

GENERAL INFORMATION

San Salvador Island

San Salvador Island is one of the outermost of a chain of some 700 islands sprinkled throughout more than 5,000 square miles of the most beautiful waters of the world. Although San Salvador is similar to the other islands of this archipelago, it is unique for its history, ecology, inland lakes, and potential for future development.

In 1492 Christopher Columbus made his first landfall in the New World at San Salvador. At that time the island was populated by the Lucayans, an Indian population which lived by fishing and agriculture. After befriendng these people, the admiral explored the island, going north from Long Bay where his fleet was anchored and rowing some twenty miles in search of an entrance through the barrier reef. One such boat canal was found with seven feet of water leading to a deep harbor which Columbus reported "would hold all the ships of Christendom." It is now known as Grahams Harbor.

The harbor remains as it was except for the Gerace Research Station (GRC), which is located on the berm of a beach composed of calcareous sands. In walking distance from the campus Pleistocene sand dunes, made visible by wave action cutting sea cliffs, arches and stacks, can be seen.

Much of the interior of San Salvador is made up of lakes which were utilized in days past for transportation. This unique inner island passage promoted the development of several communities on the perimeter of these interconnected lakes. After trampling in the dense bush which covers the island, one can appreciate why this method of transport was used until quite recently.

Today the island's paved perimeter road traverses through several small settlements which reflect the unspoiled Bahamian natural charm. The largest community, Cockburn Town, is the center of all activities on the island, having the Commissioner's office, Post Office telecommunication station, and electricity generators.

In the southern section of the island, a change in the landscape is taking place, initiated by a re-interest in a land development called

Columbus Landings. An indication of transition in the older communities can also be visualized, as new homes are being erected and remodeled due to an influx of capital from increased tourist trade on the island.

Most descriptions of the Bahamas picture islands basked continually with a warm breeze, blue skies, and long sunny days. This is for the most part true. However, it is not uncommon during winter, when a northwestern front arrives, to have as much as a week of rainy, cool weather.

These are days when it becomes too cool to swim and sweaters feel most comfortable in the evenings. The rainy season during the later summer permits the propagation of insects on San Salvador to the extent that the nuisance level becomes almost intolerable during September and October. This, along with the potential for hurricane activity, is the predominant reason for not having field projects during those months of the year. The nuisance level of insects is reduced during the winter and becomes almost nonexistent during the spring dry season.

The waters of the Bahamas are warm, blue, and have tropical reefs which can only be described for their beauty and abundance. Different from northern waters, diving in the sea produces very little comparative air temperature shock. However, many persons require wet suit vests when diving for long periods of time, even in May and June.

The Purpose of the Gerace Research Center

The GRC, as part of the College of the Bahamas, has a continuing agreement with the Bahamas government to undertake a wide range of environmental research projects in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. San Salvador offers a natural field laboratory for such studies.

Four purposes guide our activities at the GRC:

1. to inquire into the meaning of environmental relationships.
2. to develop an understanding of another culture.
3. to instruct students in research methods and techniques.

4. to conduct initial surveys and advanced field studies of the island.

The Cross Cultural Experience

San Salvador and the GRC with their cultural setting and geographic location are not for everyone. Faculty and students will not live in a manner and style to which they have become accustomed at vacation resorts. San Salvador lies well off the coast of Florida, a distance which can be measured in cultural difference as well as miles. The language is English and the people are generally very receptive, but linguistic affinity and friendliness can easily be misinterpreted for cultural similarity. In fact, this island is inhabited by a largely agrarian people who are very religious, who have a value system and world view quite unlike our own. One of the attractions of the GRC for all visitors is the cultural difference one finds on the island, but visitors have not always been sensitive to, or respectful of this difference. It is with good reason that we include "dress clothing" on the equipment list and insist that participants refrain from forms of personal behavior which might jeopardize the research center. We want to continue to be deserving of the welcome that San Salvador and the Bahamas Government have extended to us, and feel that a posture of deference to another people's cultural values is the best one to adopt.

Faculty Housing

Facilities at the GRC were built over forty years ago by the United States Sea Bees. Faculty rooms are all on the ground floor and designed to house two or more people. Each room has a sink and mirror, 2 beds or more, a dresser and desk. Most of the rooms have private bathrooms. However, in some cases, two adjoining rooms share a toilet and shower. While each room has a ceiling fan, the housing units are not air conditioned.

The GRC furnishes bed linens and towels for each room, but does not provide daily laundry service. Each participant must launder his/her own towels and bed linens. Maids clean each room and lavatory daily.

Student Housing

Undergraduate students are housed in dormitories located in the barracks which housed the Navy personnel during their stay on the island. They consist of a number of separate rooms housing a maximum of five students each, in either single or bunk beds. Men's and women's dorms are separate.

While these barracks were one of the finest built for military, they in no way compare with dormitories on your home campus. For a field station, however, living conditions are more than adequate for persons who are disciplined in keeping their quarters neat and who can function comfortably with minor inconveniences.

Graduate students are housed in ground floor rooms that can accommodate two to five students. Each room has at least one dresser and a desk. Most of the rooms have private bathrooms. In one case two rooms (housing two students each) share one bathroom.

While the GRC furnishes workers to clean the floors and lavatories of the student dorms and rooms, each student is responsible for keeping his personal living area neat and clean. Students are also responsible for supplying their own sheets, pillowcases, and towels.

Laboratory Facilities

The GRC has available modest but adequate laboratory classrooms, two large air-conditioned lecture rooms with overhead and slide projectors and VCRs, a wet lab containing aquariums with circulating sea water, a library, and a specimen repository. Each faculty member submits, prior to his project, a list of those items of equipment and library references required to complete his/her research or individual course. In this way each project has equipment tailored to the specific research being undertaken.

Dining Facilities

The GRC has complete dining facilities for ninety people. The bulk of the food utilized on campus is shipped from Nassau by marine transport or from the United States by air freight.

Fresh vegetables and fruits can be limited since we are dependent not only on availability of

supplies from Nassau but also on the supply boat being able to sail from Nassau to deliver produce. Surprisingly, the Bahamas produces very few tropical fruits which is also a limiting factor. With the aforementioned problems in logistics, our menu is sometimes limited, however, the kitchen staff will provide well balanced meals and we can normally serve a vegetarian alternative. Other special dietary needs may be difficult to accommodate.

Recreation and Entertainment

Sports equipment is provided for basketball and volleyball. Students should bring their own small games, such as cards, chess, etc. Paperback literature is available in our library for free time reading. Sodas, candy, snacks, postcards, stamps, and souvenirs are available for purchase at the Reef Club Snack Bar located on campus.

Three different night spots are located within walking distance of the GRC.

Dress Code

The Bahamian dress code is more formal than the current one in the U.S. For instance, islanders feel insulted if visitors attend church in working clothes (i.e., jeans). In respect for the Bahamian sensitivity regarding dress, it is necessary to require that shoes, shirts, and bathing suit cover-ups be worn in all public and semi-public places, and also in the Research Center cafeteria.

Insects

Like most tropical places, San Salvador has insects. The island has palmetto bugs, flies, and roaches which are not usually considered a nuisance to our participants. However, of the several hundred species of mosquitoes, San Salvador can boast of twelve. During the rainy season, the nuisance level builds to intolerable levels. However, relief can be obtained in screened quarters, especially during the twilight hours. Throughout the year most participants should not experience mosquito bites during the heat of the day in unshaded cleared areas.

The biggest offender of the insect world on San Salvador is the "no-see-um." You may

know them by the name of sand fly, punky, gnat, or nit. They can get through standard mosquito mesh and can sometimes crawl under covers to deliver a painful bite. Some people are more tormented by these insects than others. Two people sleeping next to each other may find one bothered by bites while the other experiences no discomfort at all. After the first two weeks on the island people either get used to the nuisance or develop an immunity to bites. Insect sprays are useful in the control of these tropical nuisances, and anti-itch creams bring relief from bite irritation. Occasional spraying for insects has begun around most settlements on the island, including the GRC. This has helped to keep the nuisance level of both mosquitoes and no-see-ums down as compared to previous years.

Other insects which at times can give a great deal of concern are wasps and bees. On San Salvador there are bees which can give painful stings. To date there have been no ill effects experienced even by those normally allergic to bee stings.

Bahamas Immigration and Customs

A visa is not required for U.S. citizens to visit the Bahamas. However, proof of citizenship is required in the form of a birth certificate or passport. A driver's license alone is not acceptable, although some identification with a recent photo should also be brought with you.

Bahamian customs officials are subjecting incoming people and their luggage to rigorous search. It is illegal to bring into the Bahamas any illicit drugs, spear guns, or obscene literature (this includes "Playboy" and similar publications). Note that prescription and non-prescription medications are allowed. It can be expected that the Bahamas government will prosecute any person found to possess illegal drugs or marijuana according to Bahamian law, which is more stringent than U.S. law, regarding the possession, use, or sale of drugs and marijuana.

Things to Bring

On charter air transportation, personal luggage will be limited to 40 pounds, including carry on baggage. This will be strictly enforced on both inbound and outbound charter flights.

Any additional luggage will be left behind. Anyone who insists on exceeding this limit may be charged as much as the cost of another round-trip airfare or more. It is essential that GRC visitors include the following in their luggage:

- a. sun screen, sun tan lotion, & sun hat
 - b. insect repellant and anti-itch cream for bites*
 - c. sun glasses, spare glasses, contact lenses (if applicable)
 - d. band aids and antiseptic, other necessary sundries such as aspirin, feminine hygiene products, etc.*
 - e. flash light and extra batteries*
 - f. plastic drinking glass
 - g. spiral note book, pencils, pens.*
 - h. light washable clothing to include at least the following: rain jacket, sweater and/or sweatshirt (winter months), one set of dress clothing (if you plan to attend church), long sleeve shirt, jeans, shorts, T-shirts, etc.
 - i. sturdy walking shoes and old sneakers, dive boots, or water shoes to wear in the water
 - j. swim suits, plus snorkel, mask & fins
 - k. cosmetic items and laundry detergent*
 - l. proof of citizenship (birth certificate or passport) and a photo identification (college ID or driver's license)
 - m. Students should bring 2 sheets, 1 pillowcase, 1 blanket, and 2 towels.
 - n. Watch and/or travel alarm clock (if you have trouble waking up in the mornings).
 - o. Water bottle.
- (* - Usually available on the island, but expensive and in limited supply)

In order to keep your limit to 40 pounds and also bring the aforementioned items, we suggest you wear your dress clothing to the island and bring two changes of field clothing and bathing suits. Avoid bringing heavy boots, shoes and winter coats, and pack in light duffels or small cloth suitcases.

Swimming and SCUBA Diving

SCUBA diving to a depth of 25 feet for research purposes is possible through the Gerace Research Center. Students must be accompanied

by the professor in charge when diving. Deeper diving can be arranged with the local dive shop on the island. All SCUBA divers must bring with them proof of certification (C-card) and their log book. They should also bring their own regulators, BC's, and weight belts (**minus weights**). Weights and tanks can be rented at the GRC.

Personal Funds

Personal funds must be brought for sodas, snacks, drinks, post cards, stamps, snorkeling or SCUBA equipment rentals, and souvenirs. **There are no banks for wire transfers, or ATMs, on San Salvador.** The Bahamian dollar is equivalent to the US dollar and they are used interchangeably on the island. Personal spending money must be in cash in small denominations. Travelers checks will be accepted but with a 3% surcharge to cover administration. A safe is available on campus for safe keeping of funds, passports and airline tickets. Previous experience indicates that GRC visitors spend as much as \$20 to \$100 in a week on the above mentioned incidentals.

Medical Care

Persons who choose to participate in activities at the GRC must be aware that medical facilities and personnel on San Salvador are very limited and can in no way be compared with standards found in most parts of the USA. Thus, one must assume a certain amount of risk in the event of serious or emergency medical situations. It is for this reason that the Research Center requires individuals to procure our accident and sickness insurance policy which, in the case of an emergency, will cover the costs of a flying ambulance for evacuation to hospital facilities. Minor medical care on San Salvador is provided by a resident doctor and nurse in a modest government clinic. By Bahamian standards, San Salvador is considered to be one of the most fortunate Out Islands in having even this level of medical service for its population of around 2000. A modest fee, usually \$75 or less, is charged for medicines and treatment at the clinic. Participants should be prepared to pay such fees if they require medical treatment.

Special inoculations are not required, although a tetanus shot is strongly recommended.

Insurance Coverage

A student must purchase health insurance coverage for a fee of \$1.00 per person, per day, which is included in the cost of the class.

Laundry

Coin operated washers are provided on the campus for personal laundry. Laundry detergent can be purchased on the island, however, as with other imported products you will find it more expensive than in the USA.

Electricity

Electricity on San Salvador is provided by diesel powered generators operated by the Bahamas Electricity Corporation. As in the USA the electricity is 110 volts, 60 cycle.

Time

The time zone for San Salvador is the same as the Eastern Time Zone in the USA, including both standard and daylight savings time.

Churches

Catholic, Baptist, Anglican, and Seventh Day Adventist worship services are available on San Salvador. They welcome anyone who would like to attend their Sunday services. It is important that visitors follow custom and wear dress clothing, e.g. dress shirt and slacks for men and dress or skirt and blouse for women.

Transportation to, and on the Island

Transport to San Salvador will be via small eight or nine seat charter aircraft (when available) which leave from Ft. Lauderdale (see Air Charter Information).

Travel may also be personally arranged through Bahamas Air, which has one flight daily from Nassau to the island. It may be possible to travel from your home institution to San Salvador in one day by utilizing Bahamas Air.

The Bahamas Air schedule does vary depending on the time of year and you should contact their group department to make inquiries on time tabling at Tel: 305-593-8841 or Fax: 305-593-6246. The Bahamas Air group department is also able to give cut price fares.

Transportation for daily classes and church is provided by the GRC. A faculty member from the group will be responsible for driving. The cost of repair of any damage done to a vehicle **as a result of negligence and/or misuse** will be paid by the faculty who was driving at the time.

There is no regular bus or taxi service available on the island.

Most visitors find it enjoyable to walk to the several night spots located within one to two miles of the campus after classes in the evening.

Telephone Service

The GRC's telephone number on San Salvador is (242)-331-2520, and Fax (242)-331-2524. **These are business numbers and should be utilized for business/emergency calls only.** For personal calls, visitors may use a pay phone on campus which can be used to make collect calls or with AT&T, MCI, and Sprint calling cards, or pre-paid BATELCO phone cards, available on campus.

In an emergency an individual attempting to telephone a student or faculty member should call the GRC's number between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM, and the participant will return the call. Messages may also be passed on through the Bahamian Telephone Company (BATELCO) at 242-331-2388.

Mail

Packages of any kind should not be sent to students or faculty. All packages are fully inspected and a rather high import duty is placed on most items, besides the fact that they will in all likelihood arrive after the participant leaves San Salvador. Mail sent through the Bahamian postal service can take up to four weeks to reach the island from the US, and vice versa.

All mail from the Bahamas must have Bahamian postage. U.S. postage stamps cannot be used. Post cards and Bahamian stamps are available for purchase at the Research Station.

Property Damage Bond

Personal conduct on San Salvador must not jeopardize the GRC or cause undue property damage. Therefore, each student will be asked to post a \$10.00 property damage bond upon arrival on San Salvador. This fee will be refunded in full before departure from the island if no damage is incurred by the student **or the students' group**.

Personal Conduct

The GRC and its guests are present on San Salvador under the courtesy of the people and government of the Bahamas. As such, you will be expected to conduct yourselves in a manner that is respectful of local sensitivities, customs, and laws. Any violations of Bahamian law will be prosecuted in the Bahamas with no recourse to U.S. laws and attorneys. **Any conduct that reflects negatively on the Research Center will be grounds for immediate deportation at the expense of those involved.**

Refund

There are no provisions made for any refunds if a student has to leave San Salvador due to medical or personal reasons.

Summary

Now that you have read the preceding description of the Gerace Research Center and environment, it becomes your decision whether you can adapt yourself to this field situation. We recommend our facility for those who truly enjoy working and living with people from different places, who are especially sensitive to a people and culture that are different from their own, and who view scholarly field work as being especially appropriate to their personal goals. For those who have unique medical requirements, require special diets, have problems in adjusting to a completely new situation and different culture, or have difficulty in living with and meeting a variety

of people, we strongly recommend that you consider this program with reservation. To those who feel they can adapt, the San Salvador experience may well be one of the highlights of your life.