



San Salvador, Bahamas  
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*U.S. Mailing Address*  
c/o Twin Air  
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## **STUDENT GROUP INFORMATION PACKET 2008 - 2009**

Greetings from the Gerace Research Centre! To all our returning researchers and groups, thank you, for your continued support of the GRC. To new researchers and groups, we hope that you join the long list of "regulars" who consider the GRC and San Salvador a home away from home.

### **\*\*\*Please take the time to read the following items relating to organization of group trips:**

- Our U.S. Mailing Address has changed, please update your records to reflect:  
**Gerace Research Centre**  
**c/o Twin Air**  
**3406 SW 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue**  
**Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315**
- US citizens are required to have **passports** to enter the Bahamas. Make sure everyone in your group is aware of this and has applied for a passport well in advance of your expected travel dates. Individuals without a passport will not be allowed to board flights to the island.
- If you plan to use our charter service, make note of the weight limitations, and Bahamas Customs and Immigration information. **Weight limitations will be strictly enforced.** Also, be reminded that connecting U.S. flights on your return trip from San Salvador should either be the following day or after 6:00pm on the day of return to the U.S. Although most charter flights return to the U.S. by early afternoon, this occasionally has to be rescheduled to the afternoon due to poor weather conditions or other unforeseen problems.
- As of this writing we have not yet finalized our rates with the charter company. We expect there to be an increase due to rising fuel costs, but have not yet been told what to expect.
- To make arrangements for flights on Bahamasair call their group department at Tel: 305-593-8841 or Fax: 305-593-6246. This department has been able to give low price tickets for many schools the past few years. There is presently a non-stop commercial flight into San Salvador from Fort Lauderdale on Saturdays through Spirit Airlines which can be booked online and may work well for **smaller** groups. Another route which has worked for some groups is to fly into Nassau directly and make arrangements with a charter service there to bring you over later in the afternoon. Southern Air is one company which can be chartered from Nassau to San Salvador – phone number is (242) 377-2014/5. **As always, please call or e-mail us if you have questions or are having difficulty arranging flights.**
- **Be sure to send the required forms (see packet) in to us within the time frame listed prior to your arrival.** These forms are important to ensure we are properly prepared for your group - problems invariably arise when we do not get these forms in a timely manner.

## **THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS**

*Center for the Study of Archaeology, Biology, Geology, and Marine Science*



- San Salvador continues to grow, but it is still very much an isolated island with limited facilities. Please make sure your students are aware of this – phone service and internet access are not always working at the GRC. **If students do not feel they can handle being out of communication with family or friends for up to a week or more, then they may want to reconsider their visit to the island.** Also, medical facilities are limited as always, and emergency transport off the island remains a challenge.
- Please make sure students (and parents) are aware that, as stated elsewhere in this package, our U.S. mailing address should not be used for personal mail. This is not a regular service, and it is likely that if something is sent to a student, it will not arrive until well after they are gone.
- There are still no ATM's on San Salvador, and only the Riding Rock Inn accepts major credit cards. **Credit cards are not accepted at the GRC.** Cash advances on Visa and/or Master cards are available at the local bank with two photo IDs. Be sure to bring adequate cash for your trip – **most of which should be in smaller denominations (\$5 and \$10 bills) as it is difficult to change larger bills.**

Again, thank you for choosing the Gerace Research Centre for your field studies, and we look forward to seeing you this coming year on San Salvador.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas A. Rothfus  
Executive Director



## 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 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. 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.

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

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 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 Centre

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 Centre. 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. Each room has a ceiling fan, and a number of the rooms can be air-conditioned with window units for an additional fee.

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 single beds and sharing a common bathroom. 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. Undergraduate 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 student and faculty use. There are 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. With the aforementioned problems in logistics, our menu is sometimes limited, however, the kitchen staff will provide well balanced meals and can normally



serve a vegetarian alternative. **Other special dietary needs may be difficult to accommodate, and should be discussed with the GRC Director prior to booking.**

## 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 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, 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 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 passport is required for U.S. citizens to visit the Bahamas. Birth certificates will no longer be accepted for re-entry into the US.**

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 hat
- 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. spiral note book, pencils, pens.\*
  - g. 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.
  - h. sturdy walking shoes and old sneakers, dive boots, or water shoes to wear in the water
  - i. swim suits, plus snorkel, mask & fins
  - j. cosmetic items and laundry detergent\*
  - k. Passport
  - l. Undergraduate students should bring 2 sheets, 1 pillowcase, 1 blanket, and 2 towels.
  - m. Watch and/or travel alarm clock (if you have trouble waking up in the mornings).
  - n. Water bottle.
- (\* - 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 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 Centre. 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 ATMs, on San Salvador. Credit cards are not accepted at the GRC or most other locations on the island.** The only exception to this is the Riding Rock dive resort which will take major credit cards. 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. 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 \$150 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. 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.

## Insurance Coverage

A student must purchase health insurance coverage for a fee of \$1.50 per person, per day.

## Laundry



Coin operated washers are provided on the campus for personal laundry (US Quarters only). 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 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 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 Bahamasair, which generally 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 Bahamasair schedule does vary considerable 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 Bahamasair 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)-331-2520/2521, 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 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 or faculty member 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.

## Internet Service

High Speed Internet service is available for use by students and faculty in the library during normal library hours. There is a small fee associated with this service. Wireless internet is available for faculty and researcher use in most rooms (at no charge).

## 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 Centre.

### **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 Centre will be grounds for immediate deportation at the expense of those involved.**

### **Payment**

Payment is requested at least two weeks in advance of your stay. Please contact us if this is a problem as we can usually work around this.

### **Cancellation Policy**

Reservations cancelled up to 4 days in advance will receive a full refund. A fee equivalent to one night's stay will be charged on cancellations after this time. Charter aircraft seats cancelled up to 31 days in advance will receive full refunds. Due to advance

payment requirements by the air charter companies, no refund will be given on seat cancellations after this time.

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 Centre 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.