

SCOSL VOLUNTEER – USEFUL INFORMATION

Before you go – Things to know...

A few facts

- Sierra Leone is now a stable country but it has not been without its problems, please read information given by the foreign office <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/sub-saharan-africa/sierra-leone> and if you have any questions or concerns please contact SCOSL.
- There is very limited national power; generators provide most businesses and some homes with electric.
- The HANCI center in Makeni does not have running water and runs a generator for power in the evenings.

Staying in touch with home is surprisingly easy.

Bring an unlocked mobile phone and you can buy a local sim card and top up. An international text works out at around 7p, 20-30min phone calls costs about £5.

There is a reliable internet cafe with computers available to use, it costs about £1 per hour. Alternatively if you decide to bring a laptop, the project has a portable internet USB which you will be able to borrow when it is not being used by staff (Make sure you have good virus protection on your laptop).

Health

Make sure you have comprehensive insurance before you leave the UK.

For minor complaints we have an onsite clinic with two full time nurses and for anything more severe there is a reasonable hospital in Makeni and also some better hospitals in Freetown. But nothing anywhere the NHS would recognise!

Money

There are a small number of cash machines but these are very unreliable. Bring cards with you as a back up but not to rely on.

For short term volunteers - **take enough cash** with you and change it into Leones once you are in Freetown (you will need to change a small amount at the airport to get you through the first night but keep the bulk until you are in Freetown as you will get a much better rate of exchange – HANCi will help you with this).

For long term volunteers – I would still recommend cash. And then if needs be Western Union/ Moneygram for a top up – though this is quite an expensive way of doing it.

What to bring...

Other than the obvious essentials such as clothes, shoes, and toiletries here are some other things you might want to consider packing in your rucksack.

- Torch and batteries
- If coming in rainy season - Umbrella (you can buy in SL if you are tight on space)
- And Rain Coat
- Reading books – the evenings can be very quiet.
- If you are travelling in a group- cards, games, activities for the evenings.
- Mosquito repellent with deet in.
- Food – some people are less keen on the food provided at the centre so a supply of cereal bars and biscuits is advised as a back-up. There is a gas stove in the guest house so if you chose to bring anything to cook, think camping in the UK and anything that can be cooked on a small gas stove.
- Anti bacteria hand gel.
- Dioralite / senacot / Imodium – Your digestive system is likely to be a bit unsettled, prepare in advance!
- Insect bite crème

- Antiseptic crème and plasters
- mosquito net (double one is recommended as there are few single beds)
- sleeping bag liner.
- Swimming costume/ shorts
- An old unlocked mobile phone.
- Not essential but a money belt is a good idea
- Jewellery – avoid bringing anything valuable
- Photos of family and friends to show children and staff.
- If you are planning on travelling the Bradt guidebook is a good buy, £12 on amazon.

Note on clothing

Girls – Locals tend not to show too much leg so avoid short shorts.

When you are at the centre you will be interacting with the children so any clothing that is practical is fine, don't worry about looking too smart, just be comfortable.

Pack some smarter clothes though, church is a dressed up affair, for girls the brighter the better! For meetings with parents and community members you will feel more comfortable if you are presentable rather than in t-shirt and shorts so pack a few smarter options.

Girls - trousers, knee length skirts, knee length shorts, smart-ish tops are fine.

Guys – Thin trousers (bare in mind the heat!) and smart tops or shirts advised.

Shoes – flip flops! Advise bringing some walking shoes/ trainers if you want to climb the Wusum hill or do any sports with the children.