

To The International student

I am excited to welcome you to Africa International University (AIU). You will find the AIU campus is an interesting mix of African cultures, intermingled with other cultures and a great variety of Christian denominations. We at AIU value your unique contributions to the community and look forward to having you on campus soon!

Studying at AIU is a great opportunity which also requires attention to certain details for international students. The following information gives you an overview – pay special attention to the highlighted areas before you leave. Also, please ask if you have questions!

Location and Weather

AIU is located in Karen, a suburb of the global and very diverse city of Nairobi. Nairobi is the East African hub of 3-4 million and growing daily. AIU lies on about 55 acres. The city of Nairobi lies at 5450 feet (1661 meters) and Karen is even higher. The majority of the year, Nairobi basks in beautiful sunlight and blue skies with temperatures in the mid-70s F (20s C). However, **be prepared for cold weather** as well, as the school year includes both extremes, cold (50s F - 10 degrees C) and hot (80s F - 24 degrees C). Nairobi is close to the equator, but the altitude makes it cool.

June, July and August are often cold, so be prepared for cool weather upon arrival. December - March are often warm. In the cold and the rainy seasons, it can feel quite cool in the AIU's stone and concrete buildings.

Visas and Immigration

Kenya Pupil's Pass: International students are required to obtain a Kenya Pupil Pass (KPP) to study in Kenya. Once admitted, you will receive the forms and requirements for applying for the KPP. It is imperative that you compile all the necessary information and forms and return them to admissions as quickly as possible. Then, AIU can request the KPP for you from the government. Legally, students legally should have their KPPs before coming to study and the process often takes 3-6 months. If the KPP has not yet arrived, but has been applied for, new international students are generally able to initially come in on a visitor's visa (price varies by country; often 3 months in length but can be renewed once). **Upon arrival in Kenya, you should expect to buy a visitor's visa for 3 months. If it is ready, your KPP will be stamped into your passport, after you check in on campus.** Also after arrival, students must check-in with immigration staff to find out how to apply for re-entry passes, alien registration, Kenya pupil passes for studying family members, and dependent passes for other non-working and non-studying family members. The KPP may need to be renewed after a year or two, depending on the program length. This is the responsibility of the student, but immigration staff will help.

Re-entry Permit: You need to apply for a re-entry permit if you plan to leave and re-enter Kenya. It is not expensive, but you must get it stamped in your passport before you leave and re-enter.

Alien Cards: After getting your KPP, you need to go to immigration downtown to be finger printed and apply for your Alien Card. This serves as an ID card while you are in Kenya - you don't have to carry your passport around for ID while inside the country, for sending money by phone or getting in to game parks.

Dependent Passes: If you are bringing dependents (spouse, children), they will need to apply for dependent passes, or for KPPs if they plan to study. If a spouse is working, they should get their work resident's permit through their work place.

Documents: Bring official copies of marriage, birth, and previous education certificates with you, as well as passports and health records for everyone coming to AIU.

Health

Yellow Fever immunizations may be required to enter the country. Also recommended are Tetanus/Diphtheria, Tuberculosis (BCG), Hepatitis A and B, Typhoid. If you plan to travel more widely, some students also get immunized for meningitis, polio, and rabies. Malaria prophylaxis may be recommended if you travel to warmer areas - Nairobi is high and cool enough to mostly avoid malaria. Check with your health care provider before leaving to see what precautions are recommended. AIU requires all students to have health insurance - either your own plan or the school plan. There is a basic clinic on campus and various hospitals and labs nearby.

Transportation

If you communicate the details of your initial arrival in Kenya to the admissions office, AIU can arrange to send someone to meet you at the bus station or airport. Please give a week advanced notice for these arrangements to be made. Also, please communicate any changes in plans as quickly as possible.

Buses, taxis and mini-buses (matatus) are readily available in Nairobi. If you plan to drive and you have a license, obtaining an international driver's license before arrival is recommended. AIU is 3 km from the Karen shopping area one direction and the Dagoretti market the other direction, so walking or biking is possible. Basic supplies are available at the Tuck Shop on campus.

Housing/Finances

Student housing is basic. Families live in two-bedroom painted concrete apartments. The joint living-dining room furnishings generally include a wooden-frame couch with square cushions

and matching chairs, a wooden dining room table with basic chairs. It also included a built-in bookshelf approximately five feet long with four to six shelves. Kitchens contain two two-door cupboards, a single sink; a two-burner gas stove top and a small refrigerator. Some students cook on small “jikos” outside, using charcoal or kerosene. Each bedroom contains a small hanging closet with four small built-in drawers. One room generally will have a double bed and a desk/table and the other a bunk bed and a single bed. Bathrooms contain a toilet, sink, two shelves, and a concrete shower. On hot, sunny days, solar panels in some houses provide warm water, but most students install instant shower heaters. Or you can heat water in a kettle or with a wand in a bucket - but be careful! Apartments meter water and electricity, so you will get your bills monthly.

Single students live in dorm-style rooms at the top (third) floor of the student blocks, and share a bathroom, shower, and kitchen/eating room with a handful of other single students (or possibly married students who have left their families behind). Furnishings are a bed, a desk/table, a chair, a book case and a built-in closet. Single students usually organize a cooking schedule and jointly pay the water and electricity bills. Alternatively, several students have been assigned to share family rooms recently, depending upon where space is available. There is a cafeteria, The Tamu Café, on campus. West Africans may need to add some chilli peppers, though!

Be prepared to bring or buy household equipment like bedding, brooms, mops, buckets, kitchen cookware and utensils. Very old mattresses are initially supplied for rental, but students are encouraged to **get their own mattresses** as soon as possible. These items can be found at the large Nakumatt department store in Karen. Clotheslines are available in the student housing area. House helpers are can be found at a fairly reasonable cost to assist with hand washing laundry, cleaning, cooking, shopping, and child care. AIU has several boreholes, but the local water is high in fluoride, so a special filter is recommended. There are also several taps to access treated city water on campus.

Supplies/Packing

AIU has a computer lab with laser printer, but it is well-used, so a personal laptop is helpful. A good battery is helpful for when there are power outages. *Windows Professional* software is recommended. Internet is available in a combination of wireless and plug-in sites. Capacity and speed keep increasing - the goal is to have decent speed internet throughout campus someday soon.

Cell phones are available for around \$25, most with pay-as-you-go credit. The Kenyan country phone code is +254. Many international students use Skype to call outside of Kenya from their computers (<http://www.skype.com>).

For electronics, Kenya uses 220 volts with three rectangle pin plugs. Adapters and transformers and most household items can be purchased locally. Most needed books are available in the library or bookstore. AIU also subscribes to many excellent, current, on-line journals.

Electricity is not always reliable, although the classrooms are served by a generator. A good computer battery is helpful, as are torches or lamps.

West Africa students are always surprised at how cold it is at AIU, especially in June and July. Pack sweaters, fleeces, jackets, shawls, socks, and plenty of blankets for the whole family. Even though Nairobi is close to the equator, the altitude makes it feel cold. Being on the equator, sunscreen is recommended for the light skinned.

Students from the west are often surprised how professionally AIU students dress. Smart business casual is the norm - modest dresses, skirts, and trousers for women, though nice jeans are becoming more common. Skirt lengths are longer than in the west and necklines higher. Men tend to wear button-down shirts with trousers and often a jacket. Shorts are not acceptable except when playing sports or touring.

Banking/Mail

Kenya uses the Kenya shilling. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are available in nearby Karen. Checks can be cashed there as well. Bank accounts can be set-up, but may have some fees. These can be especially helpful if you are receiving funds from a sponsor for personal upkeep. Kenya is world renowned for its cell phone banking system. **If sponsors are sending money for upkeep, it is recommended that they send the money to you through a personal account, as it can take a week or so to get it through the accounting protocols at AIU.**

Likewise, plan a week or two ahead if you need to access money in your AIU account. You can set up an account in Karen as soon as you arrive. For initial set-up (household items, mattresses, etc.) it is recommended you bring the equivalent of about \$500.

You will receive an AIU **email account** that is usually your name in this format: for Jomo Kenyatta it would be jomo.kenyatta@africainternational.edu. AIU collects mail at the **post office** in Karen. You can have mail sent there to: Your name, Africa International University, PO Box 24686, 00502, Karen, East Africa. If you need to send something by **courier**, the physical address and directions are: Africa International University/NEGST on Dagoretti

Road, 3 km from Karen on the left, after the second speed bump, across from Karen Christian College. You can send it to the Admissions office.

Safety

Unfortunately, Nairobi is not an especially safe city. While on campus, you will be safely guarded and need not worry. But of course, your entire time in Kenya will not be spent on campus... Here are some suggestions to consider:

Avoid being off campus past dark (around 7 p.m.). Most unfortunate incidents occur during the evening and early morning hours. If you must be out, avoid “matatus” (small vans used as public transportation around the city) and do not travel alone. Taxis, though more expensive, are a better option at night.

Be careful when travelling off campus alone if you are a female student, although some areas of downtown are not recommended for foreign males travelling alone, either. Stay on main roads and do not walk to remote or less public areas without someone you trust. Walking towards Karen is considered safer than walking towards Resurrection Gardens.

Petty theft and armed robberies happen on occasion, though the AIU campus itself is secure and is guarded 24 hours a day. Watch your belongings closely when off campus and carry as few valuables off campus as possible. Keep cash and valuable under clothing in well zipped purses or front pockets.

It is also wise to watch your belongings on-campus. Feel free to ask the security guards for assistance. The campus security head is Juthus Okari at +254-721-355-799. Kenya’s general emergency number is 999.

Children’s schools

In student housing, there are about 100 children of various ages so there is no lack of playmates. They speak an interesting variety of English, Kiswahili, French and other languages. These children attend a wide variety of schools.

A Christian school on campus, “Pistis”, is located immediately adjacent to the student housing, is available from “baby class” through grade eight and beyond. The school uses the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) home schooling curriculum (<http://www.aceministries.com>) for grades 2 and up. Students work at their own pace through a system of workbooks. Group activities provide additional learning in the afternoons. Fees are reasonable. Pistis follows the AIU schedule, so it works well for studying parents.

In greater Nairobi many options are available, including a Congolese French school, Christian schools, Swedish and German schools, and international schools. Nearby Kenya schools

include St. Hannah's, Forest View, and St. Christopher's. Several British schools and an American curriculum school are available in the 20-minute driving radius.

Academics

If you're coming from a semester system, terms at AIU might be shorter than you expect (only 10 weeks). Prepare yourself mentally to dive right in and try to get as much done as you can the first few weeks; don't just relax. Also, during your first term, try to think about what your thesis will be so that all your smaller assignments can build up your knowledge towards your thesis project.

Be prepared to meet a variety of teaching styles – the teachers come from various cultures/backgrounds of learning/teaching. The students also come with different ideas of the roles of teacher, student, etc. Its diversity is the beauty of AIU. It can also be a challenge, but you will learn from teachers and fellow students if you come with a learner's heart.

Church

Nairobi is full of all kinds of churches. As with any move, finding a home church can be difficult so start praying now! You can ask friends on campus if you can visit their churches. Finding a home church is not only important for your spiritual growth, but some departments at AIU require that you have a place to serve soon after arriving. International students often comment that participating in church in Kenya is one of their most memorable learning experiences.

At the risk of leaving some important churches out, following are the websites of some nearby churches (all have been attended by faculty and students from AIU):

Good Shepherd: <http://www.goodshepherdagc.com/>

Karen Community Church (KCC): <http://www.karencommunitychurch.org/>

Karen Vineyard: <http://www.karenvineyard.org/>

Nairobi Baptist: <http://www.nairobibaptist.org/>

Nairobi Chapel: <http://www.nairobichapel.org/pages/index.asp>

Nairobi Pentecostal: <http://www.citam.org/>

(All the ones with Nairobi in their name are led by AIU graduates.)

Many of the Kenyan students here come from Anglican (ACK), Africa Inland (AIC), Deliverance, Pentecostal, and a host of other denominations that have parish churches nearby. A number of AIU students walk to the nearby Free Methodist church (led by AIU graduates), and a few faculty attend and help lead at St. Francis Anglican Church in Karen. An Assemblies of God is also nearby in Karinde. New City Fellowship in Lavington has an interesting mix of about one-third Kenyan, one-third Asian origin (mostly Kenyans), and one-third white expat,

but it's a bit difficult to reach by public transportation. Many small churches in the nearby urban settlements enjoy having students come to visit and to preach. Many use Kiswahili, but can provide translators. The opportunities to worship and serve in all kinds of churches around Nairobi are almost endless. Though AIU has chapel and small groups during the week, there is no service on Sunday, so that students can be involved in the community. There is a children's ministry on campus.

Adjustment

Moving to a different cultural environment is a very stressful experience – that's why it is sometimes referred to as "culture shock". You will likely go through a difficult period of adjustment and homesickness after the initial excitement wears off. This is normal. As you learn your way around the campus and its unique culture, you will be more comfortable at AIU. Soon you will be helping other new international students adjust to AIU and Kenya. If you are willing to learn, you will learn a great deal about yourself and others who are different from you. You will leave here enriched and transformed.

Still, it is wise to take time before coming to prepare yourself and your family for the cultural adjustments that will be necessary. By reading as much as you can about cultural adjustment and talking to other international students, you can learn what to expect. Then you will better understand the feelings and frustrations you deal with as you adjust to your new environment. Since academics will demand a great deal of you at AIU, any preparation you can do before coming will help all of your adjustments once you arrive on campus. More important than all the "things" to pack, buy and organize, will be the relationships you form here and the ways your worldview changes. That will be ongoing throughout your life after AIU.

Due to cultural differences, you may feel somewhat confused when talking with fellow students. "What do they mean?" Communication in Africa is inferential rather than direct, so you will need to become adept at listening for what is being communicated between the lines. Ask questions when in doubt. Also, when dealing with difficult situations, often a common friend will be used as an intermediary to avoid direct confrontation.

Students at AIU are coming from all over Africa and the world. They will appreciate the time you invest in learning about the uniqueness of their own cultures—e.g. what communicates respect. The richness of African diversity also brings with it a variety of "English" accents; East Africans can have a hard time understanding West Africans. Depending on where your teachers are from, it might be hard to understand them. Don't feel ashamed to ask them to repeat or write a word if it is necessary for your understanding. Language is a huge part of

culture, and, while you can get by exclusively with English on campus, learning even a few key phrases in Kiswahili and other African languages can help build rapport and show respect.

Possible reading to prepare for cross-cultural experiences, mostly from a “western” perspective:

Bochner, Stephen. *Psychology of Culture Shock*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2001.

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*. InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World*. InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility*. InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Lanier, Sarah A. *Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot - And Cold - Climate Cultures*. McDougal Publishing Company, 2004.

Maranz, David E. *African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa*. 1st ed. SIL International, 2001.

Mbele, Joseph. *Africans and Americans: Embracing Cultural Differences*. Lulu.com, 2011

Storti, Craig. *The Art of Crossing Cultures*. Intercultural Press, 2007.

Storti, Craig. *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide*. Intercultural Press, 1998.

Many people on campus are here to support you in your transition to AIU. The admissions office is very helpful in directing you to the appropriate offices as you apply. I am also available to help you get settled and for on-going support. You can email me at:

janice.rasmussen@africainternational.edu. My phone number is: +254-714-577-671. The

Student Council also appoints an International Student Representative. The entire

Community Life Office aims to support students in their non-academic life while on campus.

Counsellors are also available to help students and their families. Just ask for help when you need it.

We look forward to seeing you soon at AIU! God bless your preparations.

Sincerely,

Janice Rasmussen

Former International Student Coordinator