

# SO, YOU WANT TO GO TO AFRICA?



## DO YOUR RESEARCH

- Recognize that Africa is a diverse, vast continent. Be specific with your research and focus on the area you will visit. Understand that one thing someone says does not apply to everywhere on the continent.
- Draw from a variety of reputable sources including books and articles by experts in their fields. A good place to start is with university African Studies Centers websites such as [exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu](http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu)
- Understand current events, issues, and conversations by reading local news sources (e.g. [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com) collects news stories in English from all over the continent).
- Put in the hard work to understand the people and cultures of the place you will visit.

## ACT ETHICALLY AND INTENTIONALLY

- Understand respectful ways of entering a community, organization, or government office.
- Be professional and respectful in your dress and communication. Know the appropriate language and ways to dress in different situations (You wouldn't wear a tank top and shorts to meet with your professor).
- Respect cultural traditions and ask for consent when taking pictures. Don't take pictures of random people and post them on social media without their permission.



## CONSULT AND WORK WITH LOCAL EXPERTS OR ORGANIZATIONS

- Whatever you are doing, do your best work with people from that country.
- Research and reach out to local experts and established organizations. Take your lead from them. Strive for engagement rather than paternalistic handouts.
- Seek out people from the area you will visit through on-campus student groups and academic programs.
- Listen to and work with a variety of people with different perspectives.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- Why do I want to go to Africa?
- What are my motives and intentions?
- Are these motives in line with the real, not perceived, needs and objectives of the culture and people I am trying to help or study?

