FAQ: Study Abroad in CAMEROON

1. WHERE IS CAMEROON LOCATED?

Cameroon is located on the West Central -African coast. It is bordered by Nigeria (to the West), Chad (to the North), Central African Republic (to the east) , Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea (to the South). It is a form of unitary and decentralized nation state; made up of a number of circumscriptions: 10 provinces divided into 56 divisions and further divided into 149+ subdivisions/districts

2. WHAT IS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF CAMEROON?

Cameroon has two official languages: French and English and several hundreds of local patois or dialects and abbreviated type communications.

3. WHAT DIFFERENCES DOES ONE FIND WITH THE FRENCH SPEAKED IN CAMEROON AND ELSEWHERE?

WHAT OTHER LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN ON CAMEROON?

The French spoken in Cameroon is often different, abbreviated and spoken with a different tone. One would encounter expressions like, *comment* or *ça va* in lieu of the usual comment *ça va* or *comment allez-vous* for how are you.

There a over 250 indigenous (native) languages termed local patois or dialects. In addition there are a number of common commercial or businessfolk languages commonly labeled or referred to as pidgin English, CamTok or Camfranglais.

4. HOW SAFE IS CAMEROON? CAN WE TRAVEL AROUND ALONE?

There will always be risks in traveling (abroad); even though many African countries are still unstable, Cameroon has continued to keep peace and calmness throughout the country. It is not advisable to roam around by yourself, a precaution that anyone in any foreign land should exercise. It gets dark pretty early on, but murders and such rarely occur, mostly robberies and pick-pockets: still be precautious after all life per se is a bundle of risk.

5. WHAT ARE SOME TOURIST SITES IN CAMEROON?

Cameroon has a variety of touristic riches, natural geographic curiosities, historic vestiges from their triple colonial heritage (German, English and French), agro-industrial complexes etc. There are a myriad of bodies of water to experience while in Cameroon, however one should refrain from dipping the toes into just any body of water, as parasites may roam some of the waters. Other sites of great tourist attractions include Mount Cameroon located in Buea; the Korup Wildlife Conservation Park with a hanging bridge located in Ndian, South-West Province; the crater lakes of Nyos, Menchum; Awing, Bamenda; Barombi, Kumba; Manengouba, Kupe -Kumba; the traditional palaces of Bafut, Mankon, Bali, Banso etc. in Bamenda; Lamidats of Ngaoundere, Maroua and Garoua in the Northern Provinces; the sultanate of Foumban, palaces of Bafoussam, Bafou, Foto and Foreke in West province;
6. **WILL MEDICAL SERVICES BE AVAILABLE?**

There will be local public and private clinics, as well as hospitals when permitting, available to anyone in need of medical assistance.

7. **DO I NEED A PASSPORT OR VISA TO TRAVEL TO CAMEROON?**

A passport will be needed and so will a (entry) visa. Immunization records will also be important to have prior to departure. Current information may be obtained from the Cameroon embassy website, [www.ambacam-usa.org](http://www.ambacam-usa.org)

8. **WHAT HEALTH PRECAUTIONS SHOULD I TAKE BEFORE GOING?**

Various diseases can be easily acquired in foreign lands. For Cameroon this includes typhoid, cholera, diarrhea and malaria. Before leaving for Cameroon it is important to follow advice from the Center for Disease Control, CDC, Atlanta, [www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/). Protection against bug bites is prevalent. Doctors in Cameroon understand the diseases better than some US family practitioners who may not be well versed in tropical diseases situations, and will take good care of you.

9. **WHICH VACCINATIONS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR SOMEONE TRAVELLING TO CAMEROON?**

Only one vaccine is recommended: yellow fever. On the other hand, shots for cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A and B, rabies and measles are essential. Also malaria prophylaxis are strongly recommended for a 3 month period surrounding the trip (a weekly dose of lariam; daily dose of malarone etc.).

10. **WHAT IS THE CLIMATE LIKE IN CAMEROON?**

There are two main seasons: rainy season (June – October, ~ 22°C) or dry season (November – May, ~ 29°C). Sometimes, the rainy season runs from May to August, while the dry season operates from September till April. The dust of the dry season can be uncomfortable for most people, especially those with allergies. Be sure to have sun block lotion for protection. The climate is generally tropical, warm and arid with 90°F temperatures.

11. **WHAT ARE SOME FOODS THAT LOCALS ENJOY MAKING?**

The types of foods and dishes vary throughout Cameroon. A common favorite in the west province is beigne d'haricots or puff puff balls with beans. In other places, we have very spicy dishes consisting of meat and fufu or plantains.

12. **WHAT ARE THE LIVING CONDITIONS LIKE? WHAT KIND OF IMAGINATIONS AND FANTASIES SHOULD I NURSE?**

Living conditions vary, depending on where you stay… homestay, village home or city hotel. In any case, do not let your fantasies and imaginations run wild. You are assured a fun-filled new-look life full of hospitality and real fresh challenges at the end of a trip to an African nation.
13. **How will traveling to and in Cameroon be handled?**

Arriving in Cameroon will require the aid of an airplane. Once in Cameroon, most of the traveling will be done by taxi, bus or train. Occasionally one may use an okada, local motor cycle.

14. **How much money will I need?**

The amount of money needed varies per person once in Cameroon for souvenir shopping and depends greatly on one’s spending habits. Gifts and souvenirs can be pricey, but Cameroonians love to “bargain” cheerfully and such adds greatly to the rich cultural experience. Do not take things for granted and avoid hypocrisy.

15. **What is the exchange rate?**

The exchange rate is roughly 500 CFA for $1.00 US dollar; but we could have a different and better rate in the “black market”

16. **What is the capital and/or largest city in Cameroon?**

Yaoundé is the capital of Cameroon and Douala, the economic capital is the largest city. Douala houses an international airport, while Yaoundé and Garoua also have international airports as well.

17. **Can we bring gifts for the children we come across?**

School supplies are permissible as they encourage education for the children.

18. **Are we allowed to accept gifts from the locals?**

There is no problem about this, provided there is no coercion involved. The natives are kind and very welcoming.

19. **Is there a desert around?**

No, Cameroon is filled with great vegetation and forestry. Mountains and great hills span all through Cameroon. Deserts are located in North Africa away from Cameroon.

20. **How safe is the food and water to consume?**

It is safe to consume well cooked food and drink boiled water. The best precaution is to drink bottled water and not water from an open tap/faucet. Food must be hygienically handled as some areas harbor plenty of flies and rodents? It is not very safe to buy cold food from the roadside.

21. **What type of government does Cameroon operate under?**

Cameroon has a democratic republican government with a president and prime minister, but no vice president. There is a national assembly of more than 250 members from a large number of political parties, the majority from the ruling CPDM party.
22. **How easily can phone calls be made? What about internet access?**

Phone calls are possible with a calling card. Cell phones from America might not operate as well and calling with these are much more expensive. The international dialing code for Cameroon is +237. Internet access is available at places known as *Cyber Cafés*. They have computers available for online use for a fee. Remember most of the key boards would be French AZERTY rather than the English QWERTY types?

23. **How much does a plane ticket cost?**

Plane tickets run between $3000 to $3500 US dollars from most US mid west airports. The prices may drop a little from several east coast cities.

24. **How does the electricity work in Cameroon?**

Cameroon, like other African countries, runs on European metrics and voltage (220v). Buying a radio shack adapter or step down transformer will be beneficial with electric and motorized devices.

25. **How much money will I need? What is the exchange rate?**

The amount of money needed varies per person once in Cameroon for souvenir shopping. The exchange rate is about 500 CFA for the US $1.00

26. **What is the religion of the Cameroonians?**

There are two dominant religions: Islam and Christianity, with a majority practicing Catholicism. Many local religions exist as well, within the villages and tribes.

27. **What are fun (young adult) related activities?**

There are clubs and dance halls for young adults as well as teenagers. Cinemas, or movie houses, are also available in varying cities. There is possibility for hiking, trekking or camping while enjoying pure air, great panoramic landscapes, outstretched lands etc.

28. **Is there a beach around anywhere?**

Cameroon is open to the Atlantic ocean with 400 km of coastline and boasts of dozens of colorful bays and natural beaches. Kribi, located on the west coast of Cameroon’s south province houses a beautiful beach as well as Limbe in the South west province...

29. **Do we get to see wild animals roam(ing) around?**

Generally, not in Cameroon but visiting the Waza National Park (North Province) however, allows for wild animal viewings. The grand north boasts of half a dozen national Parks, forest and fauna reserves where animals live freely in their natural environment. We may find some in the zoos or sanctuaries in Mvog-Betsi, Yaounde (centre Province) and Limbe (south-west
province) or in the Campo ma’an Forest reserve in Kribi, South Province. Most foreigners seem to think of Africa as being populated mainly by wild animals. This is a false notion.

30. **What kinds of things should I pack or not pack for the trip to Cameroon, Africa? Some kind of a packing list or checklist galore!**

Generally, make sure you take the lug out of luggage. For a comprehensive list, visit the “READY SET TRAVEL” packing list suggested on the Fulbright website.

31. **How do we generally greet others? Any common words and expressions to remember?**

We address the elderly in a special way. The male is addressed as pah or papa; the female as mah or mama. Others may be referred to as uncle or auntie…

Some common expressions include:
- Good morning (*bonjour* or *salut* in french; *emale eh* in Douala; *omaje eh* in bakwerri; *jamu* in fulbe, North; and *mbolo* in Yaounde)
- I love you – *ma ding wa*; *miyidima*; *je t’aime*

32. **What strikes a visitor or student visiting Cameroon for the first or second time? What does one expect to bring back at the end of a visit or study trip — surprises, memories, experiences…?**

Everyone falls in love with Cameroon!!! There are a number of extremes one encounters like abject poverty, dilapidated infrastructures, overcrowding, etc; but all in all, the people are extremely hospitable, polite, welcoming and friendly, peaceful, curious, resilient and resourceful; always open and willing to share of their time and culture.

Most food may be spicy, some village houses have dirt floors, and with no electricity or running water… college or school children cannot afford school books or sometimes pens and pencils… rest rooms are a luxury in most public places…

After a trip, one begins to value diversity as the true insurance against uncertainty and surprise. One’s assumptions about others and opportunities in life become greatly influenced because of the differences encountered. A trip abroad is always an eye opening and wonderful experience; and one is easily disappointed about how the developed world takes everything (Ex. education) for granted. You wish everyone could experience the sight and sounds of Cameroon, nay Africa. Success in anything over there is rare and coveted.

33. **What if I have more questions (in future)?**

For more information contact mosaicservices@yahoo.com