

## University of Miami Solomon Islands Field Course: Summer 2013

### I. Information & Recommended Packing List

Each participant is limited to 50 lbs. of luggage. Because in-country travel will be in small planes and in open boats, a waterproof duffle-style bag is recommended to protect your gear and clothing during trips between sites. Below, we provide some basic information on the Solomon Islands and recommendations on packing and attire. ***This is simply a recommendation, and do make sure to consult with the relevant professionals for some of the important items listed below (e.g., medical, insurance, etc.)***

**General Safety.** This trip is run as a graduate-level seminar and field course. You will have great freedom to explore and learn, but we ask that some simple, but hard, rules be followed at all times throughout the duration of the course. These include:

- 1) Respect for all laws and customs of the Solomon Islands
- 2) No travel in backcountry areas or out on the sea without the express consent of one of the team leaders
- 3) Follow all safety guidelines and instructions provided by the team leaders
- 4) Wear Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs; to be provided by University of Miami) during all open boat travel
- 5) Respect for all team members including fellow students, as well as for our Solomon hosts.
- 6) No consumption of alcoholic beverages during the duration of the course (this includes the instructors).

**Basic Attire.** In general, cotton or quick-dry clothing will be most comfortable. Hiking or swimming-style shorts with pockets, a light shirt (short or long sleeved depending on your skin's tolerance for intense sunblasting), rugged sandals (e.g., Teva, Keen, Chaco), sunglasses, sun hat, binoculars, field notebook, watch, water bottle, and a light wind-rain slicker will be what you are wearing and have with you on most days we are traveling or along the coasts. For our days spent working within the rainforests, you may want to exchange the shorts for long, quick-dry pants to protect your legs, and switch out the sandals for closed, light hiking shoes with light socks.

**Climate.** We will be in the Solomon Islands just before the Austral winter solstice; the SE trades will likely be blowing, so there will be a fairly constant wind-driven chop on the seas, and the temperatures and humidity are less intense than they are at other times. It can be relatively pleasant at this time of year with coastal temperatures likely ranging between 25-28° C. However, despite these mild numbers, we will be living in the equatorial humid tropics, which means hot apparent temperatures due to high humidity, and a generous supply of rain. Also, even in these the warm temperatures, long boat rides in driving rain can get

uncomfortably cold, with hypothermia possible, and thus we strongly recommend your having a light wind/rain jacket. Any quality light windbreaker or rain jacket that you use around Miami or hiking or camping at home will serve this purpose.

***Packing list.*** In addition to toiletries and other personal belongings such as reading material, personal field guides, and your journal (details to follow), below we provide some suggestions of items you will need may wish to have with you.

#### Clothing and General Gear List:

- Sun Hat
- Shorts
- Long-sleeved field shirt and field pants – REI/Columbia/Mtn Hardwear-Style quick-dry; many fishing gear companies make good products like this (e.g. Simms). Also, ones that switch to shorts from long pants and back are great.
- Swimsuit
- Tevas, Keens, Chacos, or Crocs
- Lightweight, closed hiking shoes
- Polarized and UV protective sunglasses
- Lightweight socks
- Windbreaker/Lightweight rain gear
- Camera and film/memory card
- Dive Skin/Rash Guard or thin long-sleeved tee-shirt for snorkeling
- Lightweight shorts and long-sleeved shirts (1-2 each)
- Lightweight slacks (to shield against bugs)
- Small quick dry pack towel/light towel
- Pocket knife/Leatherman-style tool (remember, you cannot bring this on-board any commercial flights)
- Prescription medicines. If you take certain medicines as part of your daily health regimen, make sure you bring an adequate supply for the duration of your trip. Your medications should be packed in your carry-on luggage.
- Motion sickness medication (if needed)
- Binoculars (please contact us if you would like assistance with bino issues; we will have a couple for the course)
- Insect repellent (Sawyer's slow release cream is great if you do DEET; otherwise take your favorite non-DEET repellent)
- Waterproof sunscreen lotion & lip balm (UVA/UVB SPF 30+)
- Flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries – recommend a quality LED headlamp as well as a backup flashlight. Headlamps are the best option.
- Small comfortable daypack/backpack
- Mask and snorkel
- Biodegradable soap/shampoo
- Travel first aid kit to include basic first aid and over the counter pain and digestive aids. It should also include the following specific for this trip:
  - Bandaging tape and gauze (Elastoplast brand is good)
  - Triple antibiotic cream
  - Immodium (to stem the tide of intense diarrhea)

- Broad-spectrum and gut specific antibiotic (e.g. Keflex and Cyprofloxacin respectively; check with your physician)
  - Gold Bond or your favorite brand of powder or other defense against skin rot and chafing in humid field conditions
  - Motion sickness medicine (if required)
  - Contact lens solutions, extra pair of prescription eye-wear (contacts or glasses).
- Do not plan on being able to purchase these or any other prescription items in the Solomons.

## **II. Solomon Islands & Destination Information**

**Entry Requirements:** U.S. passport holders do not require visas to enter the Solomon Islands. Passports, onward/return tickets and proof of sufficient funds for the duration of stay are required. Visitor permits are granted upon arrival at Henderson International Airport in Honiara. Visitors may enter any number of times provided the total period in the Solomon Islands does not exceed 90 days in a 12-month period. ***At customs, you will be met by one of the team leaders. You should tell customs you are participating in a tour of conservation areas throughout the Solomons.***

**Baggage:** 50 lbs total maximum luggage allowance per person; preferably packed in a waterproof dufflebag or other waterproof pack. We also recommend a light daypack to have on your person during work days and while traveling.

**Money Matters:** Solomon Island Dollars (SBD). Banks in Honiara include Westpac, ANZ, Bank of South Pacific and the National Bank of the Solomon Islands. ATMs are available but you will be charged by your bank accordingly. Most major credit cards are accepted at hotels and businesses in Honiara, but generally not in the outlying islands like Makira. Commerce in the native villages (for carvings, etc.) is conducted in Solomon Island Dollars (SBD) or occasionally by barter. We recommend you bring all the cash you will need in the form of traveler's checks or US cash. 1US\$ = 6.5 SBD as of 1/26/13.

**Tippling:** Is not expected or encouraged.

**Electricity:** 240 Volts AC power in Honiara and some outer islands centers (US is 110 V). Bring a converter/ power surge protector for charging equipment, or make sure your equipment can take 240 Volts. In camp, we will have a generator for an hour or two in some evenings, which will provide 240 V output. You can charge your camera/iPod, etc., during this time.

**Language:** Many speak English, although locals speak Melanesian Pidgin and their local language.

**Dress:** Dress should be modest in public areas (e.g., no short shorts and short skirts). Nudity for both males and females is never acceptable in areas that

people frequent in any regularity. When in doubt, be modest.

***Insurance and Medical matters:*** Each student is required to have their own medical insurance that will cover their medical expenses outside the United States. You should know that international doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment and U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. *Study Abroad and the instructors are not responsible for any costs associated with your medical care or medical evacuation. If you already have health insurance, please make sure that you are covered internationally, and in a country like the Solomon Islands.*

University of Miami students and staff are covered by Red24 for political and natural disaster evacuation.

Malaria is prevalent in the Solomons, and all visitors are advised to take anti-malarial medication, in addition to taking precautions against getting mosquito bites (long, light clothes for dawn and dusk, liberal use of an effective mosquito repellent). You can find the most recent updates about public health information related to the Solomon Islands at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's International Travelers Hotline (1-888-232-3228) or the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>. ***We suggest you consult your doctor a few weeks in advance for the necessary medication or advice.***

**We will be traveling in remote regions and may be far off the beaten track of 'backpacker' and other travel routes. In light of this we highly recommend that you thoroughly familiarize yourselves with the region and the health and environmental issues specific to the Solomon Islands.**