There are atms throughout the majority of the city that allow you to obtain cash in the local currency in small denominations using an ATM or debit card (Visa or MasterCard of the Cirrus network variety). Former participants report that you get a very good exchange rate, but check with the card’s issuing bank about fees. The CIP recommends calling the bank before you leave and letting them know you will be using the card in Sénégal so your account is not frozen. Be aware the ATM machines break down periodically. **If you decide to withdraw cash from an ATM machine please be cautious, so that you do not become the target of a thief.**

**Credit cards** are accepted by very few businesses frequented by tourists. Their use is not widespread in Sénégal.

Keep in mind the “holy trinity-cash, credit card and debit card” when deciding how to travel with and access your funds abroad. Most students do not travel with large sums of cash, but $100 USD or so will be handy. Some former participants recommend taking a small amount of cash with you, so you can exchange some soon after your arrival. Most students recommend changing money at a bank rather than the airport. If it is not too complicated, changing another $50 to $75 to the local currency-the CFA-before leaving the U.S. can be helpful. It sometimes lowers anxieties about managing during the first few days in Sénégal. One returned student recommends working with a weekly budget to avoid overspending.

**CLIMATE**

You’ll be in Sénégal primarily during the dry season, which runs from September/October to May/June. Daytime is usually sunny, dry, and hot, but evenings can be very cool. In December, evening temperatures can be cool enough for a sweater and a blanket for sleeping. You will arrive late in the rainy season and are not likely to encounter much rain. However, it will be **extremely humid** for the first few months. The average daily temperature is around 85°F, but during the months of November to March, mornings and evenings are cool and require sweaters or jackets.

**LUGGAGE RESTRICTIONS AND PACKING SUGGESTIONS**

Check the website of your airline to confirm luggage restrictions. Generally, international travelers are allowed to check two pieces of luggage and carry-on one piece luggage and a personal bag, such as a backpack without an extra charge. Luggage policies and fees change frequently so it is best to check the airline website for the specifics two weeks or so before departure. Be sure to learn about the airline’s policy on back-packs, lap tops, weight limits, size restrictions, fees for excess weight and items allowed in carry-on bags.

Former participants compiled the following list of suggested items to take to Sénégal. Do not take any clothes or other items that you’re afraid of wearing out or you don’t want to risk being damaged or stolen. Most report, upon returning to the U.S., that they took too much with them. So take care not to over pack. Save room for purchases you make there.
CLOTHING

Clothing considered casual in the U.S., such as T-shirts, worn jeans and shorts, are not worn to class or to conduct business in Sénégal. Plan to dress more conservatively until you are familiar with local norms. You should be comfortable in neat summer clothing. While tank tops are acceptable, women should avoid wearing shorts, skirts and dresses above the knee. Students have recommended bringing more skirts than pants since skirts tend to be more comfortable. Attire for special occasions and clubs is particularly dressy.

Past participants often admit that they took too many clothes to Sénégal and didn’t have enough space to bring back clothes bought in Dakar. One helpful tip is to pack what you feel you need in your luggage, then take out half of what you packed and you should still have everything you need.

LIST OF SUGGESTED ARTICLES OF CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

- Comfortable, sturdy, all-purpose shoes for class and walking, suitable for deep sand
- Two or three sweaters – make sure one is heavy
- Jacket
- Bathing suit
- Flip flops (can buy there)
- A couple of dressy outfits for special occasions, clubs, etc.
- At least one pair of dressy shoes or sandals
- Plenty of cotton underwear & bras (enough for 1-2 weeks)
- 1-2 Long-sleeved shirts
- A few pairs of jeans (no holes or frayed hems)
- Workout clothes (goggles, sports bras, shorts, etc., if you use them at home)
- Women: lightweight cotton skirts, dresses, pants, blouses, button-down shirts, T-shirts and tank tops. Maybe one or two pairs of shorts for hanging out and going to the beach.
- Men: lightweight, wrinkle-free pants, one or two pairs of nice shorts, button-down shirts

HYGIENE AND TOILETRIES

- Basic toiletries to last 1 month (pack the small travel containers-they take up less space, purchasing more in Dakar is not a big deal)
- Towel and washcloth. These are considered personal and homestay families will not be expected to provide them.
- 6 month supply of condoms and birth control supplies
- 6 month supply of tampons or pads. These are available there, but are expensive.
- Diva cup
- Tylenol, Advil or favorite pain reliever. In Dakar these are expensive.
- Vitamins
- Aloe Vera
- Sunscreen, Blistex
- Mosquito repellent (containing DEET)
- Band-aids, rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide
- Thermometer
- Sturdy water bottle (when traveling or commuting)
- Toilet paper, at least one roll for the first two weeks, and then buy the rest there when needed
- Yeast infection medication
- Antibiotics, Pepto-Bismol, Imodium (check with physician for best treatment for diarrhea)
- Cold/sinus medicine
- Neosporin or another antibiotic cream for open cuts
- Contact solution (cannot be found there)
- Anti-itch cream for mosquito bites
- Fiber supplement or dried prunes (with the local diet, constipation is common)
- Medication for indigestion

OTHER SUGGESTED ITEMS

- Your résumé - digital copy and hard copy for internship applications
- An international MasterCard, Visa or debit card
- Extra pair of glasses or contacts, and the prescription in case glasses are lost or stolen
- A few extra passport pictures
- Small sewing kit
- Wet wipes or liquid hand sanitizer for travel when there is no running water available
- Flashlight (can be pocket size)
- A piece of luggage with a lock and key or a strong box for valuables
- **Recent** edition of travel guides: *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guide* books are great
- Money pouch (those that you wear around your neck or under your belt are handy)
- deck of playing cards
- Small combination lock
- Pens, pencils and notebooks (these are expensive in Dakar)
- Umbrella
- Blanket for your bed (it can be very cold at night)
- Laptop computer (ACI has wireless internet)
- Converters and adapters are sold in Dakar. Most sold in the U.S. do not work in Sénégal.
- A good packing tip is to include one change of clothes in your carry-on in case your luggage gets lost, and to distribute things evenly between your two checked pieces. For example, divide your undergarments in two bags, so you can be prepared if one bag gets lost.

**NEVER pack your passport, money, or valuables in your checked luggage.** Keep those items in a money-belt or pouch on your person. Keep your carry-on with you at all times.
BECOME FAMILIAR WITH AND THE U.S. BEFORE YOU GO

One of the best ways to start preparing for your experience is to do some background reading and research on Sénégal. Monitor the current political situation and familiarize yourself with the educational system, historical background, customs, and cultural norms. Hornet Passport includes a document called *Important Resources for Sénégal* which lists online newspapers, classic novels etc. Former participants, faculty and staff members who have been to Sénégal are your best sources of information.

Occasionally, U.S. citizens have the embarrassing experience of learning that people abroad seem to know more about U.S. history and politics than we do. Learn more about current events in the U.S. before you depart and follow them while you are in Sénégal. Sénégalais students are generally more politically aware and involved than U.S. students. You can expect to be asked your opinion about current events and U.S. politics. You can also expect to hear the opinions of others that may not flatter the U.S. Should such a situation arise, the best advice is to remain respectful, even when disagreeing, and resist the temptation to criticize Sénégal, as you are a guest.

FINANCIAL AID

Those of you on financial aid at Kalamazoo College will have to take care of some items while you are in Sénégal. For complete instructions, please see the financial aid handout posted on Hornet Passport. Specific questions should be directed to Becca Murphy, Assistant Director of Financial Aid, via becca.murphy@kzoo.edu or (269) 337-7193.
ARRIVAL IN SÉNÉGAL

ARRIVAL IN DAKAR

During the flight, be sure to have your passport number, flight number, and a pen handy so that you can complete the immigration form. List your address in the country as:

Africa Consultants International
Baobab Center
Villa509, SICAP Baobab
BP5270
Dakar-Fann, Sénégal

Answer all questions carefully and honestly—border officials take their jobs seriously! After entering the airport get in the immigration line indicated for foreigners. You will need your passport, International Certificate of Vaccination (yellow health card), and possibly your ticket/boarding pass stub. Keep these documents handy.

Next, you will hand your form to an official at the door/gate to the baggage claim area. Bag handlers may be persistent about helping with your bags, but don’t feel obligated to accept. The airport has free luggage carts. If you use a bag handler a tip of $1 USD per bag is acceptable.

Report lost bags immediately to the lost baggage office across from the luggage belts, and obtain a receipt and instructions. **Kalamazoo College will not assume financial responsibility for replacing lost or stolen tickets.** Once you have finished with your bags, proceed through the “Rien à Déclarer” customs line. The “douaniers” may wish to open and inspect your bags. Have your passport and keys to your luggage ready, remain pleasant, and maintain a sense of humor!

After customs you will pass through the gates into the area where people wait for arriving passengers. Someone from Africa Consultants International/Baobab Center will be there to meet you. Be sure to stay in the group until they meet you. Generally, newly arrived students spend one night together in the Baobab Center.
THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Sokhna Sane, Resident Director (Academic Program)
Dr. Sane teaches in the UCAD History Department and assisted former RD for the academic program, Prof. Ibrahima Thioub, for many years with the Kalamazoo program. As Resident Director, she will coordinate the academic program, inform you of course updates, supervise ICRPs, facilitation registration at UCAD and oversee the History of Islam, Dakar in Transition and the Sénégal River Valley lectures. Dr. Sane is also a contact for any emergency.

Simon Lazarre Badiane, Africa Consultants International, Executive Director (Orientation & Homestay)
As director of ACI, Simon Badiane oversees the ACI and Experience Sénégal programs. ACI is a public health and social justice organization (http://www.acibaobab.org/). Experience Sénégal is the ACI component that provides intercultural training and support to international groups and North American colleges and universities. The main building of ACI is known as the "Baobab Center." ACI coordinates the Wolof program, on-site orientation, the homestay component, intercultural seminar and the rural visit.

Ms. Rama Sow Niang, Experience Senegal Coordinator
Rama Sow will work very closely with the RD for the academic program, ACI’s language staff and other local resources to plan and oversee several features of the study abroad program. Her responsibilities include organizing the on-site orientation and facilitating the cultural seminar. Rama also serves as an emergency contact for the group.

Aby Diallo and Omoul Sow
Aby Diallo and Omoul Sow work from Aby’s home office, several blocks away from the Baobab Center. Aby coordinates all the homestay placements, and Omoul assists her. Aby and Omoul are your contacts if you have any problems with your family or need to make a change.

ON-SITE ORIENTATION

Your on-site orientation will begin immediately after your arrival in the country. During the orientation you'll begin intensive Wolof and French language instruction, visit different sections of Dakar, and begin your study of Sénégal culture. ACI staff will conduct the orientation.

CLASSES
The academic program begins with your study of Wolof during the on-site orientation. Shortly after the language instruction begins, the *Intercultural Seminar* will get underway. This course is designed to tie together the various components of the study abroad program, provide structured opportunities to reflect on your observations and adjustments, and assist with the enhancement of your French language skills. Activities such as rural visits, sorties and guest speakers will be used to encourage students to develop a holistic view of Sénégal, in particular, and a deeper understanding of culture in general. You may also attend several lectures at ACI on these topics:

*History of Islam* - the introduction of Islam to the Senegambia region in the 10th century and its impact on the historical, political and economic development of Sénégal. The roots of several contemporary features of Sénégal society in the spread of Islam in the region is also a common theme..

*The Sénégal River Valley* - explores the political, economic, and cultural development as it is directly related to the geography of the Sénégal River Valley region.

*French Language at IIEF:* Located on the campus of UCAD, students will study French language and culture.

Returned students describe the classes as relaxed, laid-back and very structured. The first few months you are in class 6-7 hours a day. Most classes will be lecture based with little discussion. In Sénégal, most university lecturers feel it is their responsibility to impart knowledge to students. In turn, students are expected, primarily, to attend every class, be prepared to take detailed notes, raise questions for clarification and review their notes regularly. For these reasons classroom discussion and homework assignments are rarely part of the way classes are organized.

Instructors at the Baobab Center are warm, intelligent and open to discussion. University lectures may be more reserved, but it is OK to question them if it is done politely. Sénégal students rarely do it so it may surprise them.

**Some tips on classes:**

- Be patient with yourself and open to a completely different way of learning.
- Don’t hesitate to ask for clarification or for information to be repeated. Learning in another language has some particular challenges, but they usually subside as your French improves.
- Check with Rama if you’d like technical support with French for your course work. She can arrange for assistance with grammar and spelling. You will be responsible for the content of your work.
- If you’d like to know how you are doing, ask lecturers for their feedback. Similar to the French
system, you won’t get comments on your assignments unless you ask.
- Have fun, but don’t take them too lightly

**UCAD COURSES**

Long-term students may take just one or two university courses. For several years many students found classes at the Institut de Français pour les Etudiants Étrangers (IFEE) to be very interesting and helpful. The institute offers French language and literature courses that usually are not impacted by strikes.

 Strikes are common at UCAD and are organized to protest any one of several local and national factors, ranging from an overwhelming student population to irregular payment of lecturers. It is not unusual for class meetings to be delayed or suspended for a week or sometimes more. This can be very frustrating and confusing for students from the U.S.

 Despite these challenges, Kalamazoo feels the opportunity to learn along with your Sénégalese peers in their educational setting, is a very important one. For this reason we encourage students to exercise patience and understanding when university classes are delayed or suspended. Dr. Sane will outline the steps you should take in this kind of situation.

 Should any course be delayed or suspended for more than 3 weeks, alternate instruction for Kalamazoo program participants will be arranged by Dr. Sane. This ensures that students will have ample opportunities to earn the academic credit required.

**GRADES**

The grading system in Sénégal is similar to that of the French. You may find the table below helpful for interpreting the grades on your course work and exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points in Sénégal System</th>
<th>Grade in the U. S. system</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 to 20</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 to 14</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 12</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or less</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ICRP**

Students learn about some aspect of Sénégal culture in a direct, experiential manner to complete an ICRP. Conducting such a project is an effective way to get to know the host culture in a more intimate fashion. Typically students select project activities that reflect their academic, career or extra-curricular interests. Occasionally students complete apprenticeships, develop visual exhibits or arrange and give performances to complete this portion of the academic program. Because of the project’s emphasis on
participation in and observation of the local culture, all of these are suitable options if resources at the program site can support them.

Because projects focus on the interests of individual students, the ICRP can cover a wide range of topics. Due dates for the paper and its components are clearly posted in the schedule for the academic program. The ICRP coordinator or supervisor will assist you with the development and implementation of your project; however you are ultimately responsible for finding an ICRP location and developing your project. **It is your responsibility to plan regular meetings with your supervisor early, so you can meet the posted due dates.**

Each study abroad site has unique conditions, practices particular to the community and specific limitations. One of the common limitations of the Sénégal ICRP is that the resident director will not approve a placement if it presents some risk in terms of security. The ICRP should also encourage students to move from comparing their host culture to their home culture to a perspective that will allow them to understand the “rightness” of the behaviors and activities of local people within their cultural contexts and function appropriately within those contexts.

As a component of the academic program, the ICRP gives students the opportunity to **earn 1 K-unit of academic credit while abroad.** Students submit final essays to the Resident Director (RD) or Project Coordinator (PC) in the host country before the end of the academic program, who in turn evaluate the essays and submit project grades to the Center for International Programs (CIP). Each project is recorded on the Kalamazoo Transcript as ICRP and not assigned to a specific academic rubric. While the CIP documents the types of projects undertaken on each program site, project papers are not returned to the CIP and they are not kept on file at the College. Former participants suggest that you begin thinking of a topic in October and talk with your supervisor about your ideas at that time. Typically, students who complete their ICRP prospectus by mid-November have ample time to make arrangements for project activities, complete analysis and write the required paper by the due date.

Examples of recent Sénégal ICRPs can be found on the ICRP page of the Center for International Programs website at [http://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/k_students/icrp/](http://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/k_students/icrp/).

**CREDITS AND GRADES**

Long-term participants must enroll in the equivalent of 6 K-Units of credit. Extended-term participants must enroll in the equivalent of 9-K Units of credit and enroll in more courses at Université Cheikh Anta Diop than long-term students. In order to be counted as one K Unit of credit, a course must have 40-45 contact hours. In cases where students must combine courses to achieve the minimum number of contact hours for a unit of credit, both courses must be from the same discipline, e.g. history with history or art with art.

Grades from all study abroad courses will appear on the Kalamazoo College transcript but are not included in the Kalamazoo College grade point average. The transcript will list the title of the course,
the appropriate discipline and a translation of the local grade into the K College “A, B, C” grading system. You must earn a “C” in the local grading system to receive credit for course work completed abroad.

Students who satisfactorily complete course work can expect the following credits to transfer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Long-Term Program (6 K Units)</th>
<th>Extended-Term Program (9 K Units)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive French Language</strong></td>
<td>1 K Unit FRE</td>
<td>1 K Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercultural Seminar (ANSO)</strong></td>
<td>1 K Unit</td>
<td>1 K Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wolof</strong></td>
<td>1 K Unit</td>
<td>1-2 K Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>French Language (semester)</strong></td>
<td>1 K unit FRE</td>
<td>1-2 K Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICRP</strong></td>
<td>1 K Unit</td>
<td>1 K Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Courses (IFEE)</strong></td>
<td>1 K unit</td>
<td>2-3 K Units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All course work, including the ICRP, must be completed and turned in before the end of the academic program or no credit will be given. Consult the *Study Abroad Handbook* regarding class attendance and other academic policies.

**LIVING IN SÉNÉGAL**

**HEALTH PRECAUTIONS**

Staying healthy is not difficult if you are careful. The on-site orientation will include detailed information on the health care providers and facilities in Dakar. The U.S. Embassy also has a medical unit, which will provide the names of doctors and other health care professionals. Dr. Sane and Ms. Rama Sow Niang should be informed any time you are ill (or bitten by an animal) and want to see a physician or seek other medical care.

**FOOD AND WATER**

You will need to watch what you eat and drink and make sure that you are drinking enough fluids. You may find that you become ill after eating certain things, although your Sénégalaise friends may not be affected. That is to be expected, as they live there and their systems are accustomed to the bacteria unfamiliar to you. **Do not take any unnecessary risks.**

Tap water in Sénégal is treated, but you can purify your water by boiling it (for at least 20 minutes), filtering it, or putting iodine tablets in it. This is most important when you first arrive, and your system
begins to adjust to the food and water. When you are purifying your water, follow all instructions carefully. Drink bottled beverages but avoid ice. Be sure to use safe water for brushing teeth and taking medications.

You are advised to avoid most street food, such as any peeled fruits and vegetables, meat, fruit juices, eggs, etc. Even if you see the meat being cooked before your eyes, you won’t know how it got there; nor will you know with what kind of water fresh fruits and vegetables have been washed. Avoid all raw or undercooked fish, shellfish, and meat. You are also advised to avoid all dairy products. Pasteurization is not as standardized in Sénégal as it is in the U.S. Once again, this is most important immediately after your arrival.

Foods you can choose to eat include the following: tea and coffee (made from boiled water); well-cooked meat, fish, rice, and vegetables; fresh baked goods (breads, rolls, unfilled pastries); raw fruits, vegetables, and nuts that you peel or shell yourself. Fresh fruits and vegetables are abundant in Dakar, but they may not be important in your family’s diet. The stipend issued by the Baobab should be used to supplement the home stay meals. One student pointed out that American food is fairly easy to find and it will help to calm your system.

Don’t take unnecessary risks with your health. As your system adjusts, you may find that you can relax the restrictions. Be careful, and don’t rush it. You may find yourself in a situation where it would be culturally offensive not to eat something that is offered to you. You will have to decide what to do in those situations on an individual basis; there is no one right answer. Being truthful about something that will make you ill is often the best way to avoid taking unnecessary risks. Most hosts will understand that your stomach isn’t accustomed to the diet. Just be careful!

**COOK IT, BOIL IT, PEEL IT, OR FORGET IT!**

The following information on malaria and diarrhea has been provided by the Kalamazoo College Health Center. **Read this information thoroughly and carefully!** If you have any questions, please call your family physician or a reputable travel clinic.

**DIARRHEA**

A certain amount of stomach discomfort and traveler’s diarrhea is to be expected and should not be alarming. Most former participants recommend Pepto-Bismol tablets of Imodium AM and advise that you take a large supply with you. Talk with your physician about prescription drugs and what might
be appropriate for you. If diarrhea persists for more than 72 hours, or develops into dehydration, **be sure to see a doctor.** You should inform Prof. Sane and Ms. Rama Sow Niang that you are ill and want to seek medical attention.

**For diarrhea that is not persistent, you should:**

- **Drink at least three liters of liquid a day.** The treatment of diarrhea always begins with maintaining adequate fluid intake. You’ll receive more information on site about how to keep your body hydrated.
- Avoid drinks containing caffeine and milk if you become dehydrated.
- Take Pepto-Bismol or other prescription medications and follow the instructions carefully.
- **Seek medical attention** if diarrhea persists more than 72 hours or if you have bloody diarrhea, severe abdominal pain, or a high fever.

**MALARIA**

According to the Center for Disease Control, malaria is prevalent in all of West Africa. Symptoms may include fever and flu-like illness with chills, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. Malaria may cause anemia, jaundice and if not promptly treated, kidney failure, coma and death. Using anti-malarial drugs and personal protection measures that prevent mosquito bites can often prevent malaria.

Doxycycline, Lariam (mefloquine) and Malarone are the drugs recommended by the Center for Disease Control, the American Committee on Immunization Practices, and the American College Health Association for areas where chloroquine-resistant malaria prevails, such as West Africa. Some students have reported the occurrence of nightmares or depression after taking Lariam. Reports that Lariam causes seizures or psychosis are rare, but should be carefully considered. If you experience adverse side effects from any anti-malarial medication, the Kalamazoo College Health Center recommends follow-up with a physician in an appropriate health facility and following the medical advice provided. Health Care professionals in Sénégal are familiar with safe alternatives.

All of the organizations cited above strongly recommend that you carefully follow the instructions of your physician or a reputable travel clinic when taking any anti-malarial medication. Do not think that because some of your Sénégalaise friends do not take anti-malarial medication that it is not necessary for you to take it. The Center for Disease Control website provides very thorough and current information on the prevention of malaria. The website address is [http://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

**More on Preventing Malaria**

In addition to taking your medication, there are many simple precautions you should take. To minimize mosquito bites:
• Cover up with clothing at dusk and after dark. Wear garments with a high neckline (or bandanna around the neck), long sleeves, and long pants. Avoid sandals and open shoes, and avoid sheer fabrics, as mosquitoes bite through them. Protect your feet!
• Use a DEET-containing insect repellent on exposed skin AND permethrin, an insecticide, on clothing. Make sure you wash it off, daily, before applying another coat. It is a toxin!
• Avoid shiny jewelry and perfumed cosmetics, as they may attract mosquitoes.
• Visit rural and low-lying areas only during the day.
• Choose accommodations with tidy grounds and with air conditioning or with windows that have well-fitted screens. Use mosquito netting elsewhere.
• Use mosquito netting on your bed. Make sure there are no holes or rips in it. Tuck netting under mattress.
• Avoid preventatives such as mosquito coils or Avon’s Skin So Soft. These are popular, but they perform poorly in scientific studies.
• The above precautions are also extremely important with respect to yellow fever, which is prevalent in West Africa and transmitted by mosquitoes also.

**Early treatment is essential if you contract malaria.** Common symptoms include fever and chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, and dizziness. Consider any febrile, flu-like illness in a malarial area to be malaria until proven otherwise. Malaria can occur as early as six days after being bitten by an infected mosquito or several months after exposure. **If you become ill tell Dr. Sane and Ms. Rama Sow Niang and see a physician promptly. Delay in seeking medical care and diagnosis increases the chances of complications and serious illness.** Upon your return to the U.S., inform your physician of recent travel and illnesses abroad.

**DEHYDRATION**

It is common for students to report feeling dehydrated. It is important to drink enough water to replace fluids lost during your daily activities. Keep in mind that alcohol and caffeine increase fluid loss.

**Signs and symptoms of dehydration:**

- Rapid heart beat
- Lightheaded when change position
- Dry mouth
- Deep breathing
- Irritability
- Reduction in urine output, increase in yellow color
- Cool and mottled extremities
- Lethargy

If you experience mild dehydration, drinking plain water may be all the treatment you need. However, if there is loss of water and electrolytes (especially sodium and potassium) should also be replaced. Check with a local physician for recommendations for rehydration solutions.
HIV AIDS

The number of people infected by HIV is growing in West Africa. In Sénégal there is not as much education or publicity about AIDS as here in the States, so you need to be **extremely cautious** in any sexual relationship. Although latex condoms provide some protection, you cannot assume a partner’s willingness to use them, especially in a cross-cultural relationship. Also, you cannot expect to have a potential partner tested for HIV, prior to embarking upon an intimate relationship.

**Bring an ample supply of latex condoms with you from the States.** Do not rely on condoms sold there to provide significant protection from HIV and other STIs.

Do not use intravenous drugs or share syringes. If there is a situation in which you need to receive an injection for medical reasons, ask the health practitioner to open the syringe package in front of you, so that you know that it is unused and sterile. **Do not take any chances.** Dental procedures, tattoos, and acupuncture treatments are also risky. If a blood transfusion should be necessary, contact the U.S. Embassy as well as Dr. Sane and Ms. Sow for advice.

SAFETY

The following suggestions apply to your stay in Sénégal. You will receive a more detailed briefing on safety upon your arrival in Dakar. Please also consult your *Study Abroad Handbook* for further information regarding safety, emergencies, how to handle crises, and what to do if you are physically or sexually assaulted while studying abroad.

It is necessary to become well acquainted with your new surroundings in Sénégal in order to feel safe. Learn which areas of Dakar should be avoided, which means of transportation are most reliable. Former participants recommend that you do not walk alone especially at night. They also suggest avoiding the beach at night because a lot of crime takes place there. Taxis are the best mode of transportation after dark although buses and car rapides are cheap. They stress that you should always be careful and alert.

In general, do not do anything that would call excessive attention to yourself: **avoid flashy jewelry, watches, or wallets.** Carry only the cash that you’ll need on a daily basis. Be sure only you know where you keep your money. Be careful of pickpockets and purse-snatchers. It’s always a good idea to carry money in a money pouch rather than a purse or bag. Past participants have also recommended purses and backpacks that zip and can be kept in front of you in crowded areas. Also, be careful with your camera. Do not wear it around your neck. Some past participants also suggest making sure that you have locks on your suitcases and keeping valuables locked in them all of the time, even if your room has a lock.

Travel downtown in groups of three or four. Larger groups are taken to be tourists and attract the attention of petty thieves. Be especially careful in large crowds (e.g. concerts, events, etc.).
Women frequently receive unsolicited attention from men while in town. One former participant suggests responding in Wolof in a joking manner, making light of the situation, or making a disapproving expression then moving on quickly. Another suggests responding verbally, but looking straight ahead without stopping. Sometimes it helps to observe what is going on in front of you. You may be able to avoid an unpleasant situation simply by walking on the other side of the road. Another approach is to adopt an assertive and confident posture. This encourages men to take you seriously. Although this type of attention is physically harmless, you should pay attention to your instincts and judge each situation independently.

If someone is being crude or the situation becomes uncomfortable, be prepared to be forceful and make your exit. Make sure you are being extremely clear and forceful, even if it may seem culturally insensitive. Most Sénégalese women do not tolerate this from men on the street and neither should you.

Students and tourists are targets for various "scams," especially in the downtown area and in large crowds. Returning students have reported that many people will approach you, saying that they are friends of former Kalamazoo College participants, and will ask to borrow money or request something. Do not give your address to strangers! Do not be surprised if someone seems to know all about the Kalamazoo College program. There is no reason for alarm, but be aware of the situation.

**LOCAL POLITICS**

There have been occasions when Kalamazoo College students were exposed to political demonstrations in Sénégal. Sometimes they have taken the form of student or faculty strikes at the university. At such times, it is not uncommon for government security forces to be summoned to control the situation. Remember that it’s probably not aimed at you. U.S. citizens have not been targeted in Sénégal in the past. However, as an international visitor, your participation in strikes, demonstrations, etc. is not welcomed.

If you find yourself in a situation where there is political trouble and/or violence, please do the following:

- Vacate the area immediately
- Pay attention to the news and keep yourself updated on the situation
- Avoid areas where strikes or riots are rumored to occur
- Seek the advice of a trusted Sénégalese friend or family member, especially if a situation arises suddenly and you do not have the opportunity to consult with program staff members
- Contact your Resident Directors as soon as possible

The best advice is to use your common sense at all times. Be aware of your surroundings and follow your instincts.
**EMERGENCIES**

► In case of an emergency, you should first contact Dr. Sane and Ms. Rama Sow Niang or another staff member at Africa Consultants International. Emergency numbers are located at the end of this guide. If you are physically or sexually assaulted, please refer to your *Study Abroad Handbook*. You will receive more information on emergency procedures on site.

In case there is an emergency that requires you to get in touch with us in the Center for International Programs, call one of the following numbers:

| Center for International Programs
| Phone: + (269) 337. 7133 | E-mail: cip@kzoo.edu | Fax: + (269) 337. 7400
| Margaret Wiedenhoeft, Executive Director
| Cell: + (269) 267. 5800

Your CIP departure packet includes an orange and white emergency contact card. It lists phone numbers for the Kalamazoo Counseling Center, the Student Health Center and the Chapel.

**THE HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE**

Living with a Sénégal family can be a very rewarding aspect of your study abroad experience. Remember that the homestay program constitutes a relationship between Kalamazoo College and the host country personnel (the homestay coordinator and the resident director, in particular). Students are typically housed individually with Sénégal families. Most of the homes will be middle- to upper-middle class, but the "homestay" experiences may be radically different from each other. Whatever your family structure is, it will be your introduction to Sénégal family life, society and culture.

In general, children in Sénégal grow up within a broader family structure than what we are accustomed to in this country. Sénégal families tend to have close relationships and live in the same city with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Not surprisingly, then, a high value is placed on the family and on sustaining those relationships.

**MEALS**

You will eat most of your meals with your family. Because of the cultural importance of eating together as a family, you will probably be expected to eat the majority of your meals with your family. With this in mind, discuss with your family which meals you can eat with them, approximately what time, etc. Students back from Sénégal emphasize that lunch with your family is important to them and for your adjustment. Try not to miss it. Inform your family ahead of time if you will not be home for a meal for which they are expecting you. There are no refunds for the homestay meals you choose not to eat.
Fresh fruits and vegetables are not eaten as frequently in most Sénégalése households as they are in the U.S. But they are plentiful and can be bought from street vendors in almost every neighborhood. So it is easy to supplement the meals at your homestay with fresh snacks.

**Vegetarians** should discuss their diets with their host families soon after arriving. Most hosts are understanding and appreciative when they are told about diet restrictions before meals are prepared. Explaining what you can and cannot eat in advance will help prevent awkward situations.

If you are in a situation where meat is offered to you, keep in mind that a refusal may be offensive to those offering it to you, especially if the occasion is a special one. There will be occasions that you can "eat around" the meat in a dish, and that is much less problematic for all concerned than if you refuse to eat anything that has been prepared in the same dish as meat.

Non-meat dishes such as hummus, tabouleh, and other vegetarian items are available in many of the Lebanese restaurants in Dakar. However, access to non-meat meals throughout the program will be very difficult. For most Sénégalése families, eating meat and fish is an important part of the culture and vegetarians should carefully consider the implications of their eating habits. While Kalamazoo College does not limit the program to non-vegetarians, those who refuse to eat meat (or other animal products) should know that on occasion their needs simply cannot be met. **In such situations, vegetarians will be responsible for finding, purchasing and possibly preparing their own food if they choose not to eat what is being served.** Any extra expenses incurred because of special diet choices must be borne by the student. If you are following a vegetarian diet, please talk to students who have been to Sénégal in the past. Think ahead about how you plan to deal with this issue. If you would like to talk more about your diet before you leave, feel free to contact Margaret Wiedenhoeft in the Center for International Programs.

**LAUNDRY**

You will need to discuss with the female head of the household the procedure for doing your laundry. Few households will have washing or drying machines. Your clothes will be hand-washed and line-dried. Keep this in mind because it will take a couple of days to get your clean clothes back, and you’ll have to plan accordingly. You will have to wash your own undergarments. Before you do your laundry, ask for assistance and a good demonstration. Wash small amounts frequently.

**DOMESTIC HELP**

It's very likely that your family will employ a maid to cook, clean the house, and perhaps take care of the children. Most of you will not be accustomed to having a maid in the house, so you may be surprised at the role she will play in your new home.

There have been students who were uncomfortable with the way the family treated the maid in their
house. You may feel like intervening, by speaking to your host parents or comforting the maid. However, **don't put yourself between the maid and your family.** Culturally this would be very inappropriate and could jeopardize your relationship with your family or the position of the maid in the household. While some behaviors may seem incomprehensible to you, they may be the standard in Sénégal. If you have a question about a specific situation in your home, ask Aby Diallo about it, or one of your Sénégalais friends.

**ADJUSTING TO YOUR FAMILY**

You will not live the independent lifestyle common in the residence halls of U.S. colleges. Be prepared to give up a little of that freedom in Sénégal so you can relate more closely with your family. They may worry if you stay out late or do not share your plans with them. Women may be expected to be home at a certain hour, or to arrive earlier than their male peers. Men may be expected to escort female friends home after an evening out. Early in the program, discuss such expectations. Usually some of the restrictions will be eased as you demonstrate that you exercise good judgment and can take care of yourself. Your family may invite you to join them on certain visits, activities, or excursions. These opportunities provide an ideal way to get to know the different aspects of the culture first-hand.

**HELPFUL HINTS FOR A POSITIVE HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE**

- Keep your expectations realistic
- Respect the rules and customs of your family
- Always double-check when the family expects you to be home at night, for meals, etc.
- Make an effort to speak French or Wolof in the home even when talking with friends from the U.S. Your family will appreciate it.
- Tell someone when you don’t understand something that’s been said, and ask them to be patient as you try to improve your French and Wolof
- Get permission from your host mother to have friends over. Entertain your guests in the same way that your family entertains theirs.
- Expect to make your own bed, keep your room clean, and offer to help out, as you would in the U.S. when visiting relatives
- Bring back a small souvenir for the family from your travels during the program
- Resist the urge to spend a lot of time alone in your room. Hang out in the living room even if you don’t feel comfortable conversing with your family. They will appreciate the effort that you make.
- Be open and share things about yourself.
- Keep your room clean. Americans have a reputation for being messy.
- Show interest in them.
- If your family runs a business out of their house, be sure to support them by buying something small occasionally.
- Be patient, observe, ask questions
- Expect to feel awkward and frustrated at first, but remember this will change
There will be instances in which you are aware that your family does not understand why you act the way you do, and vice versa. Listen and observe closely. Pay attention to non-verbal messages and the way your Sénégalaise peers relate to others. Unlike current U.S. culture, direct, confrontational communication is not common in Sénégal. If you're aware that you may be doing something culturally insensitive, simply ask your family. If you're not comfortable doing that, ask the advice of a Sénégalaise friend, Aby Diallo or another staff member at the Baobab Center.

If you should have serious difficulties with your family, talk with Aby Diallo immediately. If a move needs to be made she will arrange it.

**HOMESTAY FAMILY GIFTS**

Gifts for your host family or new friends are good ice-breakers. In most families, gifts are turned over to the host mom to distribute. We encourage generic gifts that every member of the family, including house-help, can enjoy such as homemade cookies, a box of chocolates, a puzzle, or a picture book of your state. Other suggestions are Obama trinkets, travel-sized board games, candy (American candy is really popular), gum, balloons, bubbles, crayons, coloring books, balls, and children’s books in French, etc. Personal gifts may include T-shirts, baseball caps, perfume or cologne, hair accessories, costume jewelry, playing cards and scented lotion are for friends and family members you get to know particularly well. Before you return to the U.S. it is a good idea to give to your host family the clothes, towels, over the counter medicines, etc. that you do not want to take home. Try not to worry too much about gifts—families appreciate the gesture most.

**TELEPHONE AND INTERNET USE**

Most students use cell phones purchased in Dakar and buy phone credit to make calls as needed. Phones are about the same price as they are in the U.S., practical and very convenient. Baobab staff will assist with the purchase of phones shortly after the program begins. Students also recommend asking your host family about buying a cell phone second-hand, as it may help to cut down on costs (approx. $50 to $70 USD). A few past students said that phone credit can be one of the biggest expenses in Sénégal (about $5/week). Look for special offers and deals on credit and buy a lot during the promotion.

There may not be a phone (land line) in your home-stay. This is not unusual or a problem thanks to access to cell phones. Most people do not make out-going calls from their household phones.

**MAIL**

Regular mail delivery between the U.S. and Sénégal can take from 2 to 3 weeks, or more in some cases. Sending packages is often risky and requires paperwork and fees in Sénégal. Returning students recommend Federal Express and DHL for sending packages. When picking up packages, students recommend going to the post office when it first opens to avoid long lines, as it may take up to an hour to pick up a package. They must be addressed to you at the ACI street address. **Padded, plain**
envelopes work best.

Your mailing address (for packages and letters) during your stay in Sénégal is:

Your name
c/o Ms. Rama Sow
Africa Consultants International
B.P. 5270
Dakar-Fann, SÉNÉGAL

Ask friends and family to keep incoming packages small and list the value as relatively low. Most students use the ACI address throughout the program. However, you may choose to give your homestay address to your friends and family once you arrive in Sénégal and find out what your address is, if that is more convenient for you.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Over the period of your stay in Sénégal, you will probably learn the most from daily living in a different culture. For in the day-to-day experiences—the morning walk to the university, a trip to the market, a meal with your family—lie the real challenges, frustrations, and joys of living in a new cultural environment. It is an immensely rich and rewarding experience and one that you can anticipate with pleasure.

Although your experience in Sénégal promises to be rich and rewarding, everyone has bad days. It is normal to occasionally feel you just want to go home. Students who have been to Sénégal in the past offer the following advice:

- Be prepared to have unhappy days and know that they will pass.
- Know how you handle stress at home, and try the same activities in Sénégal.
- Talk to others in your group. Perhaps someone who is having a good day can also relate to your feelings.
- Review Helm’s model for White Racial Identity and Bennett’s Intercultural Sensitivity model on Hornet Passport. Try to determine which values may be conflicting.
- Try something that will involve you in the present and help you to know the local culture better; simply doing something can work wonders. Attend a local church, search for a specific item in the market, ask a new Sénégal friend to dinner, etc.
- Curl up with a book, listen to music, or go to the beach.
- Cook, write in your journal and vent your feelings.
- Be patient with yourself!
You’ll learn that everyone has his or her own way of coping in a different culture and that what might help some people some of the time, won’t help everyone all of the time. Developing strategies to adjusting in your new environment often leads students to discover new abilities and interests. This is part of the adventure.

SOME CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The following observations are **generalizations**. Expect some exceptions!

- The emphasis on **time** is quite different in Sénégal than in the U.S. Things move more slowly and there is more emphasis on relationships, rather than how many tasks can be accomplished.

- Remember the importance of respect for elders. Depending on the context, it may not be appropriate to address an elder by their legal name. It is very likely, for example, that you would simply call your best friend’s mother by the Wolof term for mother, rather than by her name.

- When with older people, do not look them directly in the eye, as this is a sign of disrespect. Direct eye contact is much less common in general in Sénégal than the U.S.

- Sénégalese do not use their left hand in eating, handing out things, or greeting people. This is considered rude. If you must use your left hand apologize for doing so. It is also acceptable to offer your right wrist for the other person to "shake" if you are unable to use your right hand.

- It is very common for friends of the same sex to hold hands while talking—even men. On the other hand, couples are **not** very demonstrative. Behavior of this type is considered disrespectful, especially around elders.

- Be aware that Sénégalese tease in a way Americans may find abrasive. Direct comments about your appearance (even your weight), dress, or eating habits are fair game. Rarely is the intention to insult.

- It is customary to escort your guests out of your house after entertaining them and to walk them down the street or even back to their house if it's not too far.

- Expect to pay for your Sénégalese friends or siblings if you invite them out.

- When you visit, take a small gift. Tea is always appropriate. On the other hand, if you are a guest in someone’s home, especially for an extended period of time, you may be offered a gift, such as a bracelet, a scarf, a favorite book, etc.

- Bargaining for items is common. Don’t be afraid to say "Non!" and walk away, as this will often result in a price reduction. Keeping a smile on your face and using a joking manner is often the best way to get a good deal. However, never bargain for something that you are not intending to buy.
There is very little “personal space” so standing or sitting very close to strangers and acquaintances is very common.

If you’re ill, people will probably flock to you to help keep you from feeling lonely.

Crying is generally associated with extreme despair or disastrous occasions, such as death. The American habit of crying to express emotion or to “get something off your chest” is not very well understood.

Take off your shoes before walking on a rug or carpeted area, or before sitting on or around a mat. People use floor mats to serve meals.

It is considered rude not to share food or drinks with others in the room or household. If you get something for yourself, enjoy it in your room or somewhere away from others.

DO NOT walk in front of people who are praying instead walk BEHIND them.

When entering a room or a new situation, first shake everyone’s hand, even the youngest child.

The assumption that all Americans are wealthy makes requests from friends, or even members of your host family, a common experience for students. At some point someone will ask for batteries, medicine, clothing, your laptop, your tablet or other items. It is not a problem to explain that these are items that you need and cannot lend or give away. You can also say that you don’t have what they want.

Poverty is not stigmatized as much as it is in our culture. Because giving alms to the poor is one of the five pillars of Islam, some Sénégalaise give change to the beggars and lepers in the street or to charity regularly.

A visit from someone is almost regarded as a gift. If a friend visits you, it’s natural to repay the gift and visit the person in her or his home. Women who receive unwanted visits from males are not expected to repay the visit!

Visiting in the bedroom of a friend of the opposite sex indicates to the family that there is a sexual relationship. Unmarried couples conducting such a relationship in an elder’s home is fairly rude and promiscuous.

One past student recommends being flexible and approachable, but not intimidated when dealing with cultural differences. He adds, allowing yourself to be immersed helps you learn much more than being frustrated.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND PRIVATE BEHAVIOR

You will find that the Sénégalese are much more conscious and concerned about public perceptions and reputations than most Americans. An individual’s appearance and conduct reflect directly on their family (nuclear and extended), any group or organization he or she is affiliated with, and in the case of
study abroad participants, Kalamazoo College and the United States. As a result of media images and stereotypes, and the conduct of former participants, Americans are often perceived as troublemakers, promiscuous and inconsiderate.

This is an extremely important factor to consider as you interact with your host family and begin to form friendships. These perceptions have impacted students’ study abroad experiences significantly in the past. **It is best if you take the time to learn what behavior is acceptable, especially regarding members of the opposite sex, and the consequences of conduct that is unacceptable.** Pay attention if your host family has concerns about your new friends or activities. While they are naturally concerned about your well-being, your choices will reflect on their entire household, as well as you as an individual. In other words, your host family has a very real stake in your actions and choices.

**GENDER DYNAMICS IN SÉNÉGAL**

As you may suspect, gender relations are very different in Sénégal than they are in the U.S. Dakar is a large, urban city where now you will see women and men in groups together (particularly university students), but it is still rare to see women and men in exclusive pairs. One student notes that romantic relationships can be complicated because it is really hard to understand what is expected of you. Consider the implications of your behavior with members of the opposite sex, and consult your friends of the same sex as to how you should behave. Some of the instructors at the Baobab Center can be very helpful in this area.

If you find that you are overwhelmed with unwanted attention from members of the opposite sex, try to use humor to diffuse the situation or to exit it without incurring bad feelings. Humor is used in many situations in Sénégal, and it can be a very effective tool to communicate difficult messages without insulting people. One student suggests taking inventory of your behavior or clothing to make sure you are not unwittingly drawing attention to yourself. At the same time, be prepared to be forceful if you are in a situation that makes you uncomfortable. Remember, if you feel uneasy or you think your intentions are being misunderstood, make sure you are being extremely clear and forceful, even if it may seem to be culturally insensitive.

**SPEAKING FRENCH AND WOLOF**

Anxiety about speaking foreign languages is perfectly natural for most travelers. So **RELAX!** It will be okay if you arrive in Dakar and don’t understand a word your host family says to you. Everyone who has studied abroad where another language is spoken has lived through that experience. There are, however, some great opportunities to practice your French here before you go. Some ideas for practicing French include renting French movies, listening to French and African music, and practicing your French with the French-speakers in your community. Living with a local family and attending classes with Sénégalaise students will help you become proficient in French and Wolof. Because many maids will speak only Wolof, talking with the house-help is a great way to practice your language.
Most students agree that bargaining in Wolof usually gets you the best prices or taxi fares. New acquaintances will appreciate your efforts when you speak as little as two Wolof greetings. So, don’t be shy, give it a try!

TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

You will be doing a lot of walking during your stay in Sénégal. Homestays will vary in their distance from bus stops, the Baobab center, downtown, the university, etc. Walking from the university to downtown can take up to 45 minutes. There are also various taxis, buses, and car rapides that travel around the city. Car rapides are the cheapest option (about 20 cents one-way) and operate on the main streets and run until 11 p.m. or 12 a.m. Riding the car rapides is never boring, one student’s advice is “...don’t be afraid, yell out your destination and hop-on!”

City buses are faster and more reliable, but they get extremely crowded. Buses tend to stop running at 7 pm or 8 pm, so taxis are best after dark. Most taxi fares around the city are less than $5 USD. All buses and car rapides go to and from downtown. If you get on one headed downtown it will take you to the main square. Coming back is a little more difficult. You’ll have to know where your bus or car rapides is going and they don’t’ leave downtown as frequently. Take a taxi if you are in a hurry. Although taxi prices tend to be inexpensive, make sure you bargain for or ask for a price for your destination before you get in the car. Fares may be more expensive at night.

REGIONAL TRAVEL

Anytime you travel outside Dakar, be sure to inform your host family and the program staff. It is very important that you prepare an itinerary for Dr. Sane and Ms. Rama Sow Niang if you plan to be away from Dakar for more than 48 hours. The itinerary should include the addresses and telephone numbers where you can be contacted during your travels. It should also be updated when your travel plans change. When you reach your destination, it is best if you contact your host family, Dr. Sane and Ms. Sow Niang and let them know that you have arrived safely. Remember, your host family and the resident directors are the chief contact persons should an emergency arise. Managing such a situation is complicated further if you cannot be located quickly.

For several years the number of violent incidents in the Casamance region of Sénégal has seen steady increase. There have been more gunfire exchanges between the Sénégal military and members of the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MCDF), resulting in deaths and injuries. There have also been landmine explosions. Although American citizens are not targeted for violence, the CIP and ACI do not recommend travel to or through the Casamance region because of the unpredictable nature of these outbreaks.

It is not the CIP’s intention to alarm students. It is, however, important to inform program participants of the situation, state our recommendations and provide resources for more information. Before arrival,
students should review the Safety and Security section of the State Department’s country specific information at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1013.html. Recent warden messages and consular newsletters disseminated to U.S. citizens in Dakar are posted at http://dakar.usembassy.gov/service/warden-messages-and-monthly-consular-news.html. In addition, details on the Casmance region will be a component of the on-site orientation.

When traveling outside of Dakar, we strongly discourage you from traveling alone. If you have an accident or become ill, someone should be there to assist you and contact the necessary people. If you are planning to travel to another country, call or visit someone at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar to inquire about any travel advisories.

Bush taxis and trains are the most common mode of transportation for travel within Sénégal. "Bush taxis" are vans or cars that hold a lot of people and are cheap. There are also trains that go to Mali which make some stops along the way.

**IMPORTANT TRAVEL TIPS**

- Make sure you really know how to get to your destination. Plan an itinerary and leave it with your host family, Ms. Rama Sow Niang or Dr. Sane.
- Ask Sénégalaise friends or people who have been to Sénégal for advice. They will be able to give you firsthand information.
- If you’re doing more than just passing through another country and you are a US Passport holder, consider registering in STEP: step.state.gov
- Be suspect of strangers who offer you rides or tours. Never accept a ride from a stranger when you are alone. “Tourist” guides who want to show you around and expect to be paid are common.
- Definitely take some kind of pouch for documents, money, and tickets. The best rule is never to remove it, even when you’re sleeping. When traveling, keep documents with you, not in luggage on top of the bus or in a checked bag.
- Be very clear about your precise destination when traveling. Once you’re on the bus, or whatever means of transport, make sure your destination matches that of the vehicle!
- Ask a lot of questions to be sure you are on the right train or bus.
- Before paying for a long-distance bus ticket, find out exactly what the vehicle will be like, if the windows are open, if people will be seated in the aisle, etc. You may be in for a long, hot, and uncomfortable ride.
- When traveling by bus, you may not get checked luggage immediately if you arrive at your destination late at night. The luggage compartment may not be opened until sunrise. Be prepared.
- Talk to security personnel when you enter boarding areas-ask which plane or bus is yours, etc.
- Always carry your passport and university I.D. with you when traveling outside of Dakar.
- If you plan to travel outside of Sénégal, be sure to take extra passport photos with you. You will need these to apply for visas to enter each country.
- It is best to obtain as many visas as possible before leaving Dakar, so be sure to allow enough time for this before traveling. Count on spending $10 - $30 USD for each visa. Visas for East African countries can often be obtained through the British Embassy.
ADVICE FROM PAST PARTICIPANTS

RECOMMENDED THINGS TO DO

“Dakar is a hot, dry, interesting place. I walked everywhere which was great for seeing things, and as long as I had a friend with me I could do a lot of exploring.”

“Going out in Dakar is fun in groups, especially if you have Sénégalais friends to come along.”

LIVING IN DAKAR: CULTURE AND CITY LIFE

“Sénégalais culture is centered around teranga, or hospitality, in Wolof. People are very welcoming towards foreigners, especially to those who make efforts to immerse themselves in the culture and learn some of the local language, Wolof. This is especially visible at meal times; people eat around a communal bowl, with spoons or hands, and the cook always makes extra food in case someone happens to come by during mealtime; it is custom to invite that person to come eat.”

“Public transportation seems very disorganized and it takes some getting used to. It really is worth figuring out the public transportation system because it is much cheaper than taxis. Taxis are the only available transportation in the evening though, and rates go up after midnight. And generally, taxis are always available. However, one must bargain with the driver before getting in the cab; the taxi drivers will try to rip off foreigners. A taxi from the Baobab Center to downtown usually costs around 1000 CFA (about $2). Taxis are never less than 500 CFA (about $1), no matter how long the trip, whereas public transport rarely costs more than 200 CFA (about 50 cents).”

“Aside from the month of Ramadan, Dakar’s nightlife is always thriving, even during week days. The city contains many diverse restaurants, ranging from Sénégalais cuisine to Thai, Korean, and Cape Verdean. The city also has patisseries (pastry shops), bars, and nightclubs with both live music and DJs.”

Nightclubs do not really get going until well past midnight.”

“For women, you will need to figure out your comfort level around men, stick to it, and then not feel weird about it.”

“The women are hard to get to know, but are wonderful when you do. If you only become friends with little kids, that’s just fine too.”
RECOMMENDED PLACES TO VISIT

Once you arrive, you’ll be able to ask friends and family to give you recommendations of places to go and things to do. But this list will get you started:

- Lac Rose (see the water that’s super-saturated in salt and bright pink!)
- Gorée Island
- Ngor Island (in the direction of the airport)
- Sorano National Theater
- Thiossane (not far from the Baobab Center and dance club of Youssou N’Dour)
- Tringa (downtown spot for live music)
- Kilimanjaro (another night club)
- Village Artisanal (to buy souvenirs and crafts)
- Local markets - Sandaga, Kermel, Tilène & the Maillian market near the train station has great deals because there aren’t many tourists
- Soumbédioune fish market along the corniche is amazing at about 5 or 6 in the evening. All the boats come in and people start selling their daily catches. The variety of seafood is a wonderful sight.
- French Cultural Center
- Place d’Independence for bookstores, shopping area, and banks
- Iles des Madeleines
- The top of the Monument of the African Renaissance offers a fantastic view of the entire city, especially after the sun goes down.
- Marche HLM for fabric

COURSES AND ICRP

“Start looking for an ICRP early (like October), because it can take ages to find one. If all you end up doing doesn’t feel like much, you’ll probably be surprised at the insight you can gain from it.”

GENERAL ADVICE FOR STUDY ABROAD

“The best piece of advice I ever got for Sénégal, was to never expect anything to go according to how you plan it. This is actually one of the most freeing things about the program. It teaches you to be flexible and open to new ideas, as well as improve your problem-solving skills and your ability to laugh off uncertainty. Life is all about uncertainty, and if you can become comfortable with it during six months in another country, you’ve gained a really valuable life skill.” Caitlin Paul K’08

YOUR RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

REINTEGRATION
Going home is usually a very exciting prospect. Most students look forward to seeing family and friends they have missed, eating food they haven't had for so long and enjoying activities that may not have been possible during study abroad.

Remember that returning home is also a transition very similar to your arrival in Sénégal. Just like your arrival, you can expect to feel frustration, anxiety and confusion at home, on your campus and with your friends. Craig Storti puts it this way in *The Art of Crossing Cultures*:

“The problem is this word home. It suggests a place and a life all set up and waiting for us; all we have to do is “move-in.” But home isn't a place we merely inhabit; it’s a lifestyle we construct (wherever we go), a pattern of routines, habits and behaviors associated with certain people, places and objects—all confined to a limited area or neighborhood. We can certainly construct a home back in our own culture—just as we did abroad—but there won’t be one waiting for us when we arrive…In other words, no one goes home; rather we return to our native country and in due course we create a home.”

At the foundation of this transition is the task of determining what to do with the changes that have occurred while you were away and the changes that have taken place within you as a result of your time in Sénégal. Life for your family, friends and teachers probably will not be the same as when you departed, but you were not there to gradually adjust to those changes with them. And they have not been able to get used to the things that are different about you.

Hardly anyone avoids the discomfort of this period of growth, but the good news is you will eventually find a way to include your new ideas, skills and outlook in your life back in the U.S. Here are a few questions to consider before your return. Your answers may help you recognize the changes that have occurred during your sojourn.

- What have I learned about Sénégalése culture that I did not know previously? In what ways has this changed my view of Sénégal?
- By being abroad and able to compare my culture with a different culture, what have I learned about the history, values and traditions that make up my home culture?
- While I was away, what significant events occurred in my country, my family, in my hometown, among my friends and on campus?
- How have my personal values changed because of my study abroad experience?
- In what ways have my stereotypes or biases changed?
- What new skills have I developed (e.g. adaptation skills, second language proficiency, sensitivity, etc) and how might I maintain them?
- How can I express these changes to my friends, family and teachers?
- What might I do to continue to deepen my understanding of Sénégal?

SAYING GOODBYE...
Taking the time to reflect on your experience in Sénégal, before you leave your host family, teachers, friends and favorite sites, can help with readjustment to the U.S. A few weeks prior to your departure, the CIP Peer Advisors (seniors who assist the CIP after returning from study abroad) will share a list of things you can do to look back on study abroad and begin to prepare emotionally for your return. For now, here is a short preview of the steps Peer Advisors wished they had taken a month or so before their programs ended:

- Take photos of your campus, living space, neighborhood, and surrounding areas so you can remember them and share them with your family and friends back home.
- Definitely set time aside for thorough ‘last’ goodbyes with friends and host families.
- Enjoy some of your favorite foods that you may not be able to get in the United States.
- Re-visit a place you went to when you first arrived and reflect on how that place feels differently now.
- Start thinking of ways to be upfront with your family and friends back home about how you are feeling – write emails or make phone calls to share what you will miss from study abroad and ask them to be patient with you when you have ups and downs as you readjust.

**TRAVEL CHECKLIST**

You will need to take care of many important details as your program comes to an end. As you are preparing to leave, please remember the following:

- Confirm your return flight 24 hours in advance on line or at the airline office in Dakar.
- Check on the availability of frequent flyer miles.
- Items made of animal hides or any agricultural products cannot enter the U.S.
- Be sure to set aside some U.S. currency for your return trip to the U.S. and exchange any unwanted CFAs before leaving Sénégal.
- Set aside some money (CFA) for the taxi ride to the airport.
- Write your homestay family a thank you letter when you arrive in the States—they will appreciate it, and they will be more likely to accept students the following year!
- Participate in re-integration activities when you return to campus. We want to hear about your experiences.

**CHANGES TO YOUR RETURN FLIGHT TO THE U.S.**

If, while in country, you wish to change your return date, you have two options. Students who used the College travel agency, Travel Leader, may contact the agency to arrange the change. Typically there is a change fee (from the airline) and a service fees (from the travel agent). You can reach Bev Gould, Executive Accounts Manager at Travel Leaders by email at, bgould@travelleaders.com.

**WHEN YOU’RE HOME . . . YOUR HEALTH**

Some students have experienced prolonged illness after their return to the U.S. Just as your body had to
adjust in Sénégal, you’ll have to re-adjust to the food, water, and different microbes at home. If illness or symptoms persist, consider scheduling an appointment with your family doctor. Make sure you tell the physician of your recent travel history.

**IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Email: aci@acibaobab.org | rsow@acibaobab.org  
Website: http://www.baobabcenter.org/experience-senegal-program%C2%A9

**U.S. Embassy Dakar**  
Route des Almadies  
Dakar, Sénégal  
Telephone: 011. 221. 33. 879. 4000 or after hours 011. 221. 33. 879. 4001  
Internet: http://dakar.usembassy.gov/index.html

Please keep in mind the time difference when calling, which is 4 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time (EDT) during the summer and 5 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST) after we turn our clocks back in the fall.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

You will want to take a guidebook with you—perhaps one from the “Let’s Go” series, “Lonely Planet” series or a Rough Guide.

http://allabroad.us/resources.php - Contains resources to help find funding opportunities, information about making study abroad support career development, reasons to study abroad, information to support diversity in study abroad, and information about discrimination abroad.

http://www.diversityabroad.com/ - “…connects talented diverse and underrepresented students and graduates to international education and career opportunities that prepares them for leadership in an interconnected world.”

http://www.purdue.edu/cie/learning/global/toolkit/ - includes 8 modules designed to help students learn about cultural worldview frameworks, intercultural openness, intercultural empathy, and cultural self-awareness.

https://travellatina.org and @TravelLatina on Instagram


https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/lgbt.html - U.S. Government’s resource guide for travelers who identify as LGBTQ


https://baniamor.com/ - Bani Amor
Blogs, interviews, and posts that revolve around identity, place and the colonial nature of travel culture; Has a series of interviews with travelers of color and an article listing travelers of color to follow

http://matadornetwork.com/bnt/7-things-latino-travelers-understand/ - Luis Guillermo
7 Things Only Latina Travelers Understand

http://www.browngirlsfly.com/ - “A Melanin-Infused Perspective on Travel”


http://www.expatica.com/nl/moving-to/Moving-home-Reverse-culture-shock_104957.html - Article on Reverse Culture Shock
http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/cultural_etiquette.htm - Cultural etiquette by country

https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/6-things-wish-knew-studying-abroad-african-american - “6 Things I Wish I Knew Studying Abroad as an African American

Books


Various. Diversity Issues in Study Abroad, https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/international-study/student-resources/while-abroad/diversity-while-abroad
Collection of quotes from study abroad participants from Brown University who are from historically disenfranchised communities.


**LGBTQ RESOURCES**


[https://www.outrightinternational.org/](https://www.outrightinternational.org/) - The Outright Action International is an association of individuals and organizations dedicated to building a free and peaceful world, respect for individual rights and liberties, and an open and competitive economic system based on voluntary exchange and free trade. They currently have members and representatives in over 100 countries.

[http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/forms/glbt.html](http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/forms/glbt.html) - Covers some of the issues a LGBTQ student may wish to research before departure.

[http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa) - Includes both general travel information and a special discussion section (Thorn Tree Forum) for LGBTQ travelers.