



Student Information Packet

(Every visitor to Gerace Research Institute should read this information packet in its entirety)

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 in the Bahamian 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 befriending these people, the Columbus 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 canal was found with seven feet of water leading to a deep harbour which Columbus reported 'would hold all the ships of Christendom.' This is now known as Grahams Harbour which remains as it was except for the Gerace Research Institute (GRI) 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 the 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 a natural unspoiled Bahamian charm. The largest community, Cockburn Town, is the centre of all activities on the island, having the Commissioner's office, Post Office, telecommunication station and electricity generators.

Most descriptions of The Bahamas portray 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 become comfortable in the evening. 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 in September and October. This, along with the potential for hurricane activity, is the predominant reason for not having field projects at GRI at this time of the year. The nuisance level of insects is reduced during the winter and spring dry season.

The waters of The Bahamas are warm and blue with tropical reefs which are well known 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.

Purpose of Gerace Research Institute

GRI, as part of University 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. They are to:

1. inquire into the meaning of environmental relationships.
2. develop an understanding of other cultures.
3. instruct students in research methods and techniques.
4. conduct initial surveys and advanced field studies of this tropical island.

The Cross Cultural Experience

San Salvador and GRI, 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 and who have a defined value system and world view. One of the attractions of GRI 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 behaviour which might jeopardize the Institute. We want to continue to be deserving of the welcome that San Salvador and The Bahamas Government have extended to us. A posture of deference to another people's cultural values is the best one to adopt.

Research Institute Facilities

Faculty Housing

Facilities at GRI were built over 40 years ago by the United States Sea Bees. Faculty rooms are on the ground floor and are designed to house two or more persons. Each room has a sink and mirror, two 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 supplied with window air-conditioning units for an additional fee.

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

Student Housing

Undergraduate students are housed in dormitories located in the barracks which housed Navy personnel during their stay on the island. They consist of a

number of separate rooms housing a maximum of six students each, in single beds, and sharing a common bathroom. Male and female dorms are separate. Undergraduate students are responsible for supplying their own **sheets, pillowcases and towels**. While these barracks were one of the finest built for military, they in no way compare with dormitories on a 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 usually housed in ground floor rooms that can accommodate two to five persons. Each room has at least one dresser and a desk. Most of the rooms have private bathrooms. In one case, two rooms (housing three students each) share one bathroom.

While GRI hires persons to clean the floors and lavatories of the student dorms and rooms, each student is responsible for keeping his/her personal living area neat and clean.

Laboratory Facilities

GRI has 10 modest but adequate laboratory classrooms. A limited number of compound and dissecting microscopes, as well as assorted laboratory glassware, are available for student and faculty use. Our large conference/lecture room has an overhead projector with laptop connectors and slide projectors; VCRs and a speaker system are also available.

We have a wet lab containing aquariums with circulating sea water available for use by students and faculty. GRI also has an analytical lab with equipment for chemical and biological analyses. This lab is available for use by faculty and graduate students only with express permission from GRI's Executive Director.

There are two repositories: one for archaeological materials and one for biological specimens. Each faculty member should submit a list of those items of equipment and library references required to complete his/her research or individual course so that GRI can make preparations.

Dining Facilities

GRI has complete dining facilities for 90 people. All of the food utilized on campus is shipped from

Nassau by marine transport. Fresh vegetables and fruits can be limited since we are dependent not only on availability of supplies but also on the supply boat being able to sail from Nassau to deliver produce. As a result, our menu is sometimes limited; however, the kitchen staff provides balanced meals and normally serve a vegetarian alternative.

Special dietary needs. Certain dietary restrictions and allergies, such as ‘Gluten Free’ or ‘Lactose Intolerant’, may be difficult to accommodate and should be discussed with the GRI Executive Director **months** prior to booking. Guests are encouraged to bring foods such as protein bars to supplement their diet while at GRI.

Technology

GRI has a Computer Lab that is open 24 hours a day and available to both faculty and students. As of summer 2013, our Internet service has improved greatly. Students may access high-speed Internet service in the computer lab and the library.

All users of GRI will be charged a one-time \$10 technology fee to cover use of the Internet and other technologies. While the Internet speed has improved, limited bandwidth and wireless Internet is available for faculty and researcher use only (this is included with the \$10 technology fee). Projectors are also available to faculty for use in their labs (also included in the technology fee). While the Internet continues to improve, this is still an island and outages can occur for days at a time or longer.

Recreation and Entertainment

GRI has a basketball court, volleyball court, Game Room and Snack Bar. Sports equipment is provided for basketball and volleyball and is available at all times. A few games are available in the Game Room. However, visitors are encouraged to bring their own small games such as cards, chess, etc.

Sodas, candy, snacks, postcards and stamps are available for purchase at the Snack Bar. Paperback literature is available in our library for free time reading. T-shirts, mugs, books and informative dive cards are also available for sale in the library.

Laundry

GRI has coin operated washers for personal laundry (\$1.50/load, U.S. quarters only). Laundry detergent can be purchased on the island; however, as with

other imported products, this tends to be costly. There are no clothes drying machines, but clothes lines are scattered around the campus.

Rules and Regulations

Student Contract

Each student must sign the Student Contract at least 6 weeks prior to arrival at GRI (available in the Faculty Course Packet online). Students who do not wish to sign the contract will not be allowed at GRI. Any behaviour deemed a risk to GRI or other visitors will result in dismissal and deportation from the island at the student’s expense (Student Contract, Section 2).

Health Status Form

Every visitor must complete the Health Status Form (available in the Faculty Course Packet online). These forms allow GRI to prepare for any medical concerns and to provide complete health information to medical practitioners in the event of a medical emergency. Participants are encouraged to be honest and to disclose fully any health/medical concern. They should not conceal any relevant issue as it could put their life and health at risk.

Student Rules

- Absolutely no alcohol is allowed on campus for any student.
- Stay out of restricted areas (garage, workshop, pump house, etc.).
- Males may not enter the female dorm hall; females may not enter the male dorm hall.
- Do not walk the roads at night without a light.
- Do not accept rides from anyone.
- Stay in the room to which you have been assigned.
- Do not enter unoccupied rooms.
- Do not invite guests back to the campus or bring guests to your room.
- Do not climb over, under, or through the fences.
- Do not climb the trees or tear down the coconuts.
- Do not sunbathe on the grounds.
- Do not smoke inside rooms or buildings.
- Do not bring dogs or other wild animals back to the campus (not including research specimens).

- Do not touch any scientific equipment encountered in the field.

Personal Conduct

GRI and its guests are on San Salvador at the invitation of the people and Government of The Bahamas. As such, we are expected to behave 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 GRI will be grounds for immediate deportation at the expense of those involved.**

Property Damage Bond

Personal conduct on San Salvador must not jeopardize GRI or cause undue property damage. Therefore, each student is required 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.

Dress Code

The Bahamian dress code is more formal than those of other countries. 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 in the GRI cafeteria and office.

Bahamas Immigration and Customs

A valid passport is required for U.S. and foreign citizens visiting The Bahamas. Birth certificates are no longer accepted for re-entry into the U.S.

As is Bahamian law, upon arrival in The Bahamas, customs officials subject incoming residents, visitors and their luggage to a rigorous search. It is illegal to bring illicit drugs (including marijuana), spear guns, or obscene literature (this includes 'Playboy' and similar publications) into The Bahamas. Prescription and non-prescription medications are allowed. The Bahamas Government will prosecute, to the fullest extent of the law, any person found to possess illegal

drugs. Bahamian law is much more stringent than U.S. law regarding the possession, use, or sale of drugs and marijuana.

SCUBA Diving Regulations

1. All students who wish to use SCUBA gear from GRI during their course of study must be certified, card carrying members of PADI, NAUI, CMAS, BSAC, YMCA, SSI or any other internationally recognized SCUBA certification organization.
2. Prior to any diving on San Salvador, each diver must complete a diving application form which includes certification type and number, dive history and a signed statement confirming recognition of hazards and a hold harmless agreement (available in the GRI main office). At this same time, GRI will photocopy the certification card for our files.
3. Supervision of any SCUBA diving must be conducted by a faculty member who is him/herself a trained diver. **The depth limit for any research dive is 25 feet.** Deeper diving can be arranged with the local dive companies on the island, but are not allowed through GRI. Absolutely no recreational dives can be conducted unless the faculty member holds master diver status.
4. Persons involved in SCUBA diving should bring their own equipment (regulators, BCs, etc.) with the exception of weights and tanks. The rental price for a full tank is \$15.00 per dive.
5. Use of GRI boats, when available, is limited to Grahams Harbour, Fernandez Bay and the inland lakes. Any SCUBA or snorkeling in other areas must be from shore.

Visitor Information

Things to Bring

- 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, prescription medication, 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. Light snacks such as protein bars, etc.
 - l. Valid passport
 - m. Undergraduate 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 costly.)

Personal Funds

Visitors must bring personal funds to purchase sodas, snacks, drinks, post cards, stamps, souvenirs and cover snorkeling or SCUBA equipment rentals. **Personal spending money must be in cash in small denominations.** The Bahamian dollar is equivalent to the U.S. dollar; they are used interchangeably on the island. Traveler's cheques will be accepted. Previous experience indicates that GRI visitors spend as much as \$20 to \$150 in a week on the above mentioned incidentals. A safe is available on campus for safe keeping of funds, passports and airline tickets.

Credit cards are not accepted at GRI or most other locations on the island. There are exceptions such as ClubMed or Riding Rock Dive Resort. However, visitors are encouraged to bring the cash they will need.

Medical Care

Persons who choose to participate in activities at GRI 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 cosmopolitan cities. Thus, one must assume a certain amount of risk in the event of serious or emergency medical situations. It is for this reason that GRI 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. A nominal fee, usually \$75 or less, is charged for treatment and medicine 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.

GRI reserves the right to refuse accommodations to any individual for medical reasons.

Insurance Coverage

Every student must purchase health insurance coverage for a fee of \$1.50 per person per day, including the day of arrival and departure. Additional travel days can also be insured.

Flight Information

Travel has to be personally arranged to the island of San Salvador. Most groups travel via BahamasAir, the official commercial carrier flying between Nassau and San Salvador, 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 depending upon flight schedules; however, it is best to leave a 4-hour layover between flights in the event of delays.

More recently, direct flights have become available from the U.S. to San Salvador on certain days of the week, although these flights are more expensive.

Flight schedules vary considerably depending on the time of year. Persons are encouraged to contact the airline to confirm schedules and make group arrangements.

Bahamas Air: 242-377-5505

www.bahamasair.com

GRI **no** longer arranges chartered flights. There are a number of charter companies working out of South Florida and Nassau which are happy to work with organizations should you decide to charter one or more planes for your group.

Hotels in Nassau

As it is likely you will have to spend at least one night in Nassau on your trip to San Salvador, we suggest staying at the Orange Hill which provides reasonably priced rooms and is located near the airport. Their information is as follows:

Orange Hill Beach Inn
P.O. Box N 8583
West Bay Street
Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (242) 327-7157
FAX: (242) 327-5186
E-mail: info@orangehill.com

Transportation

A GRI staff member will pick you and your class up at the San Salvador airport upon your arrival. There is no regular bus, taxi, or shuttle service available on the island. Transportation for daily classes is provided in vehicles rented through GRI.

GRI's vehicles are not allowed out after 5:15 PM except under extraordinary circumstances and with express permission of the Executive Director. In the evening after classes, most visitors find it enjoyable to walk to the several night spots located within one to two miles of the campus.

A faculty member from the group will be responsible for driving the class to the field sites each day in a rented GRI vehicle. A Vehicle Use Agreement form must be signed by every faculty member wishing to drive. 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 member who was driving at the time.

Payment

Once the GRI Housing Form has been submitted, an electronic invoice will be sent. Upon receipt, faculty are encouraged to review this carefully and advise us of any discrepancies as soon as possible. **Payment is requested at least 2 weeks in advance of your stay.** GRI does not accept cheques from students.

Cancellation Policy

Lead faculty can cancel or make changes to the number of course participants up to 2 weeks (14 days) before arrival in San Salvador and receive a complete reimbursement of charges. Any cancellations after that period will be charged the equivalent of a two-night's stay.

There are no provisions for any refunds if a student has to leave San Salvador due to medical or personal reasons except at the discretion of the GRI Executive Director.

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 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 and baby oil 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 GRI. 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.

Electricity

Electricity on San Salvador is provided by diesel powered generators operated by Bahamas Power & Light. Similar to the U.S.A., the electricity is 120 volts, 60 cycles, and utilizes U.S.-style outlets. While the electrical grid has improved, there are outages that can last for days or longer.

Time

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

Churches

Catholic, Baptist, Anglican, Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) and Seventh Day Adventist worship services are available on San Salvador. They welcome anyone who would like to attend their 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 can be arranged with your faculty member using a GRI vehicle or through GRI. Some churches will also arrange for pick-up and drop-off at GRI.

Telephone Service

GRI's telephone number on San Salvador is (242)-331-2520/2521; our Fax number is (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). U.S. cell phones may work on San Salvador, though at a considerable cost with international fees and data.

In the event of an emergency, an individual attempting to telephone a student or faculty member should call GRI's number between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM. We will arrange for the student or the faculty member to return the call. Students, faculty and GRI staff have e-mail access as long as the Internet is functioning.

Mail

Packages, letters, or parcels 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, not to mention the fact that they will, in all likelihood, arrive long after the participant leaves San Salvador. Mail sent through the Bahamian postal service can take up to 4 weeks to reach the island from the U.S. 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 GRI. Students often find it entertaining to send a postcard from GRI and then see how long it takes to arrive back home (hint: it will take longer to get home than you will).

Summary

Now that you have read the preceding description of the Gerace Research Institute and environment, it becomes **your decision** whether you can adapt to this field situation. We recommend our facility for those who truly enjoy working and living with people from different places, who are especially open and sensitive to a people and culture 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 programme with reservation. To those who feel they can adapt, the San Salvador experience may well be one of the highlights of your life.