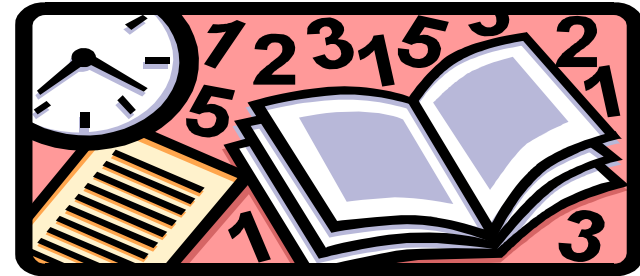




This booklet *Travel Wise* is presented as a resource for South Dakota Synod travelers as they prepare to visit Lutherans in other countries.



## Travel Wise



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revised 2009

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Suggestions for new material or revisions to this booklet will be appreciated.

### Helpful Phrases

Hello	Bonjour
What is your name, please	Comment vous appelez vous?
How are you	Comment ca va? Ca va?
My name is...	Je m'appelle
I am pleased to meet you	Enchante
Please	S'il vous plait
Thank you	Merci
No thank you	Non, merci
You are very kind	Vous etes tres gentil.
Please speak slowly	Parle lentement s'il vous plait
Water (to drink)	L'eau a boire
Water ( to wash)	L'eau a me laver
Shower	La douche
Soap	Le savon

Where is the toilet	Ou est le wvee-cee?
I need to use the toilet	J'ai besoin du toilet
Here is my visa, health card, passport	Voici mon _____
My luggage is here	Mon baggage est ici
I can carry my own bags	Je veux porter mes baggages

Colors rouge, blu, orange, juene, vert, blanch, noir,bruin violet.

Numbers un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, siece, sept, huit, neuf, dix.

How much does this cost?	Combien?
I do not understand	Je ne comprends pas.
Please help me	M'aidez, s'il vous plait
I would like to rest a while	Je veux siester.
Where will I be sleeping?	Ou vais-je dormir?
Good-bye	Au revoir

## Travel Wise

### Before you say yes to going

\*Why are you making a mission trip? There are some really good reasons like: having a skill or talent to offer, having a desire to learn first hand what is happening in the companion synod, or sensing a call to become more involved in the global Christian church. Individuals may go for the sake of curiosity, to fulfill a lifelong travel dream, to witness the exotic, or to break out of some mold that binds them to their current life. If possible, refer to the booklet, 'People, Places and Partnerships', a workbook for your mission trip abroad by Sally Campbell. It contains a wealth of planning assistance, not the least of which is a preliminary section asking why you are thinking of traveling to a companion synod's location. In the end of your personal reflections you must balance ideas regarding why you would or would not travel.

\*Danger! This experience could be life changing. A couple from South Dakota went to Cameroon for an 18 day tour to get a first hand look at the work of the Lutheran Church in Cameroon and how the South Dakota Synod could become more involved. Nearly a year

later they decided to commit to serve as long term missionaries there. After six years in Cameroon they can be heard saying they would go back again if they were called! Is God calling you? If so, you are indeed blessed. Perhaps your first visit will lead you to accept that call and your life, too, will be changed forever.

\* The challenges and rewards. Leaving your comfort zone is a risk. Risk carries the probability of reward, provided the challenges are met and overcome. Overseas travel is as risky as losing your life, experiencing pain, losing control and even learning that you have made a bad decision! Challenges are everywhere, including: physical danger, trusting others, improvising, having your values tested, or facing your own inadequacies. What is all of that worth? Nobody can ever take your experience away from you; not what you learned, witnessed, overcame or shared—it is yours. In the process of traveling in the service of God and fellow Christians, you may also reach a deeper faith level.

\*Good reasons not to go! Did somebody talk you into going? Are you one who cannot say no? Did they need one more person to fill out the group? Maybe that has happened to some—don't let it happen to you. You must go on a companion synod visit only because you want to do it. Other reasons can be practical: it is not a good time for you personally, you have family issues that take precedence, the financial hardship may be too

The South Dakota Synod webpage

The South Dakota Synod Companion Synod Committee will put you in contact with people who have been there before. Just call the Synod office or e-mail [clarson@augie.edu](mailto:clarson@augie.edu)

excellent, up-to-date sites on health concerns

<http://travel.state.gov/cameroon.html>

<http://travel.state.gov/medical.html>

[www.cdc.gov/travel/africa.html](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/africa.html)

[www.shoreland.com](http://www.shoreland.com)

#### References

Cambell-Evans, Sally: "People, Places and Partnerships"  
Published by the Presbyterian Church, 1989. Available through the SD Synod office, or ELCA –GM, Chicago, IL 60631

Shoreland Inc, "Travel Health Planner", Published by Shoreland Inc, PO Box 13795, Milwaukee, WI 53213-0795

great, or you are uncomfortable with the risks. Down to Earth reasons include: inability to travel, a health condition, an incompatibility with the travel group or simply fear. It could be fair to say that most companion synod travelers push themselves to go, but you must be the only one pushing yourself. Going is entirely an individual decision, which you alone can make!

#### Checklist

\*Work from a checklist, even if you don't use them. On pages 24 and 25 of the booklet 'People, Places and Partnerships' there is an excellent checklist suggesting what to pack. It is thoughtfully broken down for the traveler into sections like: items for your carry on, documents, toiletries and medicines, clothing, journaling aids and a few other items. On pages 27 & 28 of another booklet 'Travel Health Planner' © Shoreland, Inc. of Milwaukee, WI ([www.shoreland.com](http://www.shoreland.com)), there is a document checklist and a trip health kit checklist. These are good guides, but don't hesitate to change or add to them. Incidentally, the creators of these checklists remind you it may not be necessary to bring everything on the list! It's going to be a long list, start now.

\*Things I gotta remember not to forget! While a checklist will prove invaluable for packing, another list may be just as valuable for preparations, details for the home or business, and

travel reminders. As you think of things (i.e., leaving a house key with somebody, your computer password at the office, or getting a neighbor to shovel the snow), write them down and keep the list handy.

\*A special checklist might be for financial items. You need to arrange for finances well in advance of departure because the days before you leave are hectic. You need money, but in certain forms: cash (dollars), cash (foreign), travelers checks, credit cards, debit cards and checks. You need enough for the trip, personal use, side trips, souvenirs and a bit to cover the unexpected. On a mission trip, travelers often carry cash gifts from donors, missionary's families, people who want souvenirs and a few other sources. How will you get it, how will you separate it, will you need to cash checks and get foreign money, and then where will you safely keep it before and during the trip? In Cameroon there are few banks. The mission will be able to handle some money exchange. It is good to have one person in your group be the money expert to inform and manage group funds.

### Travel

\*Travel to Cameroon & Nicaragua from the South Dakota Synod-benefits vs cost. There is a struggle in the planning stages of every group that asks whether it is better to just send the money that the trip would cost or to spend the money and take the trip. Each position has validity! However,

with social greetings, chit-chat and pleasantries—resist the urge to get to work and instead get to know the people who came to work.

- You can't help your Yankee ingenuity! But you can appreciate it. Americans look at problems as opportunities to fix something. As a missionary I often thought of American guests as being long on advice and short on information! Well, Americans do know a lot and have wonderful educations, especially in problem solving. But they don't know everything. Sit back and wonder why a problem is being presented and if the person asking wants help or just a listening ear. Be conservative with your help regarding politics, church affairs and cultural matters. If you are not so busy fixing everything, you can use your time learning how others cope with problems they have to endure.

### Dangers

If you encounter armed bandits in your travel remain quiet and cooperative.

Watch carefully your wallets and purses especially in transportation centers or markets.

Stay with your group or a trusted host.

### Resources

- Gift giving and accepting is to be undertaken with modesty and humility. Agree with your group what and how you will give gifts. Planned gift giving is best. Resist the urge to give to everyone who asks, and do not give gifts on the street or in public places. Do not give your personal information or e-mail to people. Talk over any extra gift activity with your group, relying on your plan for guidance. People may press gifts upon you in genuine appreciation, but what will you do with a fruit basket or a live chicken when you are traveling. You can ceremoniously accept the gift (of a live goat) giving thanks for the host's generosity, and then return the gift to the group or church for a feast or benefit. Some may not be able to afford the gift they offer and you can accept graciously then use the excuse that you cannot take the gift in your luggage. Live plants, skins and precious metals may be illegal for you to have in your possession or take from the host country!
- Relationships are everything when you are visiting. Your project may not be completed, you may have to take precious work time for ceremonies and you may feel like you are wasting time waiting for events to begin. Enjoy the moment and visit with your hosts, the relationships you build may last longer than the project you felt was so important. Many people spend time "getting started" for the day

meeting fellow Christians around the globe enriches both visitors and hosts in terms of Christian relationships, friendships, long range/ long distance cooperation, cultural appreciation and valuing diversity in many forms. Checks sent in the mail, however necessary, do not join Christians like face-to-face meetings.

\*US Citizens traveling in Cameroon. It is hard to conceal your Americanisms. But conservatism and humility are worthwhile tactics for the American traveler. Avoid symbols on your clothing or luggage, try to speak the local language, avoid being loud or more aggressive than the crowd and try not to get separated from your group. Scam artists frequent transportation centers; therefore avoid deals like using an unmarked taxi, giving somebody money to hurry you through baggage checks or exchanging dollars for local currency with unofficial persons. Pick-pockets and baggage-snatchers are going to zero in on relatively wealthy Americans.

Luggage and air travel concerns. Sometimes things don't arrive when you do, so what to put in your carry-on. See page 24, of the booklet "People, Places and Partners" by Sally Campbell-Evans. Just in case, think through what you absolutely need if your bags were lost or arrived late and plan to put those in your carry-on. Think hard about money, passport/visa, papers, medicine, underclothes, one-of-a-kind items and so forth. If your bags do not arrive when you do, file a claim

before you leave the airport—even if you must wait for an interpreter. Expect rough treatment of your luggage, so pack well. Some frequent travelers use Rubbermaid Action Packers for protection and convenience. Label your luggage inside as well as outside. Plan to be able to carry your luggage, but the usual routine when you arrive is to choose which of many porters will do it for you. If the church has arranged a porter, great! Be sure to ask for that person.

\*The weather, accommodations and ground transportation. After spending hours on a transcontinental flight you may be surprised by the climate at your destination—hot and humid. You will also be tired and at the same time you need to be alert. The accommodations are not likely to be familiar, signs may not be in English and announcements that might be in English still may be impossible to understand. There may be an airline host, security agent or fellow passenger to help you, but avoid friendly people who might take advantage of your predicament. For transport to your hotel—if your host does not meet you—look for a marked bus or cab and avoid being pressured to take the first one you see until you feel it is right. Agree on the fee and make sure the destination is clear before moving your bags. If price seems out of line take another cab. Avoid being overly generous, but do tip if the service is good.

\*Your traveling partners. See pages 12-13, of

8page

practical. Ask this; could I stand to lose it, will it get in the way (airport security), will it be a distraction for my group or those I meet?

### Helpful Hints

\*Get your passport early

\*Break in a pair of shoes

\*Learn some key phrases

\*Fund raising and building support are not last minute activities

\*Prepare for your return while you are there: take pictures and notes to help you remember your stories and experiences.

\*Politics-you are a guest, sometimes it is diplomatic to remain neutral

\*Check points and police presence are ominous to some, but it is often for your security.

\*Bribes are to be avoided because they are illegal, certainly immoral and they create an expectation that all visitors (and missionary residents) will pay to avoid delays, inconvenience or to be given special consideration.

### Culture Differences

\*When you experience culture shock-smile when you can't cope, ask why things you experience are different

\*Its all about who you represent, lots of people depend on you

\*People laugh, cry, love, live and go through life's ups and downs – just like we do.



your feet are a must.

\*Leave books behind! One opinion is that books are best left behind when one travels overseas. They are not only heavy and eat up luggage space, but they can take the place of interacting with people, and they can keep one awake when sleep is necessary. In a group a Bible can be shared, one devotional book can be chosen and if needed one person can be designated to bring a travel guide. If one must read on the plane, in the airport or while waiting for transportation or something else, a foreign language phrase book is a very good book to pack along!

\*Your photo album, a must for non-English speakers to share. It is so much fun to show a host something about your life, and a small picture album can do that. A brag book of about 10-12 good quality photos works well. Photos of family, house, church, points of interest in your town and other things important to you, which are self explanatory make good communication tools when words are not possible.

\*Something nice, personal or obsessive. Really, your Teddy Bear! If your bear is dear to you take it! But, know that it could be lost or left. A big Swiss Army knife may be your thing, or a wide brim hat, a travel vest or a favorite water bottle may be what you would like to take. Since you do not know what you should take, keep asking yourself if what you plan to put in your bag is

“People, Places and Partnerships” by Sally Campbell-Evans. Before departure the group should choose a leader and spokesperson, which may be the same. Plan your gift giving with the advice of your host and agree that everyone in the group will abide by the plan. Agree that the group will meet once a day to reflect, share and discuss the progress of the visit. Attendance needs to be mandatory. Transparency for the group is a must, and if members are to be open, the confidentiality of the group must be observed. Effective group meetings often include devotions, sharing journal entries, petition prayers and listening to each other’s reflections. One cannot help but build strong bonds with the other group members.

\*Travel-here and there, expect an adventure. On our first trip to Cameroon we spent the day on the plane, but ended up taking a bus for the last leg of our journey. Schedules in some places are only a guide; planes and trains can leave early or not at all! Unscheduled stops are common. However, at the end of most days you end the trip at your destination with your bags.

In Europe trains sometimes are split or joined and you need to watch for transfers, some of which are unannounced. Fellow passengers—many speak some English—can lead you to the proper coach or platform to continue your journey.

\*Tickets-Make your plans early and get a travel agent with experience in travel to Africa. Earlier arrangements normally mean big savings. Ask

previous travelers about their experience with luggage, money exchanges, accommodations and local conditions at your destination.

\*Passports, Visas, Letter of invitation. Decide on a location for your papers and money early in your packing process and stick faithfully to keeping your things in that place. It really happens that people get to the airport without their passports! Maybe you need one more checklist for the day you leave! Keep your papers handy as you travel, you may even have to show your papers to officials after you clear customs and immigration at the airport. Hotels and ticket agents will need to see your passport.

\* Jet lag is both myth and reality! Your body will tire from traveling, excitement, meeting new challenges and staying extra alert—to say nothing of sitting for hours cramped in an airline seat. You can plan to avoid jet lag. Here is one successful method for going East or West. Do this: when you look at your watch enroute reset it for the local time even if you are out over the ocean. When you arrive take up the day's activities of your host at your destination, and at a slower pace do what people there normally do for that time of day (or night). Avoid a nap if you are not a nap-taker, eat lightly and get some exercise without overdoing it. The next day you may be a bit travel weary, but you will be on schedule with the people you are going to meet.

\*What to pack—think ahead, start early, leave extras out, don't be an “Ugly American”! Think practical combinations, can you wear something several times. Is your equipment needed, and handy in trying conditions (camera). Do you have well broken-in shoes, good underwear and socks. These are not clever choices: a white shirt, insulated jacket, open-toe sandals, new jeans and enough socks for 3 weeks! Leave your sweater if you have a jacket that is versatile, how many shoes do you really need (more than two), an outfit for every day, really! The image of the “Ugly American” includes overpacked bags, small gadgets with straps liberally draped around the shoulders and so many electronic devices in the hands that it is not possible to dig one's passport out of the not so secret pouch under one's shirt!

\*Luggage-weight allowances can change if you stop enroute! Specifically ask your travel agent about your bag and weight limit—and if it changes enroute should you stop before catching the next available flight. You may be given a heavier limit if you check your bags through to your destination, but many travelers stop to rest, for example in Paris if you are going to Cameroon.

\*Selecting clothes and shoes. Good quality clothes and comfortable shoes make for an enjoyable excursion. Choose clothes that are durable, wearable, comfortable and conservative. Shoes that fit very well, clean up easily and protect

connections and meet people. Giving gifts can be a tricky thing, especially if it builds jealousies between people. Nice gifts include soccer balls that can be given to a school or community, enough pencils for an entire school, or paraments or a banner for a church. You may also wish to purchase Bibles once you arrive, in the native language, and give those as gifts to groups you work with. Simple sewing supplies are a great gift for your hostess.

\*What you spend on souvenirs and what you choose should be your own business, but everything you do is seen as a reflection on your group. Spending outrageously, bargaining mercilessly, and choosing lavish or foolish gifts (a spear or a very large drum) says more than enough about your character, your group and your sponsors. Conspicuous consumption is the mode in the USA, but it is insensitive elsewhere. Use modesty in all endeavors!

\*Take pictures and videos with careful regard for your subjects. Some do not want their image used, some may be fearful and others may expect payment. Take good shots and do it conservatively. If one person takes a picture have him share it rather than having others snap the same scene. In many countries it is illegal to take pictures in public areas, near schools, of police or soldiers or of extreme poverty scenes. Always ask before you take photos or videos. Pictures in church or the host's home are usually OK.

### Food available in Cameroon

Fresh fruits and vegetables in season, including: carrots, potatoes, yams, bananas, plantains, avocados, mangoes, peppers, tomatoes, garlic, onions, and so much more!

rice, pasta of every shape and size, bread, cereal—hot and cold, popcorn, flour, freshly roasted peanuts are a real treat

margarine, vegetable oil, eggs, soft cheese, powdered milk

jam, chocolate bars, soda pop, wine, beer, bottled water, instant coffee, tea

### Inoculations, medicine and the doctor

You must get: Yellow Fever, Malaria-preventative, Tetanus-diphtheria, measles up to date

You may need: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Polio (update)

You may want: Meningococcal, Rabies, Typhoid

Begin these inoculations at least 6 months before your trip. Most are available from your physician. Yellow Fever may be less available, plan early.

Medicines to take: Personal prescriptions, Mints, Immodium, Tylenol, Benadryl. If you can get a general antibiotic from your doctor or any other

meds in small quantity, take them and consider leaving unused supplies with medical people in your host country.

Water safety- Avoid unsealed or “recapped bottles”. For brushing teeth use bottled water, filtered, and/or boiled water, or water that you know to be pure. If not, do not rinse and make sure your toothbrush is dry before you use it again. Do not rinse your mouth or get water in your mouth while you shower.

Food Safety- Cooked food served by your host or food you peel yourself is OK. Normally, restaurant food is safe, but look around for a place that looks right. Soak fruit and vegetables you want to eat raw in one-tablespoon of bleach to a gallon of water solution for about 10 minutes and rinse with filtered water. Street food is OK if you saw it being cooked and handled properly. Things off trays that were cooked someplace else are a risk, just like anything else you did not see being cooked.

Malaria- It is spread by a very tiny, female mosquito. Can you say anopheles? Sleeping under mosquito nets, staying indoors in the evening and using repellent can prevent bites. It is a serious illness, but it can be cured with quinine or other medications. The sooner treatment is started the better. Symptoms differ greatly and come on slowly: aching, headache, fatigue, diarrhea, stomach pain, vomiting and other flu like

and leave it, that will be acceptable to your host. If you see that you are being fed first, take conservative portions because the family will eat what is left later. You may have to sleep in the hosts beds while the family sleeps in chairs or at a neighbors. This seems like a great imposition, but it may be the only way.

### Packing

\*Expect to be a mule! Missionaries may ask you to bring needed items in your luggage. Please try to help them as much as possible. You’ll be asked to carry everything from Christmas and birthday gifts to plumbing and well parts. These items may be heavy, and some will be last minute. On the way home, you may be asked to take letters to mail and other small items for family and friends back home. They appreciate your help! Ask what is in each package and, to be legal, seal the package yourself.

\*Gifts for missionaries. The missionaries who work in the host country may invite you to dinner, or help you in some way. Nice gifts to give to them include cake and frosting mixes, balloons and other small party items. A just released DVD movie might be very welcome. Even more importantly, ask before you leave the US and bring gifts they need.

\*Gifts for people you meet and/or work with. Remember that we’re in the host country to make

accommodations, you will be given the best that can be offered—conceal your surprise and express your gratitude.

In villages do not expect motels, restaurants, or flush toilets. In the city expect stoppages in water and electricity occasionally. Cell phones may be available to purchase but where you are going may not have a tower. Trust the local missionary's advise and trust God!

Your missionary hosts will be occupied with your safety and comfort as you arrive. Normally it takes extra time to accommodate visitors. Your host will be helping you, while attending to interruptions and everyday duties. Be patient, ELCA people already have two or more jobs. When it is convenient, missionaries or your host will help you with using the telephone, E-mail and sending letters. A “low maintenance group of visitors” is an oxymoron, however, a group can decrease its burden on the host by looking for ways to be helpful, without making more work.

Your in-country hosts will be honored to have you in their home. Take measures to accept their hospitality by asking ahead of time what to expect. You are an honored guest; enjoy it! If you are presented with a chipped plate, too large a spoon or a very uncomfortable chair, you may have to live with it. But if you are given food you cannot eat or a drink you don't feel is safe, either refuse it gently or leave it uneaten. If you try something

symptoms. Do not ignore flu like symptoms, ever! You must tell your host or companions if you develop some or all of these symptoms. Untreated malaria can be fatal! Early treatment can mean being able to travel in 2-3 days, although one will feel fatigued. Malaria can take up residence in your body and you can come down with it weeks or months after returning home. Seek out a local or preferably a missionary doctor if you suspect malaria.

Health Matters- For good reasons you need to be especially careful about health matters. **Sunburn** is likely in tropical places. Hats, shirts and cream are good for prevention. Men-protect the top of your head, because in the tropics the sun is directly overhead during all seasons! Protect the tops of your feet if you wear sandals. **Diarrhea** can seriously disrupt your schedule. Carefully select your food and water. If you have a nervous stomach try mints instead of going directly to Immodium. **Handwashing** is the single, best preventative measure for ensuring good health. Avoid **fatigue** by resting whenever possible and say no to side excursions if you are not up to them. **Dehydration** can become serious quickly in tropical places. Try not to avoid drinking simply because you are modest about using crude toilets or using the great outdoors! Headaches are a good sign of dehydration, but a wise nurse once advised that the best indicator of proper hydration is to pass clear urine at least once each day. If you don't 'pee clear' then you must drink. Use only

new **packaged needles** if you need treatment involving your blood. Your group may wish to take packages of needles along. You cannot get safe blood in Cameroon, nor can you rely on laboratory testing. If the group records the blood type of each person you would have a record of who could share in case of need. Pg 26 data

### Clothing and other supplies to take with you

Flashlight and extra batteries (One can buy AA and D batteries in Cameroon.)

Toiletries

Prescription and other necessary medications

Glasses if you need them (An old pair may be a good spare if you lose or break yours.)

Sunscreen, Insect repellent

Shoes, sandals, boots – depending on your plans.

Shower sandals or thongs (especially in rural areas you will want to shower with thongs on).

Underwear, socks and pajamas. After arriving you may be able to have clothes washed.

Shorts –adult men in Cameroon rarely wear shorts!

Long pants for men

Shirts – light weight, cotton- T-shirts pack well and can be left as gifts.

Skirts or dresses– women of Cameroon rarely wear pants, sleeveless tops or shorts. Plan on at least one church dress. Young women are to dress very-modestly compared to US customs. You can buy cloth in Cameroon and wrap it for a easy skirt.

Lightweight sweater or jacket for cool evenings or pop-up rain showers.

Towel (light) and washcloth

Hat or cap, work gloves if needed

Bedding and cooking equipment are usually provided by the host.

\*Food you may wish to bring with you

Herbal tea bags, Jerky, Granola bars (Products cannot be homemade.)

### Language

\*Language and culture are mixed. Learn some common phrases before you go. Learn some more phrases as you travel and meet people. If you try to speak somebody's language you will win friends and be admired for your efforts—even if you don't do very well. Many people speak simple English; they may not want to—but they can if you encourage them. If you misunderstand, do not agree or say yes to what you thought was being said. Knowing some of your hosts words helps you to tune in to his culture.

<List of key phrases suggested at back of booklet

### Hospitality

Housing. Missionary housing is nice – cement floors, locks on the doors, running water and electricity, bottle gas stoves are common. Staying in a villagers home is a wonderful experience, and may be a high point of your stay. Whatever the