



# KENYA CHECKLIST

## George Mason University / Center for Global Education

### EQUIPMENT:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 medium/large sized CHECK-IN luggage bag. Photos at end. No need for a **really** large bag (highly discouraged). We recommend the simple kind with wheels or the duffel-type bags. Large hard-case luggage is more difficult for you to negotiate. Whatever you bring – you will end up carrying the entire trip. No need for “hiking” backpacks. Large, hiking bags also attract attention from airport security and can cause us delays.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 regular-sized backpack (day pack) as your CARRY ON, which also acts as your personal travel bag on safari. You will use this during flights and in the field.
- \_\_\_\_\_ TSA luggage locks (small ones) are good to have to protect your bags in flight – to prevent accidental opening. They must be TSA compliant or they will be removed by security. Small luggage locks are also good in-country; they will be source of comfort while you are away from your bags, even though there is really no concern to be had at our camps.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 thin, collapsible duffel bag that you pack in your check-in luggage. Recommended to be used later in the trip but is also good to have for your dirty laundry, etc. Good for gifts on the way back from Kenya. Students always come back with more than they went with – so you can use the duffel bag as a carry on of all your purchased gifts (you don’t check those in). It’s optional of course, but really very useful!
- \_\_\_\_\_ You should have a change of shirt and shorts and some very basic toiletries with your carry-on bag from the US to Nairobi and back. Be prepared for a one-day emergency.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Binoculars – REQUIRED for each student. Carry on only. See advice on binoculars on the web page.

\_\_\_\_\_ Camera. Optional – but not a bad idea, of course. Carry on only. See advice on cameras on the web page.

\_\_\_\_\_ Laptop, iPads, smart phones, etc.. – all can be accommodated for use when we get to Kenya. You can buy service that will cover you during the whole trip, but the one location that is tough is the Mara (it's far removed from networks).

\_\_\_\_\_ A thumb drive – to retrieve photo and/or files during the trip can help. Trying to get photos from others after the return to the states is most troublesome. I would imagine about 2-4 gigs would be best.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your printed journal articles. You will receive these prior to departure –most likely at orientation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your course materials that were handed to you. Required.

\_\_\_\_\_ Writing pad, writing instruments. I think a small journal type book is best, which you can also buy on your first day in Kenya.

Carry all **valuable** items with you – in your carry on! Under no circumstances should you pack expensive or important items in your check-in luggage. Pack light – our belongings will be trucked around and will be in the heat at times. I don't recommend taking anything expensive unless you are used to traveling with it in your care (i.e. high end cameras, laptop, etc.).

## **CLOTHES, SHOES:**

***Absolutely NO SHORT SHORTS! Knee-length or longer only. or beyond.***

***Absolutely NO REVEALING SHIRTS (no tank tops, muscle shirts, etc.).***

***Absolutely NO STRETCH PANTS (leggings).***

***We have good reason for this... to be discussed at orientation***

\_\_\_\_\_ Clothes for safari driving (you will be in a vehicle for many hours during the day). Casual, conservative.

\_\_\_\_\_ It will be Kenya's dry season, but it can be chilly at night. Temperatures can go into the 50s at times – but in the sun, in the low 70s – usually low 80s. Come prepared! Layering is best.

\_\_\_\_\_ Hat, shades, sun-block if needed. Equatorial solar radiation is not to be sniffed at. Take it seriously. In particular, you should have a hat with a wide rim for over the ears.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 set of clothes for our AWF visit (more conservative attire). Light pants are best. We may go out to a causal dinner in town – certainly no need for fancy clothes.

\_\_\_\_\_ Comfortable shoes for walking in city and brief hikes around camp. You really only need two pair of shoes on this entire trip. Walking/hiking shoes (light ones), and in-house slippers/ flip flops. If we conduct field exercises, it's best to have sturdy shoes. Thorn acacia can be on the ground – and may penetrate flimsy sneakers. Light outdoor shoes are great. You cannot wear Tevas or sandals in the field – just around camp.

\_\_\_\_\_ Pants and shorts (reasonable) for day time use. Remember- no stretch pants. You'll never see a Kenyan wearing stretch pants. In the privacy of your own tent it's up to you, but as soon as you leave the tent – that's when it matters.

\_\_\_\_\_ You can't go wrong with packing lots of underwear.

\_\_\_\_\_ See previous statement!

\_\_\_\_\_ Clothes for a cold night or two. Fleece is great.

\_\_\_\_\_ Pajamas – since you may not be in individual private rooms. Rooms and tents are usually prepared for two people, sometimes three.

\_\_\_\_\_ One small towel that dries easy. Towels are provided at all accommodations, but you never know when you may need an additional one. Ex: a small, lightweight face towel. Camping towels are best.

\_\_\_\_\_ Swim trunks / bathing suit. There is a pool at the Guest House.

\_\_\_\_\_ Women might want to consider a really good sports bra – being in a safari vehicle on rough terrain for hours on end can be uncomfortable.

I recommend you choose to dress conservatively, but with very comfortable clothes on flights. Flights can be about 8 / 9 hours. Be prepared for the a/c on planes too.

Please keep in mind we are **not** on vacation. Be modest – even in remote areas where you think it might not matter, we must respect local staff (the drivers, Maasai locals, housekeeping, kitchen staff) who find too much exposure offensive (for both guys and girls). They may not say anything at the time – but it comes back to me. Regular t-shirts and knee-length shorts are quite fine, but if you have to second guess whether it is appropriate...then wear something else. We will have access to laundry (you pay for it, at about \$3 a load), so **limit your packing to about a week and a half.**

If you are taking heavy hiking shoes (not really advisable) – wear those while on your flight to reduce the luggage weight. And even for carry on - some airlines can force you to check in anything over 20-25 lbs. Airline staff can just look at your carry-on bag and ask to weigh it in. Be careful. Pack light. Check the airlines for such details.

Do not go out and buy the entire line of Banana Republic khaki safari wear. You don't need all of that (though you'll look fantastic!) – what you have for walking around school and town is just fine. I recommend light, easy to dry clothes. i.e. Reconsider heavy denim.

## DOCUMENTS, MEDICINE:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Passport. Must be good for at least another 6 months upon RETURN.
- \_\_\_\_\_ GMU ID. The photo must be **very clear** – get a new one if you need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 photocopies of your two first passport pages (the page with the photo and the one with the Kenya VISA).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Register with the Office of Homeland Security. <https://step.state.gov/step/> You are REQUIRED to do this – CGE does not register you with the embassy or with Homeland Security – this is your personal responsibility.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your wallet. I use a travel wallet for ease and safety.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency contact info – to GMU, CGE and course instructor. We will also leave all contact information with your friends and family in the states.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A list of all the addresses of the people you want to send post cards to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ VISA - Don't wait on this!! It's \$50 from the Embassy. Takes about 2 weeks. Please see the visa instructions document / procedures on the web page or the following link: <http://www.kenyaembassy.com/visa.html>
- \_\_\_\_\_ Immunization **yellow card** (preferred) – and appropriate immunizations. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/kenya.aspx>

We also recommend getting the flu vaccine, though this is optional. It is wise to have it for Kenya.

**INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF VACCINATION**  
AS APPROVED BY  
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
CERTIFICAT INTERNATIONAL DE VACCINATION  
APPROUVE PAR  
L'ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE

TRAVELER'S NAME-NOM DU VOYAGEUR  
ADDRESS-ADRESSE (Number-Numéro) (Street-Rue)  
(City-Ville)  
(County-Departement) (State-Etat)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
PHS-721 (REV 11-91)

**OTHER IMMUNIZATIONS/PROPHYLACTIC RECEIVED**  
Autres vaccinations/prophylactiques reçues

This space is provided to record immunizations (or prophylaxis that are not required for entrance into any country) that have been obtained by the traveler for additional health protection (cholera, typhoid, malaria, measles, etc.)

Date	Vaccination/Prophylaxis Vaccination/prophylactique	Dose	Physician's Signature Signature du Médecin
2/16/07	Tet/Dipht	1.5ml	Wm. Daniel Kelly, MD
2/16/07	Polio	1.5ml	Wm. Daniel Kelly, MD
2/16/07	Mening	1.5ml	Wm. Daniel Kelly, MD
2/16/07	Rotavax #1	1ml	Wm. Daniel Kelly, MD
2/16/07	Influenza	0.5ml (2x)	Wm. Daniel Kelly, MD
2/16/07	Typhoid (oral)	oral	Wm. Daniel Kelly, MD

- \_\_\_\_\_ Printed documentation for any/all medications you have.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Malaria medication and all personal medications. This medication is not cheap – look into it. And check with your general doctor (you need a prescription for this) about what kind is best for you. Malarone works well – and it is probably the most common one used now. You are **NOT** allowed to use Larium (mefloquine) at all. See website above.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sunblock. We are literally under the equator. It may feel o.k. – but it's not. Tropical sun is quite dangerous. Protect yourself. Heat illness makes for a miserable trip. Keep in mind you have the nice option to stand through the roof of the vehicle (recommended) and this will expose you to direct sun for many hours. Students tend to alternate sitting and standing – depending on what we see.

\_\_\_\_\_ Mosquito repellent. This is just another level of safety for evening and nights.

\_\_\_\_\_ Cash – in Kenyan Shillings. Exchange is about 100 Ksh to \$1. You should not “need” a lot of cash at all during your time in Kenya. Most of your on-site expenses are covered. **However**, these are what students like to spend money on:

- gifts (kikoys, shukas, kangas and bracelets are very nice)
- snacks (you will likely suffer from sugar withdrawal and need candy)
- drinks in between meals
- internet fees / phone SIMs, etc..
- post cards / stamps
- emergency medicine
- personal toiletries (but please buy most of these in Kenya)
- **Finale dinner (this is your personal expense, not covered by the course) – you will need about \$20 USD (in Shillings when the time comes to pay).**

Also consider any expenses in various airports to and from (and their currencies!). There is an ATM at the Nairobi airport to convert to Kenya Shillings from credit or debit card withdrawals - and many all over town we can access; usually these are cheaper than any currency exchange offered in the US. The cash-changing stations are frequently closed. I would think that **having about \$200.00** (converted to Kenyan Shillings on-site) is more than enough. You won't need it, but it's a safety buffer. A credit card is excellent to have for major emergencies. You will also need to call your credit card companies and let them know you're going to use the card in Kenya. Otherwise those cards may not work.

**CASH CONVERSIONS: currently estimated at 103 Ksh to \$1 USD – it changes! Think 100 to 1 to be safe.**

Usually when you retrieve cash from ATMs, they will be delivered in 1000 Ksh bills. And you can expect that if you procure large bills, people suddenly have no change... try to maintain small bills for any small item purchases. You will get the best exchange rates with an ATM. Do not take traveler's cheques – they are useless. Do not take US dollars that you expect to exchange for shillings – you'll get a terrible exchange rate. Use an ATM card, and/or credit card for purchases.

20,000	Kenyan shillings	=	\$200.00
15,000	Kenyan shillings	=	\$150.00
10,000	Kenyan shillings	=	100.00
5,000	Kenyan shillings	=	\$50.00
<b>1,000</b>	<b>Kenyan shillings</b>	=	<b>\$10.00</b>
500	Kenyan shillings	=	\$5.00
100	Kenyan shillings	=	\$1.00

**Note for AmEx users:** Despite what they tell you at the general orientation, AmEx is not that useful in Kenya. This may be different in other parts of the world – but you are better off with MasterCard or Visa.

**About credit cards and cash:** Keep your wits about you – and do not use a credit card at some road-side curio shop. Use cash as much as you can – and credit cards only when safe and appropriate. If you're not sure – ask us.

## PERSONAL ITEMS:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Toiletries. You should take travel size for one or two days – and BUY all other toiletries once you're there. We deliberately go shopping on the first day for this reason. You can buy all the same stuff in Kenya that you have in the states. If you need some really unique product, then bring that, but otherwise – get the shampoo, batteries, toothpaste, etc. in Kenya - **don't weigh yourself down.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ No need for any jewelry – **highly** discouraged. A simple watch or small alarm clock is helpful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flashlights recommended: 1 small-sized (AA or so), high-intensity light for walking around campground at night. 1 LED key-chain light for inside your room/tent. The little one is great for ease without blinding your roommates. It is highly recommended you take a **headlamp** - just easier to be hands free.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flashlight batteries. I think one set of new batteries is fine for the whole trip. Best to buy these in Kenya because they will weigh you down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your cell phone. Take it. You will need it at airports (especially on return) and it's always good for emergencies / stored numbers. *Check with your provider for coverage in Kenya!*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone charger! Along with any other chargers you need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Several small travel packs of tissue (a.k.a. emergency toilet paper). Pit stops...
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be aware that Kenya has recently outlawed most plastic bags, particularly the grocery style ones. Still, you should probably take along some Zip Lock style bags. They are incredibly useful as they can keep things clean, and make packing much easier. And bring extra ones for the trip back! You will use all of them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 re-usable water bottles. Any kind will do – you'll need it for day trips as well as when you brush your teeth (do not use tap water for that). We will always have access to filtered water. Unfortunately Kenya is big into plastic bottles of water – if you prefer that. But you need TWO for the field. You can just buy 2 bottles of water in Kenya (\$2) and be done with it. Please don't go out and buy fancy plastic bottles - you don't need to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Small rain poncho or mini umbrella.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bandana (yes, you will find a use for it).

- \_\_\_\_\_ Find a toiletries bag that you can hang in the shower – most of the showers you will use will have no shelves or surfaces to put anything on (yes, that's weird), so carrying them becomes cumbersome. It really helps to have a small case designed for a few toiletries that has a hook on it.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Laundry odor sheets (Febreze). Really helps keep your stuff fresh while packed in those bags all the time. You live out of a bag for 2.5 weeks, so it will help.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Triple antibiotic cream & hydrocortisone cream. Bug bites tend to look bad at first (your body needs to adjust to it). Nevertheless, apply the antibiotic cream at night if needed and the hydrocortisone cream if the itching gets to you.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tweezers, nail clippers.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ear plugs – unless you are o.k. with other people snoring near you. It will happen.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pepto Bismol chewable tablets (crystalized ginger helps). Just in case you get travelers upset stomach.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ A couple of those tiny packs of travel laundry detergent – for a quick travel wash. It is common in Kenya that you wash your own knickers! This is why I mentioned bringing a lot of underwear....
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ Though this is a busy trip, you will have time to yourself – and perhaps you'll want to enjoy a book or two (especially for the planes).

## LUGGAGE SAMPLES:

**ONE Carry on**  
personal  
**25 lbs max**



**Check-in**  
personal  
**50 lbs**



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This is what we (instructors) usually take: 1 large bag (cannot be over 50 lbs), 1 carry on item (expensive items – cameras, laptop) that goes into the overhead compartment. **Keep in mind that your carry on item cannot weigh more than 25 pounds.** They can take it from you and make you check it in – which you don't want. There are so many items you can simply buy in Kenya on the first day: batteries, shampoo, soap, any liquid toiletries of any kind, snacks, etc... The stores we go to have all the same stuff you find here. You should not pack large bottles of shampoo!! Just buy it there. We make a special trip to the grocery store just for this purpose alone. You also have access to laundry service on the trip, so you only need 1.5 weeks worth of clothes. Seriously. Do not over pack!!

## ELECTRICITY:

### Voltage warning:

In the U.S., we use 110 volts for things we plug into the wall that use electricity. Kenya uses 220 volts. If you plug something that needs 110 volts into an outlet that provides 220 volts you will **PROBABLY DESTROY** your device.

The good news is that most electronic devices (laptops, cameras, phones, etc.) will work with both 110 or 220 volts. But **YOU need to CHECK** your equipment to make sure. ***This is YOUR responsibility!!***

Students on prior trips and have had their adapters, power strips and other devices destroyed because they did not use some type of **voltage converter**.

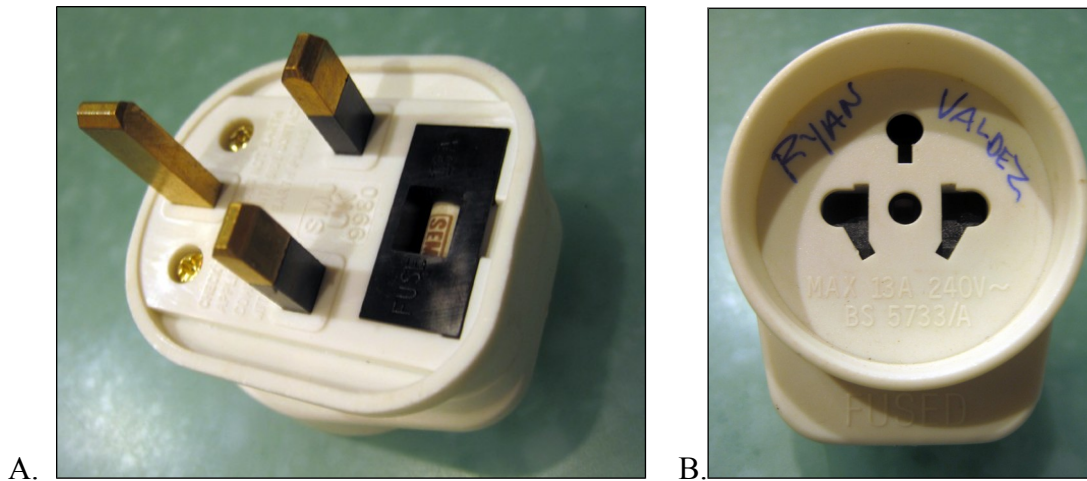
If you plan on using anything that only works with 110 volts, then you need some type of device to convert your voltage to 110 volts (see below).

### Plugs:

Regardless of whether or not you take anything that needs 110 volts, you will need to take an adapter as Kenya uses a different type of plug. Below is a picture of a simple adapter. You plug it into the wall or outlet in Kenya (A), and then plug your device into



the other side of it (B). This is only an adapter and **DOES NOT CONVERT VOLTAGE**. Adapters like this are available in the U.S. or in Kenya, but it's probably good to have one before you go.



Some students then buy a US power strip that goes into the adapter so they can power multiple devices (remember, **NONE OF THIS** provides 110 volts). You can also buy a surge protector type power strip (get one designed specifically for travel) that will give you some protection against power fluctuations (one of us (Professor Laemmerzahl) uses this approach).

#### **Voltage conversion:**

If you absolutely need 110 volts, you will need some type of voltage converter. Below are two examples:



This is a transformer. You plug the white adapter into the wall, then the black voltage converter into that (best to go three prong to two). Finally you plug your 110 volt US device into the black voltage converter. This is a heavy item – it weighs about 2 pounds even though it looks small. This is available at Amazon: <http://a.co/hNKbuHB>. You can buy any device you wish, the link is just for this particular example.

Professor Valdez uses this together with a very **small** power strip with a circuit breaker.

Below is a voltage adapter (in this case, an all in one device). This is not a transformer and while it works with many 110 volt devices, it doesn't work with all of them. Use this as is – or put a power strip on it for multiple devices. This particular device is also available at Amazon: <http://amzn.com/B002E7L7UO> (again, feel free to look around and find a better one)



Finally, while we don't have the time to talk about wattage, if you try to plug in something that requires a lot of power you will most likely blow a circuit at the place we're staying and/or destroy your voltage converter (regardless of what kind you have - these are not designed for heavy duty equipment!). You will have to do without your hair dryer etc.

***WARNING on carrying illegal drugs:***

***This must be stated, so please do not be offended: BUT – Kenya is intensely strict when it comes to any contraband. Do not, under any circumstances, take any chances with possession of a substance you know is illegal in Kenya. As an example, any drug possession in Kenya is an automatic 10 years in jail. Not kidding here. Contraband will not be tolerated by the course instructors, GMU/CGE – or by the Kenyan government. You are responsible adults and we are relying on your good judgement to keep us all safe.***