Student - Frequently Asked Questions

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Pre-Departure

1. What documents should I receive from Gap Africa?

You should receive a confirmation email, which contains an invoice (bank details can be found on your invoice) and confirmation letter and includes a link to the group webpage.

Documents included on the group webpage will be:

- Information Pack – contains a kit list.
- Pre-Departure Pack – contains a kit list.
- Travel Plan

After you have a made a payment you will receive an updated invoice. Two weeks before travelling final documents and e tickets will be emailed to you.

2. What travel documents are required?

Students must have valid passports with at least 30 days beyond their intended date of exit from South Africa. Any student travelling on a non-UK passport should confirm any VISA requirements with the South African consulate before travel.

http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/exempt-countries

3. What vaccinations are recommended?

We recommend consulting your GP or travel clinic or this website:

https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/201/south-africa

4. Do we require travel insurance?

All travellers must have travel insurance which includes all activities – True traveller is our preferred supplier, you should select 'Adventure Pack' which covers all activities.

5. Where can I find the kit list?

The kit list can be found on the information pack and pre-departure pack on the group webpage.

6. What luggage allowance do I have?

Your luggage allowance depends on which airline you are travelling with and whether you have a domestic flight in South Africa. If you are over your baggage allowance, you will be responsible for any charges. Details can be found on the pre-departure and information pack found on the group's website.

7. When is my next payment due?

For details relating to payments please see your most recent invoice. Please let us know if you require a new copy.

Health and Safety

8. Should I bring a first aid kit with me?

We recommend you carry a basic first-aid kit with you. Basic items such as plasters, and paracetamol, ibuprofen, rehydration tablets and Imodium can be very useful whilst on the project.

Basic first aid will be available and emergency procedures will be communicated to you. Please note that staff at the projects are unable to give out any medication.

Any prescription medication should be in its original packaging and consider having a doctor's letter as well. Ensure that all prescription medication is carried in your hand luggage.

9. What are the emergency procedures and contacts?

Emergency contacts are provided on the pre-departure packs. Tutors will have details of emergency procedures.

Emergency procedures will also be included in the arrival briefing.

10. What is the procedure for reporting incidents or issues during the trip?

Any incidents or concerns should be reported to your tutors in the first instance. Your tutor will then communicate with the project staff to resolve any issues.

11. What happens if I require a doctor or hospital?

Firstly, ensure you have spoken to your tutor, staff at your project will be able to assist in ensuring that you gain access to medical care as required. All private hospitals and doctors in South Africa adopt a pay-as-you-go system, you will need to have access to funds to pay. This includes transport to the hospital or to see the doctor. For example, transport from Shamwari to the doctor is around £75.00. All payments would need to be paid locally.

You must ensure you follow the guidance as set out on your insurance policy to ensure you can claim back any costs.

12. Are there opportunities for swimming?

At some projects there are swimming pools, lakes/dams/rivers/seas that can be used, however, you need to be aware that there are no lifeguards and limited/if any life-saving equipment. Your institution will issue guidance on using these facilities. The recommended kit list will advise if swimwear is applicable.

13. Are there any specific cultural considerations for the trip?

Respectful behaviour and cultural sensitivity are important throughout the trip; In particular, you should dress respectfully and short or revealing items should not be worn. Neutral colours are recommended whilst working on the reserve.

We recommend that students keep cash/mobile phones and valuables out of sight, particularly in the communities and around towns.

14. Mobile Phone and Wi-Fi

Mobile phone signal is patchy – Vodafone and O2 seem to provide the best coverage in South Africa however please keep in mind any additional charges. Students could purchase an eSIM before travelling or a Vodacom/MTN SIM card at Johannesburg airport.

Depending on the project some Wi-Fi may be available (please see appendix 1) Any available Wi-Fi will be patchy and of low speed. Streaming Netflix will not be possible, uploading photos to social media should be possible.

15. I'm a fussy eater what food will there be?

Food at the projects is homecooked and excellent quality, projects will cater for genuine dietary requirements and allergies however the project cannot cater for "fussy eater". We recommend you look at the sample menu in the pre-departure packs and if you believe that you will struggle you should take items such as noodles/ breakfast bars etc. with you; there may be an opportunity to stop at a local Spar shop however this is not guaranteed.

Note: We must know of any dietary requirements and allergies at least 6 weeks before departure.

16. How is accommodation arranged?

Students will stay in shared accommodation; this is normally allocated with your tutors before travelling.

17. How much spending money should I bring?

It is hard to answer, some students will bring R200 (ZAR) others will bring R3000. Opportunities to spend money are quite limited, normally at small Spar shops on the way to and from the project and maybe during the weekends. Students often spend the most amount of money at the airport on the way home. Card and Apple/Android pay are widely accepted in towns, please be aware of additional bank charges. Smaller communities and villages only take cash. We recommend that students do not bring large amounts of cash, rather use Card and Apple/android pay. See appendix 1 for more details.

18. Am I expected to tip?

Whilst there is no obligation, it is a nice gesture to show your appreciation for the rangers and housekeeping staff by leaving a small tip/donation for the staff at the reserve when you leave; any amount is always appreciated this should be given to the project coordinator. In cafes/restaurants 10% is normal.

Donating any clothing, equipment and toiletries at the end of the trip is always a great way to help local communities, these should be given to the project coordinator.

19. What will the weather be like?

The climate in South Africa can vary hugely. Winter in South Africa (July & August) can be very cold temperatures of 5°C are common overnight whereas Summer in South Africa (Dec and January) temperatures can reach 40°C.

Links to weather monitoring website.

- Eastern Cape
  - Port Elizabeth (Sport)
  - Shamwari
  - Sibuya
- KwaZulu-Natal
  - Bonamanzi
  - Nambiti / Zingela – please note that Nambiti / Zingela is very cold in the mornings during June to August and temperatures can get below freezing
  - St Lucia
- Limpopo
  - Waterberg – Entabeni/Rooiberg/Hanover/Waterberg Cottages/Welgevonden
- Western Cape
  - Gansbaai (White Shark)

20. Can we drink the water?

Drinking water is available at all projects, during your induction/orientation session this will be explained to you. It is important to ensure you are drinking plenty of water to keep hydrated. If you don't like the taste of the water, purchase small, concentrated squash bottles in the UK to take with you. Please take an insulated water bottle with you.

21. Are there laundry facilities

Some projects have basic laundry facilities this will be highlighted in the pre-departure presentations. Some projects offer a laundry service however the items might be washed on a high temperature and then a hot tumble dry, be prepared for items to shrink. See appendix 1 for more details.

22. Is drinking alcohol allowed?

This is subject to your individual college/institution policy on alcohol; we recommend you confirm this before travelling. Most projects have the option of stopping at off-licenses if required. Any form of inebriation is not acceptable, please refer to the student guidelines document. Please note alcohol cannot be purchased on Sundays.

23. What travel adapter/plug will I need?

It is important to ensure you take the right travel adapter so you can charge your phone, and other devices, whilst away. Follow this link to access a map showing the most commonly used plug types.
https://www.kayavolunteer.com/international-guide-to-travel-adapters-plugs/

24. How to support students who may be menstruating during the trip

The accommodation has closed bins in the bathrooms that can be used to dispose of sanitary items. These must NOT be flushed down the toilet due to septic tanks and French drain systems. Out on the reserve however, access to toilets can be very limited, with most guests opting to "bush wee" when the need arises.

Students must bring sanitary products with them, menstrual cycles can change you should also be bringing items that can hold used sanitary products until there is a suitable place to dispose of them.; nappy bags are a good idea, also have tissues or wipes and some hand sanitiser if you need to change your sanitary product during the day. Products must not be left in the bush as these will not biodegrade. Most of the time, the Guides will do their utmost to take you to a proper bathroom if needed but this may be an hour away from where you are working so students must be prepared for this.

Don't forget, all the Guides are experienced in these matters and students should try not to feel embarrassed about being honest about their needs if their period comes whilst they are away.

25. Community Donations

Each rural community will have a donation wish list, for more information on the current wish list please contact us – we can also supply a bag that can be filled in the UK with donations to take to the project. Please liaise with your tutor and fellow students on the donations you are bringing. The additional cost of a donation baggage will be covered by Gap Africa Projects.

26. Appendix 1

Project/Area	Wi-Fi	Phone Signal	Laundry	Electricity	ATM / Cash Machine
Bonamanzi	Limited, around camp	Yes, patchy	Yes – (R50) and handwashing available	Mains	No card payments or ATM
Valley Trust	Limited	Yes	Handwashing available	Mains	No card payments or ATM
Entabeni	No	Yes, in places	Yes – additional cost	Mains	Card machine
Gauteng	Depends on accommodation	Yes, good	No	Mains	ATM at retail park
Hlomo Hlomo	No	Yes, patchy. MTN best	No – handwashing available	Mains	No card payments or ATM
Nambiti	No	Yes, very patchy	No – handwashing available	Solar power	No card payments or ATM
Sports Coaching	At accommodation	Yes, good	Yes, at additional cost (R10)	Mains and also have solar power and inverters as a back up	5-min walk from accommodation
Rooiberg	Yes	Yes, fair	No	Mains power and generator	ATM in the town
Shamwari	Limited around the accommodation	Yes, fair - Vodacom	Yes – once a week, no charge	Mains power and generator	Card payments at reception
Sibuya	Limited around the accommodation	Yes, very patchy	Yes – additional cost	Solar power	Card payments
St Lucia	Limited	Yes, good	No - launderette in town	Mains	ATM in the town
Hanover	No	Yes, very patchy. Phone dependant. MTN best	Yes – machine and line or handwash	Solar power with generator back up	No card payments, ATM in town
Waterberg Cottages	Limited around the accommodation	Yes, fair	Yes, at additional cost (R150)	Solar power	Card machine at reception and ATM in town
Welgevonden	Yes, in camp	Yes, very patchy. Signal booster at office.	Yes, at additional cost (R20)	Mains with UPS and generator back up	No card machine – ATM in town
White Shark Project	Limited, around camp	Yes, fair	Yes	Mains with battery back up	Card machine
Zingela	Limited, around camp	No	No – handwashing available	Hybrid – mains and solar with lithium batteries for back up	Card machine

Please note: note: *The quality of your connection will depend upon your phone and eSIM, with some working better than others. We cannot guarantee coverage.*