

# Southern Sudan Orientation

October 2009

**Welcome!!** We are so glad to have you coming to work with us on the Southern Sudan team. We minister in several different areas of southern Sudan—from Malakal to Kapoeta. Southern Sudan includes over 150 different people groups (distinct groups of people with their own language, culture and history.)

In this article we have attempted to give you some ideas to help you prepare more effectively for your time here. Please read through the material. If you have any questions, you can reach us via e-mail at: [www.sudansouth.org](http://www.sudansouth.org).

## Preparation

### 1. Spiritual

Being spiritually prepared for your service in Sudan will be **the most important thing** you do. You will want to be prepared to permit the Holy Spirit to use you in unique ways to meet the spiritual needs of the people with whom you will be working, as well as positively impacting your life and the life of your church when you return home.

Discipline yourself in your quiet time and prayer life. While praying, you might ask God to reveal to you any specific spiritual preparation you need. Perhaps ask Him to also reveal any unconfessed sin that you need to resolve so you can be a true instrument of His peace.

As you pray, ask God to reveal to you your role in reaching the people of Southern Sudan. Ask Him to use the talents He has already blessed you with to glorify His name while you are in Sudan. Thank Him for going before you to begin working in the hearts of people He has ordained you to meet so they will be ready to hear the gospel.

One book that will help you to understand not only the Southern Sudanese, but most Animistic believing people groups, is called, Quest for Power by Robert C. Blaschke . This book will help you understand where we have to start in presenting God and what he has done for mankind to the Animist believing person. You live in a sin culture, they live in a spirit-controlled shame culture. That is a big difference as a starting point. These books are currently out of print but if you contact the author directly he may have some he is willing to sell. His address is:  
[bob.blaschke@gmail.com](mailto:bob.blaschke@gmail.com)

### 2. Physical

Southern Sudan is a physically difficult country. It is very hot and very dry much of the year though they do have about 4-5 months of rainy season – usually. Your main means of transportation will be by footing (yours), so you should be able to walk 1-5 miles when necessary. You must be in excellent health before coming to Sudan. This trip is **not** for you if:

- you have ongoing medical problems that require close monitoring.
- you are on a very restricted diet (especially a low-carb diet!).
- you don't tolerate heat well.
- you don't like to be in a minority (all of our people have **very** dark skin.)

- you don't like to be the shortest person in the neighborhood.

### 3. Personal

Make sure to leave our phone numbers and e-mail address, along with a photocopy of your passport, with a family member before you leave. In Rumbek we have a satellite phone as well as e-mail. We will provide you with those details before you come.

\*\*\*\*\***Just so you're aware...**\*\*\*\*\*

This assignment is unlike most others you may have been on or heard about. Southern Sudan was a civil war zone for the past two decades. Sporadic tribal fighting continues in parts of the country. People die in this country every day. Our permission to live the country is granted by the Southern Sudanese authorities. With the advent of the recent peace agreement things are changing from day to day without any predictable patterns. You will still see soldiers and civilians with guns, many of whom are only youth. On the positive side, our compound is located in a relatively safe area.

We are located far away from the hostilities that are going on in the Darfur region so that in itself is not a factor.

Now, if you still want to come, here is some info to help you on your way.

### **Travel**

- **Passport:** You will need to arrange for a valid passport if you do not already have one. This could take several months, especially if your trip is in the summer. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO GET THIS!!** To avoid problems, start the process at least 3 months prior to departure. Once you receive your passport, please make some extra copies of the photo page. Leave one at home, and bring one with you (kept in a separate place from your passport.) **Passports are necessary to clear immigration and therefore should not be placed into checked baggage.**

Team leader: please have a copy of each passport along with contact info for each team member.

- **Arranging your Flight – to Nairobi:** Plan your travel well in advance of your departure dates so you can get the best air fares. The International Mission Board can recommend several travel agents. A ticket may cost \$1500-\$2000 or more, though people have been known to find them for much less. Your ticket from Nairobi-Southern Sudan must be purchased in Kenya (see below.)
- **Flights - to/from southern Sudan:** You will travel from Nairobi to Southern Sudan by air. African Christian Tours and Safaris (**ACTS**) in Nairobi handles all the logistics for us. As soon as you have your anticipated travel dates contact ACTS at [Adrian@africanencounter.org](mailto:Adrian@africanencounter.org) or through their website <http://www.actsafrica.com> ACTS will book the flights to and from Sudan and arrange Kenya logistics (lodging, transport, Sudan travel permits, etc). Flights to Sudan usually leave at 7:00 a.m. and return to Kenya in the late afternoon. If your flight back to the US leaves Nairobi before 10:00 p.m. you should plan to return to Nairobi a day before the flight. You should not try to connect to a flight that leaves Nairobi earlier than 10pm.
- **Luggage Allowance (transatlantic):** You will want to check with the airline for their luggage rules. Each airline will be different. Put a copy of your itinerary inside each piece of your luggage, on the top, in case it is lost and the tags have been torn off. This way the airline can get it to you. For ease in locating baggage, please consider using matching name tags and a strip of fluorescent tape, bright ribbon, or other identifying feature on each bag.

Luggage allowance from Kenya to Sudan is generally 20 kg per person (44 pounds). ACTS will give you further info on how this applies specifically to your group. As a general rule, you will be better off using a small, lightweight bag for travel to Sudan. You might be better off using your allowance for things other than wheels on a bag! (Some folks travel from the US with their normal rolling suitcases, then downsize to light-weight duffle bags once they reach Kenya. Ask ACTS if this option would work for your group. Besides, wheels don't do so good on our dirt out here.)

- **Visas:** You will purchase a total of two visas and one travel permit for this trip. You will need two Kenya TRANSIT visas (\$20 each.) The first TRANSIT VISA will be purchased at the airport upon arrival in Kenya; payment is in US\$ cash (new bills only; must be dated year 2003 or later); exact change will save you time and hassle. The second Kenya TRANSIT visa will be purchased when you return to Kenya from Sudan. We will send you the Kenya visa application form before you leave the US; please print the visa and have it filled out before you arrive (two copies, one for each transit visa.) Transit visas are good for seven (7) days. NOTE: It is possible to purchase tourist visas in advance from the Kenya High Commission, but that involves extra time and expense and is unnecessary. Non-US Citizens may have other visa regulations; these can be found at [www.kenyahighcommission.com](http://www.kenyahighcommission.com).

You will also need a travel permit to Southern Sudan. This must be purchased in Kenya, and ACTS will take care of that for you. **As soon as everyone in your group has their passports, please send ACTS a color photocopy of the photo page and two passport-sized photos** so they can get the travel permit in advance.

There is a \$35 entry fee when arriving at the airport in Rumbek. Be sure you have exact change! (This is **in addition to** the travel permit.) If you depart through Juba, there is a \$45-65 exit fee as well. (We will try to meet you at the airport with local currency to pay this fee.)

- **Immunizations:** The only immunization **required** for Sudan is Yellow Fever (and they do check at certain airports and when you return to Kenya). We **highly recommend** that you be immunized for typhoid and make sure your tetanus-diphtheria is up-to-date. You should also be immunized for hepatitis A/B and meningitis. We realize that there are a lot of shots but it is better to be safe than sorry at a later date.
- **Malaria Prophylaxis:** The recommended prophylaxis is Mephaquine (Lariam.) Some folks choose to use Doxycycline or Malarone daily. Using the Doxy will make you very susceptible to sunburn so beware. All of these choices have side effects; you just have to choose which ones you prefer!
- **Insurance:** All volunteers are required to purchase volunteer insurance. Adams and Associates International offers an excellent plan at highly competitive rates. IMB volunteers should provide their volunteer request number when purchasing insurance. (Adams & Associates at P.O. Box 5845, Columbia, SC 29250-5845; 803-758-1400 or 1-800-922 8438 ([www.aaintl.com](http://www.aaintl.com).)
- **Arriving in Nairobi:** You will arrive at in Kenya at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. After you leave the plane proceed to Immigration. Get in the line that says "Visas." (You will need to have: filled-in visa form, \$10, Kenya entry card, either yellow or blue, available on the plane or at the table as you enter Immigration.) They will stamp a visa in your passport. Be sure you get a receipt. Proceed to Baggage Claim (down the stairs.)

Luggage carts are free of charge. After you have collected your luggage, head for the doors. You may be asked to open your bags, but they don't usually search too thoroughly. If they ask any questions you should say you are with Baptist Mission, going on a mission trip to Sudan.

All of the things in your bags are to be used in Sudan. (Hint: pack in suitcases or footlockers, but NOT cardboard boxes. Boxes seem to attract extra attention, and you will ALWAYS be stopped by Customs.)

After exiting the customs/baggage claim area you will be met by someone. Look for a card with your name or the name of your team. You will usually spend at least one night in Nairobi on each end of your trip. (The plane for Sudan leaves at 7:00 a.m.) It is highly advised that you plan on one day in Nairobi on your way in due to late planes, lost luggage, missed connections, etc. We have had some teams spend a week up here without any clothes other than what they wore over here!

- **Arriving in Sudan:** There is an Alien Registration Fee payable upon entry into Sudan (this is not the same as the Sudan travel permit which ACTS will get for you.) The cost is about \$35. Imb personnel will meet you with the local currency to pay this fee (and you can reimburse them!) This was mentioned above under “visas”.

### What to expect – Kenya

- **Climate:** June-September: 65-80 degrees, sometimes wet. December-March: 70-85 degrees and sunny. Nights can be cool all year around.
- **Clothing:** The key is layers. The weather can and does change many times during the day. You will want a lightweight jacket or windbreaker for evenings. Jeans or pants are suitable for day wear. Shorts are suitable for game parks or around the house. Other than that, the dress is the same as for Sudan. Be sure you have enough clothes to wear during your time in Kenya; you will not be doing laundry. You may be able to leave your Kenya clothes in Nairobi while you are in Sudan (discuss this with ACTS.)
- In light of current world affairs, please do not wear t-shirts or hats with obvious American logos (flags, “I love America,” etc.) on them.
- **Foreign Exchange:** The best rate is given for \$50 and \$100 bills. ATM machines are easy to find but they don’t always work, so be sure you have some USD cash available for changing! You can change money at the airport, but the cash exchange rate is not as good as it is in town. If you are using an ATM, go ahead and get your money at the airport. We will let you know whether your schedule will permit you to change money in town. In Kenya you will need cash for some meals, souvenirs, etc. \*\*\*\***Please bring NEW bills, with big faces. Do not bring any bills printed before 2003. For Sudan you need bills dated 2006 or later.**

### What to expect – Sudan

- **Setting:** Rumbek is a small town. Our compound has solar powered-electricity and a well for water. We have communication with Nairobi via cell phone, satellite phone and some e-mail facilities. Other towns and villages will probably not have these.
- **Communications:** some limited e-mail MAY be available, but it is very costly. If you are able to do e-mail, expect to spend \$8 per hour. We suggest telling your family that “no news is good news.” Team members should not expect to be doing e-mail while they are here. Our team will try to facilitate you while you are here with using our personal computers when the opportunity is available.
- **People:** The tribes found in Southern Sudan range from the very tall and dark Dinka to the shorter and lighter skinned Jur – and everywhere in between. They follow Christian, Muslim,

or Animist religions, with the latter being the predominate one.

- **Money:** Sudanese pounds and US Dollars are used in Sudan. There are no ATMs in Sudan; you will need USD to exchange it at the bank. *Remember, no bills prior to 2006.*
- **Housing:** Ranges from burnt-brick houses to safari tents to huts to small tents, depending on where you are.
- **Food:** Your choices are limited, but you won't starve. We eat a lot of beans, lentils, rice and chapattis. Our vegetables are mostly canned. We have a little meat from time to time. We have a deep well with clean water to drink.
- Each person is asked to bring his/her own breakfast food (cereal, etc.) and snacks. This should be something that does NOT require a toaster or microwave! Hot water will be available for "instant" type foods. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate will be provided.
- **Climate:** Hot and dry (December – May). Temperatures will be between 100 and 120 degrees most of the time. It will cool down at night. In the rainy season (June-Oct) it is a bit cooler but has many more mosquitoes. December and January are the coolest months, especially at night.
- **Medical Care:** Facilities are limited in Sudan. There is a hospital in town for minor cases. In case of emergency we will call a plane to medivac the patient to Nairobi for further care (and this is where you will be glad you have volunteer insurance!)
- **Clothing:** The key word is "cool." Woven cotton is an ideal choice. Loose-fitting clothing will be more comfortable than tight-fitting clothing. Colored clothing is a better choice than white (it doesn't show the dirt as easily.) Tan or khaki are ideal. Denim is *hot*. We will wash clothes most every day, so you will only need a few changes of clothes in Sudan.

In order to be culturally sensitive, we ask that you use the following guidelines:

Women – You will need to dress modestly. Sleeveless shirts are ok, as long as they are not spaghetti straps. Pants/capris may be acceptable in some situations if you wear a long loose shirt over them. Skirts are often cooler than pants, and should be no shorter than the knee. You can wear shorts at the compound (with a skirt nearby to throw on in case company comes). Please DO NOT BRING mini skirts, short dresses, short shorts, midriff tops, or tight shirts.

Men – You will *not* need a coat or tie. Shorts may be worn at most times. You will want to throw in one pair of light-weight pants. Please *do not* bring short shorts. Short-sleeved shirts are best.

- **Shoes:** Sandals are the usual shoes of choice. These should be strong walking sandals. Some of the bushes have large thorns that would pierce through thin soles. Flip flops are great for around the compound.
- **Jewelry:** Sudanese men do not usually wear earrings though this is becoming more common among the youth.
- **Jewelry, part 2:** You will be asked to leave all of your jewelry off when you are shopping or sightseeing in Nairobi for security reasons, so it's better to just not bring it at all.

**The key** – Dress in a way that is 1) pleasing to God and 2) will not cause anyone to stumble. Our desire is not to place a burden of rules on you, but to allow you to practice freedom in Christ with the

responsibility of effectively sharing what it really means to be a believer, walking with Christ.

One more note: Personal cleanliness is important to adults. Children tend to be less concerned. Torn, dirty clothes give a bad impression of Christianity. Many of the people you will meet own only one or two sets of clothes. Many do not have the means (soap) to wash them each day. Just praise the Lord for a nose that can smell the different smells of Africa!

### Travel Check List

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passport   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tickets                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> US\$ Cash (for visas and spending money)                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reconfirm w/airline 72 hours before leaving                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra passport photos            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone numbers of local personnel   | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible and devotional material    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journal  | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera and/or video              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pen and Paper  | <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries for camera   | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal water bottle            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription drugs – for entire trip                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Individually-wrapped snack items |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mosquito spray/insect repellent  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast food (without the boxes!)                                      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight (so you can see the creatures on the way to the outhouse....) |   |

Now, welcome to paradise....