



THE SOCIETY FOR OCEAN SCIENCES

Bahamas Field Expedition

GENERAL INFORMATION

This document summarizes information about San Salvador and the Gerace Research Center, our base of operations during our expedition. Much of this information can also be found on the Gerace Research Center website at: <http://www.geraceresearchcentre.com>

San Salvador Island

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 befriending 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 Centre (GRC), which is located on the berm of a beach composed of calcareous sands.

Much of the interior of San Salvador is made up of lakes which were utilized in days past for transportation. These unique inner island passages 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.

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.

On average, the Bahamas experience approximately 300 sunny days a year. Daytime temperatures during winter (December to April) average 70°F (21°C) and a balmy 80°F (26°C) in summer. In general, the islands receive cooling trade winds year-round.

The rainy season extends from late May to November. Humidity can be relatively high year-round. Hurricane season is June to November with storms most commonly occurring from late August through September. Winter and early spring months are generally drier. However, when a northwestern front arrives there can be as much as a week of rainy,



cool weather. During this time it may become too cool to swim and sweaters feel most comfortable in the evenings.

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, some persons feel more comfortable in a wet suit vest when spending long periods of time in the water, even in May and June.

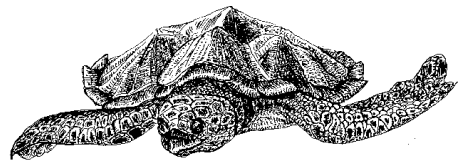
The Cultural Experience

As a sparsely populated out-island, expedition participants should be aware that San Salvador lacks many typical Caribbean resort amenities.

The local Bahamians of San Salvador are largely an agrarian people with strong religious values, which in some cases can be very different to our own. One of the attractions for visitors to San Salvador is this unique cultural experience that one finds on the island. However, visitors must be sensitive and respectful of this difference. It is with good reason that the GRC includes "dress clothing" on the equipment list and insists that participants refrain from forms of personal behavior which might jeopardize the Research Centre. The Society and GRC want to continue to be deserving of the welcome that San Salvador and the Bahamas Government have extended to us. We ask each expedition participant to present themselves with decorum and respect toward the local people.

Student Housing

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 single beds and sharing a common bathroom. Men's and women's dorms are on separate floors.



While these barracks were one of the finest built for military, they are not luxurious. 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.

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.

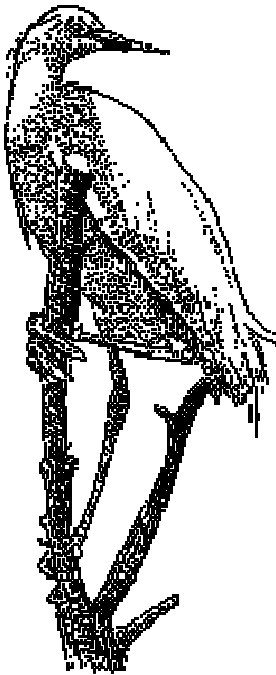
Laboratory Facilities

The GRC has available 10 modest but adequate laboratory classrooms, most of which are air-conditioned. A limited number of compound and dissecting microscopes, as well as assorted laboratory glassware, are available for group use. There are two large air-conditioned lecture rooms with overhead and slide projectors and VCRs, a wet lab containing aquaria with circulating sea water, a library, and a specimen repository.

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 GRC is dependent not only on availability of supplies from Nassau but also on the supply boat being able to sail from Nassau to deliver produce. Notwithstanding the aforementioned problems in logistics, the kitchen staff will try to provide well-balanced meals and will normally serve a vegetarian alternative. **Other special dietary needs may be difficult to accommodate, and should be discussed with the group leaders prior to registering for the expedition.**



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, and stamps are available for purchase at the Snack Bar located on the GRC campus. T-shirts are available for sale in the library.

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 are worn in all public and semi-public places, and also in the Research Centre 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, after periods of significant rain, mosquitoes can become a problem. 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 other, more significant insect offender on San Salvador is the "no-see-um." You may know them by the name of sand fly, punky, gnat, or nit. These very tiny insects can penetrate screening and can be particularly bothersome in shaded areas or at twilight.

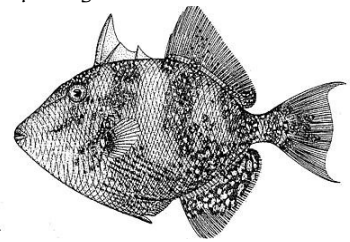
Insect sprays, as well as light-weight long pants and shirts, are useful in the control of these tropical nuisances, and anti-itch creams bring relief from bite irritation. Occasional spraying for insects has begun around most settlements on the island, including the GRC. This has helped to keep the 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, bees and fire ants. On San Salvador there are bees which can give painful stings. It's imperative that expedition participants inform us of any insect allergies and provide epi-pen injectors if necessary.

Bahamas Immigration and Customs

A passport is required for U.S. citizens to visit the Bahamas. As of June 1, 2009, birth certificates are no longer accepted for re-entry into the US. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. Allow at least 8-10 weeks for obtaining a passport. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

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 should be transported in their original packaging. 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

Personal luggage is limited by the airline, to a single checked bag and carry-on. The total weight of the two bags cannot exceed 40 pounds. This will be strictly enforced. Anyone who insists on exceeding this limit may be charged by the airline. The Society is not responsible for these charges. Further, students are responsible for transporting their own baggage through airport terminals and to and from accommodations. Some of these walks may be lengthy. Do not bring more than you can carry.

It is essential that GRC visitors include the following in their luggage:

- a. sun screen, hat, and water bottle
- b. insect repellent 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. Field Guides, note book, and pencils.

We recommend that you bring the "Field Guide to Coral Reefs: Caribbean and Florid" and "Field Guide to Southeastern and Caribbean Seashores: Cape Hatteras to the Gulf Coast, Florida, and the Caribbean" both by Eugene H. Kaplan.

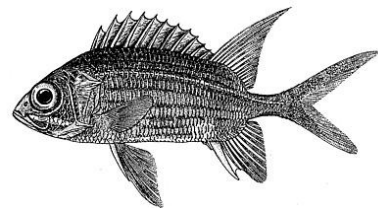
- g. light washable clothing to include: Bathing suits, shorts, T-shirts, a light wind/rain jacket, one long sleeved shirt and pair of long pants, one set of dress clothing (if you plan to attend church)
 - h. sturdy walking shoes and old sneakers, dive boots, or water shoes to wear in the water
 - i. snorkel, mask & fins
 - j. cosmetic items and laundry detergent*
 - k. Passport
 - l. 2 sheets, 1 pillowcase, 1 light-weight blanket, and 2 towels.
 - m. Watch and/or travel alarm clock (if you have trouble waking up in the mornings).
 - n. Sandals, if used, must have an ankle strap – no flip-flops outside the dormitory
- (* - Usually available on the island, but expensive)

In order to keep your limit to 40 pounds and also bring the aforementioned items, we suggest you bring two or three changes of field clothing and bathing suits. In the event that all luggage does not arrive in San Salvador on our flight, personal items such as medications and a single bathing suit/shorts and T-shirt should be included in your carry-on. Avoid bringing heavy boots or shoes, and pack in light duffels or small cloth suitcases.

Swimming, Snorkeling, and Hiking

We will be spending at least a portion of each day snorkeling (2 Or 3 hours). Participants need to be able to swim and be comfortable in deep water. It is essentially that each student brings a mask, fins and snorkel with them on the expedition. Weak swimmers should also consider bringing a snorkeler's vest to provide them with some additional floatation. Be sure that all snorkeling equipment fits well and is a sufficient quality to withstand vigorous use.

We will also be hiking to some field sites and taking long walks along the shore. In order to enjoy all these activities, participants should be in reasonably good condition; and be able to walk continuously for 2-3 miles over uneven terrain during mid-day temperatures.



Personal Funds

Personal funds must be brought for sodas, snacks, drinks, post cards, stamps, and souvenirs. **There are no ATM's on San Salvador. Credit cards are not accepted at the GRC or most other locations on the island.** The Bahamian dollar is equivalent to the US dollar and they are used interchangeably on the island. **Personal spending money must be in cash and in small denominations (\$5-\$10).** A safe is available on campus for safe keeping of funds, passports and airline tickets. Previous experience indicates that GRC visitors spend \$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 Centre 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. This insurance premium is covered in the overall cost of the trip. 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 1000. 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.

Laundry

Coin operated washers are provided on the GRC campus for personal laundry (US Quarters only). If you intend to do laundry, bring a small amount of detergent in your checked baggage.



Electricity

Electricity on San Salvador is provided by diesel powered generators operated by the Bahamas Electricity Corporation. As in the USA the electricity is 120 volts, 60 cycle.

Time

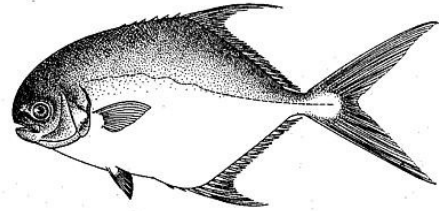
The time zone for San Salvador is the same as the Eastern Time Zone in the USA, including both standard and daylight savings time.

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 on the Island

Transportation for daily field trips and church is provided by the GRC. The group will be transported in an open, flatbed truck which has been modified with bench seats and railings. A group leader will be responsible for driving.



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

Contacting Home

The GRC's telephone number on San Salvador is (242)-331-2520/2521, and Fax (242)-331-2524. **These are business numbers and should be utilized for business/emergency calls only.** There are no phones available on campus for general use. Phone calls can be made in Cockburn Town at the Bahamas Telecommunication Corporation (BTC). Depending upon carrier, US cell phones may work on San Salvador, though at a considerable cost.

In an emergency an individual attempting to telephone a student should call the GRC's number between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM, and the participant will return the call. Messages may also be passed on through the Bahamas Telecommunication Corporation (BTC) at 242-331-2388.

High Speed Internet service is available for use by students in the GRC library during evening library hours. There is a small fee associated with this service that will be collected by the librarian.

Please note: Phone service and internet access are not as reliable on San Salvador as they are in the United States. Students may be out of communication with family or friends for some portion of their stay.

Mail

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 Centre Snack Bar.

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 to GRC. 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 Society for Ocean Sciences or the Gerace Research Centre will be grounds for immediate deportation at the expense of those involved.**

Payment for the Expedition

In order to register for the trip, each participant submits a registration form along with a **down payment of \$950.00 by February 15, 2010**. Checks can be made out to *The Society for Ocean Sciences*. After determining that there are a sufficient number of participants (at least 20 students) to offer this trip, deposits will be used immediately to purchase roundtrip airline tickets to the Bahamas for each participant and all staff. **Final payment of the remaining \$950.00 is due by April 20, 2010.**

In the event that there is insufficient registration, all deposits will be returned to participants. Thereafter, monies used to purchase airline tickets cannot be refunded. However, refunds of the final payment may be made up until 31 days prior to our departure.





THE SOCIETY FOR OCEAN SCIENCES

Registration Form for Bahamas Field Expedition

Name _____ Age _____ Sex _____
(First, Middle, and Last Names –exactly as they appear on passport)

Home Address _____

City/State / Zip _____

Home Telephone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

Height _____ Weight _____ Birth Date: _____

Citizenship _____ Passport No. _____

Emergency Contact Name _____ Telephone _____

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