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Pohnpei Survey and Excavation, Federated States of Micronesia

Program Information

PROGRAM SPECIFIC FIELD CONDITIONS

What are the average weather conditions during the time of the field school? (average temperature, humidity levels, amount of rain, wind, variation between day and night, etc.)

Pohnpei is a lush, gorgeous island, but it is a very warm and humid place. Pohnpei has an equatorial climate that is consistently hot and humid year-round. Average highs are around 80°F and average lows are around 70°F. However, you can expect temperatures on some days to reach 90°F. Nights are slightly cooler than days. Precipitation levels are some of the highest among inhabited places on earth, with over 4000 mm of rain per year. Most days will have at least some rainfall, although you can expect most days to also have times that are sunny and hot.

Please describe the site(s) where the students will work, for example, outside and/or inside; in a city, town or rural area; shady or sunny, etc.

Students will work outdoors in a rural area. This project will involve survey, so the terrain will be variable. The island is heavily forested, so it is generally shady, although there are likely to be some sunny patches as well.

Because Pohnpei is located so far from continental landmasses, there are fewer communicable illnesses than in some other tropical locations; for example, malaria is not a known issue. However, you should, at minimum, be prepared for any illnesses that are an issue in the US, and have the full series of CDC recommended vaccinations, especially tetanus. There are also not a large number of terrestrial animals that can cause issues; guard dogs can sometimes be aggressive if they interpret you as invading their territory, although rabies is not common (though not completely unheard of), and there are some imported species of ants that produce painful bites. Mosquitoes, even though they are not known to transmit malaria, can be quite noxious, and have been known to transmit chikungunya, dengue, and zika at times (though not commonly). It is worth bringing strong insect repellant and treatment for bug bites (e.g., hydrocortisone, calamine lotion, anti-itch creams).

If you encounter routine medical issues, there is a state hospital as well as a few clinics and pharmacies on the island that carry common medications and are staffed by licensed medical professionals. More serious health emergencies may necessitate treatment in Hawai'i or Guam.

Are there special features of the program site, for example, nearby important cultural areas, ambiance or scenery, interaction with staff, access to unique infrastructure, techniques or objects?

Nan Madol, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is sometimes called the "Venice of the Pacific," is located on the island and we will take at least one trip there. Additionally, there is a petroglyph site (Pohnpei) that is relatively unique in Micronesia that students will have the chance to visit.

Will there be other people onsite with the field school or working in the same area? For example, other researchers, staff, or community volunteers?

We will be interacting with heritage professionals at the Pohnpei State Historic Preservation Office, and some may help us get situated. We will also likely be working with students and faculty from the College of Micronesia (COM-FSM) at the site. We will also be working closely with landowners and traditional leadership, from whom we need permission to work, and will be working with local field technicians.

What does an average week look like (working times, lecture/discussion times, free time, weekends)?

We will conduct archaeological fieldwork five days a week. One evening a week we will discuss assigned readings. On Saturdays, we will take field trips to important sites around the island. Sundays will be more loosely structured, with time for students to engage in cultural enrichment activities and exploration on their own.

What are the options for students to access money? Are there ATMs nearby? Should students plan to bring a certain amount of cash?

Bank of Guam and Bank of the FSM are both located on the island, in Kolonia Town. Bank of Guam has an ATM in the center of town and at the branch on the edge of town. They are compatible with most US bank cards although daily transactions are generally limited to a few hundred dollars per day with a non-local bank. It is often (not always) possible to use credit cards in town, although machines can go down and cash is then necessary. Outside of Kolonia Town, transactions are in cash. Taxis in town generally require cash. I recommend that students bring more cash than they would plan to use in the US as well as a bank card from home.

ACTIVITY LEVEL & ACCESSIBILITY

Please comment how accessible your site is for people with mobility challenges. Would someone using a wheelchair be able to participate? Someone who uses crutches or other assistive walking devices?

This project may pose obstacles for those with mobility challenges, as reaching sites often requires traversing uneven terrain. However, we are happy to work with those with mobility challenges and adapt the plan to maximize participation for everyone.

PROGRAM COUNTRY & CULTURAL INFORMATION

What do you love about the country and area you work in? What do you think students will be most excited to discover?

Pohnpei is a gorgeous island and most Pohnpeians are welcoming and hospitable people. The pace of life tends to be fairly slow, which is often necessary during the heat in the middle of the day. I think one of the most amazing things about the island is that it is incredibly lush and green, and outsiders often read this as an untamed jungle. However, in the areas where people live and where we will be working, the vast majority of this greenery comes from the cultivation of the landscape by Pohnpeians in both the recent and the distant past. The way that Pohnpeians grow plants is very different from the tended fields with which most students will be accustomed, but it is also very productive!

How large is the community where students will be staying? Will students have opportunities to interact casually with local residents? Please describe.

The island of Pohnpei is home to about 30,000 residents. About 6,000 people live in Kolonia Town, where we will be staying. Students will have opportunities to interact casually with local residents around town, and at times at the site and at other locations around the island. We are also hoping to involve COM-FSM students in the project with whom students can interact.

Primary languages spoken by people in the area:

Pohnpeian and English. Pohnpeian is spoken in daily life, but beyond primary school, students are taught in English and most residents speak English proficiently.

What are some things students may find surprising about the local culture?

Sakau (called kava elsewhere in the Pacific) is an important part of local culture. This beverage, which comes from the root of *Piper methysticum*, and is strained through hibiscus bark, produces a mild narcotic effect in the consumer. Sakau is prepared using flat stones made of basalt, and in the evening it is common to hear people pounding sakau all over the island.

Chewing betel nut is also quite common.

The pace of life is much slower than that to which most Americans are accommodated. If working with local communities, I recommend leaning into this in pace rather than trying to work against it, as trying to make sure things get done as quickly and efficiently as possible usually ends in frustration rather than results.

Are there cultural aspects that students should be aware of before they come, particularly behaviors that could be offensive or misinterpreted (for example, eye contact, dress, gestures)?

Relatively modest dress is recommended. Short skirts or shorts above the knee are frowned upon. Most Pohnpeians are pretty devout Christians, so conduct such as immodest dress or excessive swearing is not recommended (though of course this varies considerably from person to person).

In Pohnpeian culture, modesty and stoicism in attitude are valued. I think most Pohnpeians recognize that foreigners won't always know this, but it is good to be aware that the impression of, for example, talking frankly about one's own accomplishments will not necessarily be the same as in the US.

What cultural enrichment opportunities are students likely to have outside of the program? For example, are there museums, parks, coffee shops in the area, or will there be festivals or events nearby during the program period?

Students will have the opportunity to explore Kolonia Town on their own, which has shops, restaurants, bars, a nightclub, a library, and various other amenities. There are also opportunities for hiking, swimming, snorkeling, and potentially even surfing. Heritage sites dot the island.

Will students have opportunities to explore other areas of the country? If so, what options are available to them (such as available transportation or unscheduled time for exploration).

Because Pohnpei is a relatively isolated island, opportunities for further exploration will require advance planning, and would generally take place before or after the program. There may be opportunities to travel to reef islands or Ahnd Atoll on day trips during the program.

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

Please describe student accommodations, including the type of accommodation (tent, hostel, hotel, etc.) and a brief description of the accommodation itself, including number of students to a room or tent, access to toilets and showers, and common areas.

We will stay at Yvonne's Hotel (https://www.yvonneshotel.com/), in the central area of Kolonia Town. Each room has a bathroom with a shower that will have hot water available as well as an air conditioning unit. There is coin laundry on the property that you can use. The staff regularly cleans the hotel rooms, although I ask that you keep your room reasonably clean before cleaning staff enters. We will stay in two larger rooms that accommodate the group with an attached kitchen, although there may be options for staying in smaller rooms if that is your preference. All efforts will be made to accommodate each student to the best of their preferences.

One of our rooms will have an attached kitchen, and we will typically have shared meals. Generally, everyone (including students and field directors) will help out with food preparation on a rotating basis, including preparation of lunches to be taken into the field. Because we will be staying in town, with several restaurants and shops nearby, we may occasionally eat meals at restaurants as well. The hotel has wifi.

Please describe how/how often students can do laundry.

There is coin-operated laundry on the premises, which students can use on their own time. US Quarters are required to operate the machines.

How are room assignments made? If rooms are assigned according to gender, how will you assign rooms for non-binary, trans and queer students?

Generally, students will stay 2-3 to a room, and room assignments will be made in individual discussion with the preferences of each student.

Are there options for single rooms? Would there be an additional charge (and approximate cost)?

There is an option for single rooms, and the estimated additional cost is $15/night, although this cannot be confirmed before negotiation with the hotel.

Will the program provide meals? If not all meals, please specify which meals students will be responsible for, and what facilities are available for them to get groceries and prepare meals.

We will provide packed lunches. We will arrange dinners as a group and rotate meal preparation. Breakfast will take place on your own. There are a number of grocery stores and food stalls in the surrounding area, as well as restaurants.

Please describe typical meals that are offered by the program.

Lunch will typically be sandwiches, or rice with some form of protein and vegetables. Accommodation of pescatarian diets is fairly simple. Vegetarian and vegan diets would be slightly more difficult, but potentially do-able. Gluten-free should be possible to accommodate. Strictly Kosher and Halal diets will be more challenging, because meats will not be Kosher or Halal.

If the program can accommodate different dietary needs, please indicate:

In terms of dietary restrictions, eating vegetarian is difficult; for example, your field school director is ovo-lacto vegetarian in the US, but eats fish on island as non-animal protein options are limited. It would probably be possible to keep strictly vegetarian in the field, but you would definitely need to keep a careful eye on nutrients. Dairy products are not particularly common, so it would not be difficult to avoid them. For students with celiac disease, most starches consumed do not have gluten in them, so keeping gluten-free is not likely to be more difficult than in the US. Students with shellfish allergies will need to be careful, as crab is a common local food; if you have a life-threatening allergy you should carry an EpiPen. If you have other dietary restrictions, please reach out and we will discuss your needs.

There are several grocery stores in Kolonia Town that sell a range of processed, imported foods similar to what you find at a US supermarket. The range of fresh produce in supermarkets is more limited. However, local foods are often available at the markets, such as many varieties of fresh banana, breadfruit, coconuts, and freshly caught fish. There are also several restaurants in town, mostly diner-style. There is also a considerable amount of Japanese and Japanese-style food available at restaurants.

VISA AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Indicate the visa requirements, if any, for US citizens. If there is a visa requirement, what type of visa should students apply for?

For citizens of the United States of America: You will need a U.S. passport valid for at least 180 days from the time of entry, a completed FSM Immigration Arrival and Departure Record, and a completed FSM Customs Form in order to enter the FSM. Your air carrier will distribute the FSM Immigration Arrival and Departure Record and Customs Form before you arrive in the FSM. U.S. citizens may enter the FSM to live, work, or study indefinitely without visas or non-citizen registration requirements per the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the FSM. There is no limit to the length of time U.S. citizens can remain in the FSM.

The Federated States of Micronesia imposes departure taxes. which you must pay when you leave each island. **The fee is $25 per person, regardless of length of stay.** Please make sure you have cash available, as credit cards are not accepted, and ATM machines are not available at any of the airports. There is no departure fee for U.S. officials traveling on official or diplomatic passports.

Travel on commercial aircraft between states of the FSM is considered to be international travel, and persons who are not citizens of the FSM are required to comply with passport requirements upon arrival in any state of the FSM from a commercial aircraft regardless of the point of boarding.

Citizens not from the USA are asked to check the embassy website page at their home country for specific visa requirements.

TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

If students will fly, what airport should they fly into?

Pohnpei International Airport (PNI).

Most flights are on United Airlines (although Air Nauru serves PNI from some other Pacific destinations) and will generally arrive via the Island Hopper departing from either Honolulu or Guam and stopping on other islands along the way. There are typically only six Island Hopper flights that arrive on the island per week, so plan ahead. Travel to Pohnpei from the mainland US frequently takes longer than 24 hours one way, depending on layovers. I recommend that you arrive on the island by June 8 at latest.

If there are other ways students can get to the program, please describe.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email the field school director immediately. A local emergency mobile phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

Where will you meet students? If not at a primary arrival point, like an airport, how should students get to the meeting point?

The airport is very close to Kolonia Town; someone from the project team or the hotel will meet you upon arrival.. The hotel is a five minute taxi ride from the hotel, and costs $2 per person.

If the field site is not close to student accommodations, how will students get there? How long does it take?

On the island, we will travel in rental vehicles between field sites and the hotel. Most places in town are within easy walking distance; taxis are also readily available in town and can be used to travel between locations on the island if you would rather not walk (e.g., later at night).

Are there any other aspects of the program, site, or location you want students to be aware of before they arrive?

Although malaria is not a concern, mosquitoes are common and can be quite aggressive. Be prepared for this with both mosquito repellent and anti-itch creams.

The sun is very, very intense near the equator. While we anticipate working under forest canopy for much of the time, sunburns happen very quickly and can be very painful and severe. Sunscreen is not always locally available. Even if you are not typically susceptible to sunburn, I would recommend bringing sunscreen. If you are susceptible, bring sunscreen with a high SPF and apply regularly.

PACKING LIST

Required

- Identification/passport
- Travel documents
- Prescription medication for the entire program period
- Credit/Debit card
- Extra glasses/contacts if worn
- Pointing trowel (preferably a Marshalltown), 5” x 2” (https://marshalltown.com/pro-1900-pointing-trowels?srsltid=AfmBOooTKpv4A0aGMIcuHDXop71o7FmBoA_ohbapM7WhIdmA5lQLjjbK)
- Reusable water bottle
- Rite-in-the-Rain or other water-resistant notebook; metric ruling preferable (https://www.riteintherain.com/4-625x7-side-spiral-notebook#363)
- Work gloves
- Hat (a wide-brimmed hat will protect you best from the sun, but a baseball cap will also work)
- Backpack or other daypack
- Flashlight
- Work clothing appropriate to the weather conditions: Jeans or work pants with t-shirt is generally acceptable.
- Water-resistant shoes (we recommend both sandals and boots). Keens are a good option: https://www.keenfootwear.com/collections/sandals/products/womens-newport-h2-navy-magnet
- A light poncho and/or umbrella
- Sunscreen

Recommended

Items recommended include:

- Swimwear of some sort, if you plan to swim. Most Pohnpeians swim in their clothes, but if you will be more comfortable wearing something designed for water, please bring it.
- Extra quarters for laundry, and some extra cash
- Clothing that will be comfortable in extreme humidity
- Hiking boots

Please do not bring:

- Controlled substances, including any form of cannabis
- Shorts or skirts cut significantly above the knee – this is generally not acceptable dress locally