



Gerace Research Centre  
University of the Bahamas

# Student Group Information Packet

(Every visitor to the Gerace Research Centre 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 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 befriending 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. 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 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.

## **Research Centre Facilities**

### *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 six 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 usually 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 three students each) share one bathroom.

While the GRC hires 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 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 speaker system are also available. The facility has a wet lab containing aquariums with circulating sea water available for use by students and faculty. The GRC also has an analytical lab with equipment for chemical and biological analyses. The Analytical Lab is available for use by faculty members and graduate students with express permission from the director. There are two repositories; one for archaeological material and one for biological specimen. 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 the GRC can make preparations.

### *Dining Facilities*

The GRC has complete dining facilities for ninety 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 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 balanced meals and normally serves a vegetarian alternative.

**Special dietary needs:** Certain dietary restrictions and allergies, such as "Gluten Free" or "Lactose intolerance," may be difficult to accommodate and should be discussed with the GRC Director MONTHS prior to booking. Please bring with you foods such as protein bars in order to supplement your diet while at the GRC.



## *Technology*

The GRC has a Computer Lab 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 the GRC will be charged a one-time \$10 technology fee to cover use of the internet and other technologies. While the speed of internet has improved, there is a limited bandwidth and wireless internet is available for faculty and researcher use only (this is included with your \$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 during your stay for days at a time or longer.

## *Recreation and Entertainment*

The facility contains 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. Sodas, candy, snacks, postcards, and stamps are available for purchase at the Snack Bar located on campus. 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. Students should bring their own small games, such as cards, chess, etc.

## *Laundry*

Coin operated washers are provided on the campus for personal laundry (\$1.50/load, 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. There are no clothes drying machines, but there are clothes lines scattered around the campus.

## **Rules and Regulations**

### *Student Contract*

Each student must sign the Student Contract six (6) weeks before arrival at the GRC (available in the Faculty Course Packet online). It is your choice to visit the Gerace Research Centre and to abide by its rules. Those who do not wish to sign the Student Contract will

not be allowed to come to the GRC. Please note that any behavior deemed a risk to the GRC or other visitors will result in dismissal and deportation from the island of San Salvador at the student's expense (Student Contract, Section 2).

### *Health Status Form*

Please fill out the Health Status Form (available in the Faculty Course Packet online) to the best of your knowledge. These forms allow us to prepare for any medical concerns and to provide complete health information to doctors in the event of a medical emergency. Please do not conceal any relevant issue as it could put your life and health at risk.

### *Student Rules*

- No alcohol is allowed on campus for any student
- Stay out of restricted areas (garage, workshop, pump house, etc.)
- Boys may not enter the girls' dorm hall; girls may not enter the boys' 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 are assigned and do not enter unoccupied rooms
- Do not invite guests back to the station or bring guests to your room
- Do not climb over, under, or through the fences
- Do not climb the trees or tear down coconuts
- Do not sunbathe on the grounds
- Smoking is not permitted inside rooms or buildings
- Do not bring dogs or other wild animals back to the station (not including research specimens)
- Do not touch any scientific equipment you encounter in the field

### *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.**

### *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.

### *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 and office.

### *Bahamas Immigration and Customs*

**A passport is required for U.S. and foreign citizens visiting 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.

### *SCUBA Diving Regulations*

1. All students who wish to use SCUBA gear from the station during their course of study on San Salvador 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 which includes certification type and number, dive history, and a signed

statement showing recognition of hazards and a hold harmless agreement (available in the GRC main office). At this same time we will photocopy your certification card for our files.

3. Supervision of any SCUBA diving must be conducted by a faculty member who is himself 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 the GRC. 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, BC's, etc.) with the exception of weights and tanks. The rental price for a full tank is \$15.00 per dive.

5. Use of the GRC 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, 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)





### *Personal Funds*

Personal funds must be brought for sodas, snacks, drinks, post cards, stamps, snorkeling or SCUBA equipment rentals, and souvenirs. **Personal spending money must be in cash in small denominations.** The Bahamian dollar is equivalent to the US dollar and they are used interchangeably on the island. Traveler's 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.

**Credit cards are not accepted at the GRC or most other locations on the island.** There are exceptions, such as ClubMed or Riding Rock dive resort, but it is best you take the cash you need for your trip with you.

### *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.

The GRC 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 arriving and departing. Additional travel days can also be insured.

### *Flight Information*

Travel has to be personally arranged to the island of San Salvador. Most groups travel through BahamasAir, the official commercial carrier flying between Nassau to San Salvador. BahamasAir 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 four (4) hour layover between flights in case 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.

The GRC is **no** longer setting up chartered flights. There are a number of charter companies working out of both South Florida and Nassau which are happy to work with you should you decide to charter one or more planes for your group.

Flight schedules vary considerable depending on the time of year and you should contact the airline to confirm schedules and make group arrangements.

Bahamas Air: 242-377-5505  
www.bahamasair.com

### *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. They provide reasonably priced rooms and are 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  
Email: [info@orangehill.com](mailto:info@orangehill.com)

### *Transportation*

A member of the Gerace Research Centre staff will pick you and your class up at the 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 the GRC. The



GRC's vehicles are not allowed out after 5:15 pm except under extraordinary circumstances and with express permission of the director. 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.

A faculty member from the group will be responsible for driving your class to the field sites each day in a rented GRC 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 who was driving at the time.

### *Payment*

Once the GRC Housing Form has been submitted, an electronic invoice will be sent out. Please review and advise any discrepancies as soon as possible. **Payment is requested at least two weeks in advance of your stay.** The GRC does not accept checks from students.

### *Cancellation Policy*

You can cancel or make changes to the number of participants in your course up to two weeks (14 days) before your 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 made for any refunds if a student has to leave San Salvador due to medical or personal reasons except at the discretion of the 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 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 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 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.

### *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 cycles, and utilizes US-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 USA, 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 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 can be arranged with your faculty member using a GRC vehicle or through the GRC. Some churches will also arrange for pick-up and drop-off at the GRC.

### *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). US cell phones may work on San Salvador, though at a considerable cost with international fees and international data.

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. Students, faculty, and GRC staff will have email 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 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. Students often find it entertaining to send a postcard from the GRC wait to 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 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.