

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

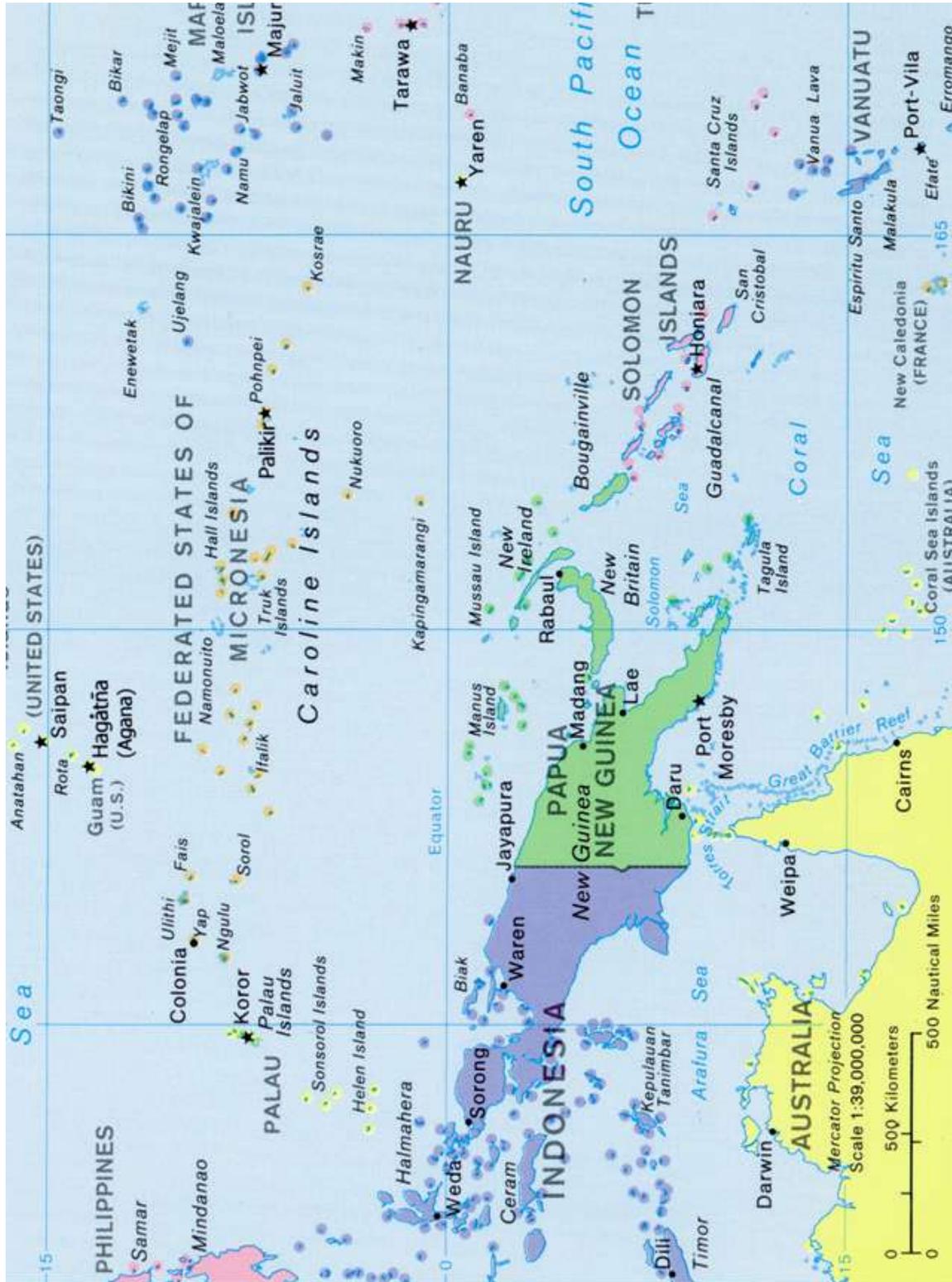
MICRONESIA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS

December 2014

MICRONESIA/PALAU MAP



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on receiving your invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of Palau (Palau). We look forward to meeting you soon.

Please spend some time reviewing the material in this welcome book. It is packed with useful information that will hopefully answer most of the questions you have about our program and the living/working conditions here in FSM and Palau. One of the challenges of putting together this book is addressing the diversity of the sites where we place Volunteers. In general, the capital towns of the FSM islands are still small, rural-feeling towns but, relative to rural villages and the outer islands, have a greater variety of goods and services available. Even the capital of Pohnpei, Kolonia, is far from urban. No matter where your site is, a great adventure awaits you. What you make of it is mostly up to you. So prepare yourselves for “the toughest job you’ll ever love,” because being a successful Peace Corps Volunteer begins and ends with hard work. The staff of FSM and Palau promise you will have the support you need to have a rewarding experience and to do the job to which you will be assigned.

Micronesia is a beautiful and welcoming location. The blue of the Pacific waters blending on the horizon with the azure skies is a sight that will live on in your mind long after you have completed your service. The relationships you form with your professional colleagues and members of your host family will be among the most important parts of your experience.

Please come prepared to spend two years outside of your comfort zone, especially in the first few months. Give yourself time to adjust to the challenges of learning a new language, adjusting to new living conditions, and experiencing a different pace of life. By far, the most important things to bring with you are a positive attitude, a willingness to learn new things, and a boatload of patience. If you step off the plane equipped with those things, you almost certainly will have a good experience here in Micronesia.

Good luck wrapping up all the details you need to take care of between now and your departure. Spend some quality time with your family and friends. Pack light. Congratulations again on your invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer. You have already taken the most important steps: You have proven yourself to be someone who is willing to serve others and take some risks. Start rolling up your sleeves!

With warm regards and anticipation of your arrival,

— The Staff of FSM and Palau

Table of Contents

A WELCOME LETTER.....	1
CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS	4
PEACE CORPS/MICRONESIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS	5
History of the Peace Corps in Micronesia	5
Peace Corps Programming in Micronesia	5
COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MICRONESIA AT A GLANCE.....	6
History	6
Government	7
Economy.....	8
People and Culture.....	8
RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.....	9
General Information About Micronesia.....	9
Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees	10
Online Articles/Current News Sites About Micronesia.....	10
International Development Sites About Micronesia.....	10
Recommended Books	11
Books About the History of the Peace Corps.....	11
Books on the Volunteer Experience	11
LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE.....	12
Communications.....	12
Housing and Site Location	13
Living Allowance and Money Management	13
Food and Diet	14
Transportation.....	14
Social Activities.....	15
Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior	15
Personal Safety	16
Rewards and Frustrations	16
PEACE CORPS TRAINING	18
Overview of Pre-Service Training.....	18
Technical Training.....	19
Language Training.....	19
Cross-Cultural Training.....	20
Health Training.....	20
Safety and Security Training	20

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service.....	20
YOUR HEALTH CARE IN MICRONESIA.....	21
Health Issues in Micronesia.....	22
Helping You Stay Healthy.....	22
Maintaining Your Health.....	22
Women’s Health Information.....	23
Your Peace Corps Medical Kit.....	23
Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist.....	24
SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH	26
Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk.....	26
Staying Safe: Don’t Be a Target for Crime	27
Support from Staff.....	28
Office of Victim Advocacy	28
Crime Data for Micronesia.....	28
Volunteer Safety Support in Micronesia	28
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW	30
Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site	30
Cross-Cultural Considerations.....	31
What Might a Volunteer Face?.....	31
Possible Gender Role Issues	31
Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color	32
Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers	33
Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities	34
Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples	34
Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers	35
Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers	35
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	36
PACKING LIST	43
PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST	46
CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS	48

CORE EXPECTATIONS FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to do the following:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others
9. Recognize that you will be perceived in your host country and community as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsively the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

PEACE CORPS/MICRONESIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

History of the Peace Corps in Micronesia

The Peace Corps program in Micronesia began in 1966. At its peak size in 1968, 700 Volunteers were assigned to the islands now known as Micronesia, which included Palau, FSM, Northern Mariana Islands, and the Marshall Islands. The first group of Volunteers taught English at all grade levels. A cadre of Volunteer legal advisers soon followed and assisted the then-U.S. trust territory in its quest for independence. In the 1970s, the Peace Corps moved into agriculture, health, community development, and cooperative management projects. The early 1980s saw Volunteers working in water and sanitation, forestry, and fisheries.

The formation of FSM in 1986 resulted in a reassessment of Peace Corps programming and Volunteer activities were consolidated. Dual assignments were developed and all Volunteers taught English in primary schools and also worked in other activities determined by their sponsoring state government agency. In the 1990s, the programming strategy moved from state-specific to national projects. Concurrently, programming shifted from being focused on teaching English as a second language (TESL) to projects in a wide range of technical areas, such as library development, health education, sports development, youth group development, marine resource management, environmental education, watershed management, and small business development.

From 2000–06, Volunteers worked in two main project areas: natural resources conservation and development and youth and community development. Volunteers continued to work in the areas of youth, health, library/reading and technology, marine resources conservation, and terrestrial resources conservation. There was also an increased emphasis on cross-sector collaboration among agencies to respond to social and environmental issues.

In 2006, the Peace Corps met with more than 80 representatives from the education, environment, and health sectors to determine how and where Volunteers could best serve FSM and Palau. As a result, Volunteers returned to the classroom for TESL and to work with communities to facilitate environmental education, health education, and community development programs.

Peace Corps Programming in Micronesia

Today, Peace Corps Volunteers work in the TESL education project. While there are 18 local languages spoken across FSM and Palau, English is the language of government, education, and many professional settings. Lack of English ability is seen as a key factor in a 66 percent drop in enrollment between elementary school and high school and in very low entrance exam scores at the College of Micronesia. In a broader sense, stakeholders note systemic educational challenges with instructional planning, teaching skills, assessment practices, and school-parent communication—areas in which Volunteers also contribute.

To support English instruction and address systemic education issues in a sustainable manner, Volunteers work closely with the local school staff and leadership as peer observers, demonstration teachers, co-planners, team co-teachers, and facilitators of informal exchanges.

In addition to co-planning and co-teaching at your school, Volunteers are capable and well positioned to support school-driven projects, especially as they relate to priorities in health education, environmental education, and youth development. Therefore, the design of the project plan addresses an urgent need for English, while also encouraging Volunteers to work with local school members, community groups, and agencies on other issues.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MICRONESIA AT A GLANCE

History

The name Micronesia is derived from the Greek words *mikros*, “small,” and *neso*, “island.” Until recently, the many distinct languages of the Micronesian islands existed only in oral form. Thus, much of the early history of these islands had to be derived from archaeological artifacts. It is thought that more than 3,000 years ago, Austronesian-speaking Micronesian people entered the Pacific from Southeast Asia. These seafaring people probably first settled in the Marianas (Guam and Saipan) and then the Western Carolines, including Palau and Yap. Later, migrations from the southern Melanesian islands brought settlers to Kosrae, Chuuk, and Pohnpei. The “outer islands” of Micronesia were likely settled later, as their languages are dissimilar to those of the main islands.

Micronesians are known as great sea voyagers and sailed huge outrigger canoes over distances of thousands of miles, using early ocean navigation techniques, dependent on knowledge of the movements of currents, swells, winds, and birds. Early Micronesians lived a subsistence lifestyle based on fishing, gathering, and agriculture.

Legends of ancient civilization in the Caroline Islands tell of an ancient empire, about which little is known. The remnants of magnificent stone fortresses constructed from basalt pillars in Pohnpei (Nan Madol) and in Kosrae (Lela Ruins) are thought to date back to A.D. 400. Yapese stone money (stone discs as large as 12 feet in diameter that weigh up to 12 tons) was mined as far away as Palau and transported by canoe to Yap.

Islands in the archipelagoes known as Micronesia were among the first in the Pacific to be “discovered” by European explorers of the 16th century. The islands were grouped into three categories: the Marshall Islands, the Eastern Caroline Islands (Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Chuuk), and the Western Caroline Islands (Yap and Palau).

The first known European contact dates back to 1521, during Ferdinand Magellan’s quest to find a trade route to the Spice Islands of the east, traveling west from Spain. The Spaniards developed an indirect trade route to Asia: across the Atlantic to South America, across South America via land, and onward into the Pacific. In the 18th and 19th centuries, whalers, traders, and missionaries found their way to the islands. Based on the missionaries’ influence, all the major islands and some outer islands are almost entirely Christian today; Micronesians retain little memory of earlier belief systems.

The islands of the FSM and Palau share similar colonial histories under Spain, Germany, Japan, and the United States. Spanish influence in Micronesia expanded in the 19th century, but following its defeat in the Spanish-American War, Spain sold Palau and most of the Caroline Islands (which later became FSM) to Germany in 1899.

The Germans were interested in the islands to support trade in coconut products. Their use of forced labor on the island of Pohnpei culminated in the assassination of the German governor by a young Micronesian. Many Pohnpeian men were then exiled to Palau; other Micronesian men were transported from the outer islands of Pohnpei and Chuuk. The Germans deserted Micronesia in World War I, which allowed an easy takeover by the Japanese. Japan built large military bases on some of the islands and developed sugar mills in the Marianas, bauxite and phosphate mines in Palau, and fishing and shell production throughout the region. The Japanese encouraged emigration to Micronesia, and Micronesians were used as low-level manual laborers.

Japan had aspirations of being the dominant power in Asia and in the Pacific. Thus, the Pacific saw significant military activity during World War II. Chuuk Lagoon became the Japanese navy's most important central Pacific base. In February 1944, U.S. forces attacked Chuuk Lagoon. Over two days, more than 200,000 tons of equipment was sunk in the lagoon. Heavy fighting continued in Micronesia and surrounding islands over the ensuing months, with particularly long and brutal battles occurring in the Marianas and Palau. Japan held the islands until its surrender after World War II. When the war ended, Micronesia remained under U.S. military control.

In 1947, the islands of Micronesia were formed into the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands by the United Nations. The U.S. was given temporary administrative rights over the islands to prepare them for eventual independence. While the intention had been to prepare the islands for self-government, their economies relied almost entirely on government services and resources from the States.

In 1965, the U.S. agreed to form a congress to determine the islands' future. In 1979, Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap chose independence as freely associated states and became the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) on November 3, 1986. The Republic of Palau (Palau) took much longer to reach that status because it opposed U.S. demands for control of the waters around the islands. It chose independence in 1981 and became the independent Republic of Palau on October 1, 1994.

Today, both FSM and Palau have compact agreements with the United States. The agreements spell out the funds the U.S. will provide each country over time and the strategic and defense advantages the U.S. will have in return. Many U.S. government social services (e.g., Head Start, legal services, and special education services) are available to the citizens of both countries. FSM entered its first compact agreement with the U.S. in 1986 and a new compact agreement was signed in 2003 that will provide U.S. financial support for the next 20 years. This new compact is focused on creating self-reliance, gradually phasing out some U.S. social service programs and establishing a trust fund to help provide FSM with ongoing financial resources.

Government

Both the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau are democratic republics closely modeled on the federal system of the United States. They are divided into states, each with a state government. In FSM, the states are further divided into municipalities, each with a governing entity. Unlike the U.S., the states of Micronesia are highly autonomous, exercising much greater independence from the federal government. There is a unicameral legislature with proportional and at-large representation from the four states. The president is elected by the members of the legislature from among the at-large delegates. The Republic of Palau has a bicameral form of government based on the U.S. model.

The court systems of both countries are similar to the U.S. system and often rely on U.S. precedents in their rulings. The Constitution of Micronesia is closely modeled on the U.S. Constitution and includes a section similar to the Bill of Rights. The Micronesian Constitution allows for great deference to the traditional government hierarchy, exempting it from some of the mandates of the document.

Palau and the islands of Pohnpei and Yap have traditional governing entities that include paramount chiefs. This traditional leadership structure remains strong, functioning alongside the official governing entities. These two seemingly diametrically opposed systems attempt to accommodate each other. Some local issues are considered more the domain of the traditional system while others (particularly international issues) are left to the official government and legal system.

Economy

FSM has a large government bureaucracy, which is largely supported by U.S. compact funds and accounts for about 90 percent of FSM's cash economy.

Despite intentions in the first compact agreement, FSM has yet to develop a viable private sector and 50 percent of its resident workforce is employed by the government. Systems have been established for greater accountability and oversight of the amended compact funds.

In 2003, FSM conducted an economic summit and reaffirmed its commitment to three industries to support economic development: tourism, fishing, and agroforestry. Of all the FSM states, Chuuk—well-known for its treasures of Japanese ships sunk during World War II—probably has the best developed scuba diving industry. Nonetheless, it is the poorest of the states, partly due to its relatively large population (approximately 48,600) and partly due to mismanaged funds. Other issues that impede the economic development of FSM include complicated rules of landownership and the fact that foreign investors cannot own land.

Palau has seen much greater development of its economy. Its tourism industry is thriving, and there are many new restaurants, hotels, and tourist attractions. International travel to Palau is more frequent, with flights arriving regularly from Guam and the Philippines. Palau is now known as a world-class diving destination. However, this economic development, particularly in the tourist trade, is placing a significant strain on the environment. The increase in tourists and divers is threatening fragile coral reef systems, and the construction of a paved road that will connect rural Palauan communities to the capital is disturbing fragile ecosystems.

People and Culture

Approximately 60 of FSM's islands are inhabited, but most of the country's 102,600 citizens reside primarily in the four major states: Yap (11,400), Chuuk (48,600), Pohnpei (about 36,000), and Kosrae (about 6,600). Palau's population of approximately 21,000 is spread out among eight permanently inhabited islands; most live in Koror, the capital of Palau. The majority of the population of these two countries is young: Approximately 64 percent are under the age of 24.

The people of FSM and Palau have maintained much of their indigenous cultures despite their contacts with Spaniards, Germans, Japanese, and Americans. The languages spoken on the five main islands are distinct, and many more distinct languages exist in the outer islands. Thus, English is the common language among many Micronesians.

Both countries are predominantly Christian. A small proportion of Palauans still practice an indigenous religion. Despite the Westernization of their religion, most people on the outer islands and rural areas maintain a traditional lifestyle. While Micronesians on most main islands dress conservatively, on many of the outer islands and in Yap it is common for outer islanders to wear only *lavalavas* (sarongs made from woven cloth) and loincloths.

On Yap, a very strict caste system exists and entry into a village requires permission from the powerful village chief. On Pohnpei, the chiefs exert a great deal of influence and are treated like royalty. In Pohnpei, the making of the intoxicating drink *sakau* (kava) is part of both everyday socializing and of any important celebration. Betel nut (a palm nut) chewing is common throughout the islands, especially in Yap and Palau.

Funerals, which sometimes last for days, are important social events on the islands.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Micronesia and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although the Peace Corps tries to make sure all these links are active and current, the Peace Corps cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and please keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Micronesia

State.gov

The Department of State's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Micronesia and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

Gpo.gov/libraries/public/

The U.S. Government Printing Office publishes country studies intermittently.

lweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

The Library of Congress provides historical and sociological data on numerous countries.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pocketbook/World_Statistics_Pocketbook_2013_edition.pdf

United Nations resource book with 2013 statistical country data

Data.un.org

United Nations site with links to data from U.N. member countries

Wikipedia.org

Search for Micronesia to find encyclopedia-type information. Note: As Wikipedia content is user-generated, information may be biased and/or not verified.

Worldbank.org

The World Bank Group's mission is to fight poverty and improve the living standards of people in the developing world. It is a development bank that provides loans, policy advice, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing services to developing countries to reduce poverty. This site contains a lot of information and resources regarding development.

Data.worldbank.org/country

Provides information on development indicators on countries, including population, gender, financial, and education, and climate change statistics.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

RPCV.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “Friends of” groups for most countries of service, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities. Or go straight to the Friends of Micronesia site: <http://friendsofmicronesia.wordpress.com/>

PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org

This site, hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers, is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Micronesia

UN.org/News/

The United Nations news service provides coverage of its member states and information about the international peacekeeping organization’s actions and positions.

VOAnews.com

Voice of America, the U.S. government’s multimedia broadcaster, features coverage of news around the world.

International Development Sites About Micronesia

<http://www.micsem.org/home.htm>

Nongovernmental organization with extensive historical data about FSM and Palau; it also presents current socioeconomic issues to the public.

www.eastwestcenter.org/pidp-ab.asp

East-West Center

www.apdip.net

Asia-Pacific Development Information Program

www.ausaid.gov.au

The Australian government’s international aid program

http://www.spc.int/lrd/agriculture_for_diversification_team.htm

Secretariat of the Pacific Community Forestry and Agriculture; contains forestry and agriculture information specific to South Pacific, but still applicable background information for FSM.

Recommended Books

Books About Micronesia

1. Allen, Gerald R. and Roger Steene. "Indo-Pacific Coral Reef Field Guide." Monterey, Calif.: Sea Challengers, reprint edition, 1998.
2. Flood, Bo and Beret E. Strong. "Pacific Island Legends: Tales from Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia, and Australia." Hawaii: Bess Press, 1901.
3. Karolle, Bruce G. "Atlas of Micronesia." Honolulu, Hawaii: Bess Press, 1995. A description of the islands from a sociogeographic perspective.
4. Kluge, P.F. "The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia." Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994. A returned Peace Corps Volunteer's account of the politically difficult years after independence when the Micronesian Islands were forging new relationships with the United States.
5. Myers Robert, F. "Micronesian Reef Fishes: A Field Guide for Divers and Aquarists." Guam: Coral Graphics, 1999.
6. Ridgell, Reilly. "Bending to the Trade Winds: Stories of the Peace Corps Experience in Micronesia." Mangilao: University of Guam Press, 1991. A collection of stories based on the experiences of Volunteers in Chuuk in the early 1970s.
7. Ward, Martha C. "Nest in the Wind: Adventures in Anthropology on a Tropical Island." Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press; second edition, 2004. An anthropologist's humorous account of working in Pohnpei in the early 1970s.

Note: Volunteers recommend bringing books on women's health and on diet, as eating healthy on an island is challenging and any such reference books are helpful.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. "All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. "The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps." Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. "Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver." Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. "When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years." Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. "Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place." Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. "Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience." Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. "Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village." New York City: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. "River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze." New York City: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. "From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps." Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thomsen, Moritz. "Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

Communications

Mail

The postal system of the Republic of Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia is modeled on the U.S. Postal Service. Costs for mailing letters and packages had been identical to those in the United States, but as of 2006, international rates have been phased in incrementally. FSM and Palau use their own postage stamps, while a customs declaration form is required for packages. Items that ship airmail normally take about two weeks between the U.S. and FSM or Palau, but those traveling by sea may take months to arrive. The mail system is generally quite reliable. There is one post office in each of the state capitals of FSM and in Palau; all are open during regular business hours. During training, you can receive mail at the main Peace Corps office in Kolonia, Pohnpei:

“Your Name,” Peace Corps Trainee
Peace Corps/Micronesia
PO Box 9
Kolonia, Pohnpei, FM 96941

After you move to your site, you must make arrangements to have your mail sent directly to the state where you serve.

Telephones

Phone service within the main islands of both FSM and Palau is generally reliable. However, phone service is not available on most outer islands. International phone service in the FSM varies from island to island and site to site. Calling cards can be purchased for use with landline and cellphones for local and international calls.

Peace Corps/Micronesia provides cellphones to all Volunteers as a safety and security measure. Your U.S. cellphone may or may not be compatible with the system and frequency used in-country. Refer to www.telecom.fm for more information on FSM communications services and prices and www.palaunet.com for more information for the Republic of Palau.

If your site is on an outer island, you will communicate with the Peace Corps offices using single-side band (SSB) radio (all outer islands Volunteers serve on have at least one) or a Peace Corps-issued satellite phone, but you will not have international calling capability from your site.

Computer, Internet, and Email Access

While many Volunteers bring a laptop, many Volunteer sites have limited or no Internet availability. Each Peace Corps office in Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap has desktop computers with Internet and email access available for Volunteers’ project-related work. However, most PCVs do not have easy access to these Peace Corps offices as they are located in the more urban part of the island state and Volunteer sites tend to be more remote. Many find having their own computer useful. The Peace Corps has strict guidelines regarding Volunteer-created and maintained blogs and websites. These policies are outlined in the Volunteer Handbook and will be reviewed during pre-service training.

Volunteers who bring their laptop computers are responsible for insuring and maintaining them. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance. Because of the high value of laptops, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming a victim of crime.

Heat and high humidity conditions are damaging to most electronic equipment. There is little to no technical support available and replacement parts are usually not available on the island. If you bring a laptop, be sure to buy a high-quality surge protector, as electrical lapses and surges are common. Also note that paying for Internet access via your laptop will be your responsibility, and your site may or may not have phone line service.

Housing and Site Location

Volunteers in Micronesia are required to live with a host family for training and the entire two years of service. Many Volunteers find it a challenge to adjust from the independent living of which they are accustomed. Household rules, especially for women, are likely to feel very restrictive compared to life in the United States, yet the rewards tend to be large.

Almost all life in Micronesia revolves around the family and being “adopted” into a family gives a Volunteer a vehicle to becoming part of the local community. Micronesians live with extended family and find it extremely odd for anyone to live alone. Living with a family makes it easier to learn the language, provides unique opportunities to become a part of the culture, and ensures a safer and more secure environment. Much of a Volunteer’s life in Micronesia is based on interactions with the host family and these interactions help facilitate community entry. Married couples also live with a family for their entire service.

Peace Corps/Micronesia is committed to focusing on rural communities. Living in the more rural villages is a very different experience from living in one close to the capital. On main islands, you may be surprised at the distance between houses in villages. On outer islands, space and land is more limited. If you are posted to a main island, you will be living in a village. Most main island communities have electricity and water, with houses constructed of block or plywood with a tin roof. Lagoon or outer island communities tend to be more rustic and traditional, although most houses are made of block with a tin roof. The way of life will be more traditional, although U.S. influence will still be apparent. Most communities consist of clusters of houses, a school, and a church.

Life on the outer islands is much more traditional in terms of cultural events, food, dress, and social interactions. Traditional tribal/caste structures and gender roles are strong and determine levels and lines of communication. Volunteers assigned to the outer islands need to be especially sensitive to the cultural norms.

During “site development,” Peace Corps staff identifies housing and host families using criteria that include safety and security guidelines. Your host family will provide simple, basic furniture such as a bed/mattress, table/desk and chair.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a monthly allowance in U.S. dollars that is sufficient to live at the level of the local people. The allowance covers food, housing, household supplies, clothing, transportation to and from work, utilities, recreation and entertainment, and incidental expenses. Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live at a level that is comparable with that of their host country counterparts. The Peace Corps discourages Volunteers from supplementing their living allowance with funds from home.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will receive several types of allowances. FSM and Palau use the U.S. dollar for currency. Most allowances will be deposited monthly into your local bank account, which will be established upon your arrival.

You will receive a living allowance of approximately \$380–\$410 per month to cover your living expenses. You will provide \$75 of this amount in cash or in-kind as your contribution to your host family. You will eat primarily with your host family. The remainder of your living allowance is provided to fund your needs for toiletries and household supplies, clothing, supplemental food you choose to buy, transportation, reading materials, recreation and entertainment, and other incidentals. A vacation allowance of \$24 per month will be deposited as part of your living allowance. After you swear in as a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will receive a one-time settling-in allowance of \$150 to purchase household necessities, such as a futon, lantern, and fan.

You may find that even though you are a Volunteer, you receive more remuneration than your Micronesian counterpart(s) or even your supervisor, which can create certain challenges. Additionally, you will probably have more material goods and actual money than your host family—issues that should be dealt with sensitively.

Peace Corps/Micronesia will likely ask you to travel for training events/conferences. In such instances, you will be given funds to cover the cost of any additional transportation and meals.

Most ATM cards can be used in the capital towns of FSM and in Palau. Credit cards and traveler's checks can be used in tourist areas in FSM and Palau.

Food and Diet

Although there are Volunteers who have remained vegetarians throughout their stay in Micronesia, the local food here is not oriented toward a vegetarian diet. Canned meat, ramen, pork, and chicken with root crops (i.e., taro, yams, cassava) are the norm. Fish is available often in most locations, but not in all, and imported white rice is eaten at almost every meal. Fresh fruits and vegetables are rare, especially in the outer islands and, when available, are expensive. Local fruits like papaya and pineapple are occasionally available, with citrus being more common in Kosrae. Coconuts are typically available on most islands, and bananas are available on all of the main islands. Families consider food a significant part of their culture, and Volunteers are expected to eat with their families and eat what the family is eating. The family will expect them to participate in customs and funerals, in which food plays a significant role. Volunteers find that eating what the locals eat helps them to quickly gain acceptance, and that refusing food creates a significant wall between them, their family, and their community.

The local diet is often high in fat, cholesterol, and carbohydrates. Vegetarians will find it difficult to maintain their diet both because of the limited variety of fruits and vegetables and because host families expect Volunteers to accept the food that they eat. Most vegetarians choose to modify their diet while serving in Micronesia, at least to include fish.

PLEASE NOTE: It is important to remember that the host family is doing you a service by allowing you to stay; it is a hardship for them to constantly worry about the Volunteer's eating needs. If you are a vegetarian and unwilling to change your diet you may want to reconsider accepting this offer.

Transportation

There is no public transportation in FSM or Palau, except for the limited school bus service in Yap. Volunteers on some islands can use taxis, which tend to be inexpensive. Most Volunteers coordinate with their host families regarding transportation into town. If you choose to purchase a bicycle, the Peace Corps requires you to wear a helmet and will issue you one. Depending on your site, you may travel by boat on a regular basis and are required to wear a life jacket and carry a PLB (personal locator beacon, also provided by the Peace Corps) any time you are in a boat.

The Peace Corps prohibits Volunteers from owning or driving motorized vehicles and riding on motorcycles. Violations of these policies may result in immediate termination of your Peace Corps service.

Geography and Climate

The climate of Micronesia is tropical. Temperatures fluctuate very little annually (86 degrees Fahrenheit is the average, but it can seem warmer under the intense sun). Rainfall and humidity are high year-round. Northeast trade winds bring relief from the tropical climate during the first few months of the year, but these breezes are mainly felt directly along the coast. October through May is typically typhoon season in the Pacific. Although most of Micronesia is outside of the main typhoon belt, Chuuk and Yap are the most likely to be affected by typhoon activity.

All of the main islands receive a fair amount of rainfall, but none as much as Pohnpei, arguably the wettest place in the world. Pohnpei averages more than 300 inches of rainfall per year in the upland forests and around 200 inches on the coast. On these islands, people go on with their daily chores, seemingly oblivious to the rain.

Social Activities

Most social activities in Micronesia center on the family. There are many sporting events, cultural events, and customs throughout the year in which you may be able to participate. Micronesians love watching movies and most families on main islands own DVD or VCR players.

Going out at night is more difficult for female Volunteers than male Volunteers. Traditionally, local women only go out in the evening to other family members' houses. Volunteers under age 40 may still be considered "youth," per the Micronesian definition of youth, and will likely be under the protective and watchful eyes of strict host families. Standards of social behavior may appear somewhat more relaxed in Palau communities closer to the capital, but the nuances of what behavior is considered acceptable take time and patience to learn. Kosrae is the most religious of the islands and Volunteers there may find themselves in church with their families every Sunday. Despite these differences in social activities and norms, most Volunteers learn to enjoy recreational time with Micronesian friends and find their niche over time.

Possible outdoor activities include snorkeling, hiking, and kayaking. There are marvelous waterfalls on most main islands. Caution is necessary, as currents can be strong and flash flooding can occur. Scuba diving is expensive, but spectacular. Much diving in the FSM and Palau is rated as advanced due to the currents. Volunteers interested in diving should become scuba-certified before arriving in-country, as some of the islands do not offer accredited certification classes.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

Micronesians in all FSM states and Palau dress conservatively. Micronesian men rarely wear shorts to work. The average Micronesian woman does not wear anything that would expose her thighs or knees. Women typically wear longer skirts and muumuus (loose dresses), often with layers of slips or other skirts underneath so their thighs are not visible when backlit. Bicycle-type sports shorts can also be worn underneath skirts. Tight blouses, halter tops, and tank tops are seldom appropriate for women. Loose-fitting blouses with covered shoulders or T-shirts are appropriate. In your home, loose sleeveless tops that are not "strappy" may be acceptable. Men should wear casual slacks and sports shirts. On some of the outer islands (Western Chuuk and Yap), both men and women go bare-breasted, but women still cover their thighs.

Although island dress tends to be casual, trainees and Volunteers should dress conservatively (long pants for men; nice long skirt/dress [mid-calf] and blouses that cover one's shoulders for women) during special occasions and when visiting government offices.

Volunteers are not only guests in the country, but are also representatives of the Peace Corps. Micronesians will look up to you for dressing well and earning their respect will help you succeed as a development worker. Peace Corps/Micronesia's recommendation is to dress as conservatively as possible until you learn the norms at your permanent site. You may choose to consult with your host family and colleagues. Keep in mind that it is the older, more traditional generation whose support and approval you will need to be effective. Modeling your attire after the extremes that may be visible among some members of the younger generation can quickly alienate the elders, who are the decision-makers in these communities.

During pre-service training, trainees will be expected to follow these same Micronesian norms of attire.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Safety and Security section, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Micronesia Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help reduce the risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Micronesia. Using these tools, one can be empowered to take responsibility for his or her safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. Volunteers and families are encouraged to look at safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at peacecorps.gov/safety.

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and safety. There is a section titled Safety and Security in Depth. Among topics addressed are the risks of serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

Rewards and Frustrations

Most Peace Corps/Micronesia Volunteers have rewarding personal and professional experiences that stay with them for the rest of their lives, but you will inevitably encounter frustrations. Collaborating organizations and host families do not always provide the support intended due to cultural and family obligations, changing financial situations, or illness/obligations that cause people to unexpectedly travel off-island for long periods of time. The pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to. Family, not work, is the priority of almost all Micronesians. Some Micronesians are understandably hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old in the name of "development." For these reasons and many others, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to and living in a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys. You will have personal responsibility and independence in your work in a way that you have not had in any other job. You will initially be a listener and an observer, and you may do little else for your first six months of service. Micronesians have their own goals and community priorities and your biggest task will be to acquire an understanding of what they want for themselves, their families, and their community.

You may find yourself in situations where you have little guidance and want to motivate your community partners. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact from your efforts and may not receive any feedback. Development is a slow process. Progress may come only after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years.

You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results. Your impact on the ambitions and English language skills of a child, your lifelong friendship with your host sister, or the computer skills you teach to a colleague are each significant accomplishments. You will feel a sense of accomplishment by focusing on the positive impact you have on the people around you and on your own personal growth and experiences.

You will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, and a good sense of humor. Micronesians are hospitable, friendly, and warm people. The Peace Corps staff, host families, colleagues, and fellow Volunteers will help support you through times of challenge and in moments of success. Most Volunteers feel the peaks of their service are well worth the difficult times and leave Micronesia feeling they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Overview of Pre-Service Training

The Peace Corps uses a competency-based training approach throughout the continuum of learning, supporting you from arrival in Micronesia to your departure. Pre-service training (PST) is the first event within this continuum of learning and ensures that you are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform your job. Pre-service training is conducted in Micronesia by Peace Corps staff, most of whom are locally hired trainers. Peace Corps staff measure achievement of learning and determine if you have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Peace Corps training incorporates widely accepted principles of adult learning and is structured around the experiential learning cycle. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas.

Integrating into the community is one of the core competencies you will strive to achieve both in PST and during the first several months of service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the relationships you build by respectfully integrating into the host country community and culture.

You will be prepared for this through a homestay experience, which requires trainees to live with host families during PST. Integration into the community fosters language and cross-cultural learning and ensures your health, safety, and security.

When you first join us in Pohnpei, the capital of FSM, you will participate in approximately 10 weeks of intensive pre-service training. PST will help you to learn about your host country and island, learn what it is like to be a Volunteer in FSM/Palau, and learn about yourself.

The goals of Peace Corps/Micronesia's training program are to give you a "jump start" in learning about the culture and language of your host island, to help prepare you for community entry into the community in which you will serve, and to train you to be an effective observer/cultural student. PST helps prepare Volunteers to be development facilitators who can help their communities prioritize local needs and desires and help initiate efforts to address these needs. During PST, you will learn some skills that will help you begin to feel comfortable in a classroom environment. You will be introduced to the concepts of capacity building and sustainable development; you will have the opportunity to learn about local organizations, institutions, and leaders; and you will start to meet community partners. The goal of PST is to help you successfully start a learning process that will continue throughout your service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Micronesia.

A set of Peace Corps training competencies (technical, behavioral, cross cultural, medical, safety, and language) will drive activities throughout PST. Evaluations will be conducted to give trainees ample opportunity to self-assess and get feedback from training staff. Informal feedback will be given on a daily basis.

Peace Corps/Micronesia staff members will do all they can to give you opportunities to learn about Micronesian culture, attitudes, and viewpoints. They will work hard to help you immerse yourself in an environment that helps you learn the basics you need to know to become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Ultimately, you will be in control of your learning and have the responsibility to make the most of the opportunities you will have.

It is a privilege to become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Trainees who successfully complete PST and are recommended to be Volunteers have earned this privilege through their perseverance, hard work, and patience.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Micronesia by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Micronesia experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Micronesia and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your project's goals and objectives and will meet with the Micronesia agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities, report your progress, and serve as a productive member of your community.

The Peace Corps FSM/Palau, Pohnpei Department of Education, and the College of Micronesia partner on the technical component of training. Host-country teachers train and learn alongside Peace Corps trainees during PST, and participate together in TESL sessions and a teaching practicum led by local Peace Corps staff. Technical training will consist of familiarization with the education field, technical content on TESL, classroom observation, and a teaching practicum in model school. Model school refers to practice teaching in a classroom setting with local students. The emphasis will be on active learning. Active involvement in self-directed learning will assist and best prepare you for success at your site.

By the end of training, trainees should have a basic understanding of the education and youth context, methods for investigating and analyzing community interests, TESL teaching techniques, and educator resources, including tools and manuals.

Goals for Peace Corps/Micronesia's TESL Project Plan will be reviewed. You will learn about how Micronesian communities make decisions. You will also learn techniques that will ensure success in the classroom.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, help you integrate into your community, and can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Micronesia language instructors usually teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups.

In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will develop strategies to continue studying language during your service.

Although many Micronesians speak English and are willing and sometimes eager to speak with you, the extent to which you truly integrate and what activities you can actively participate in will be closely tied to your ability to speak the local language.

As many as 18 languages are spoken throughout Micronesia, and Peace Corps/Micronesia provides training in six of them. As a Peace Corps trainee, you will begin to study the language of your island of service. Micronesian instructors teach language classes with small groups of trainees.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training will provide opportunities for you to reflect on your own cultural values and how they influence your behavior in Micronesia. You will also discuss the questions you have about the behaviors and practices you observe in Micronesia, exploring the underlying reasons for these behaviors and practices.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. Training will cover topics such as the concept of time, power and hierarchy, gender roles, communication styles, and the concept of self and relationships. Because adjusting to a new culture can be very challenging, you will participate in resiliency training which provides a framework and tools to help with adjustment issues.

The host family experience provides a unique context for cross-cultural learning, and is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of PST and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Micronesia. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be trained in health prevention, basic first aid, and treatment of medical illnesses found in Micronesia. You will be expected to practice preventive health and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. Health education topics will nutrition, food and water preparation, emotional health, dealing with alcohol, prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and common illnesses in Micronesia.

Safety and Security Training

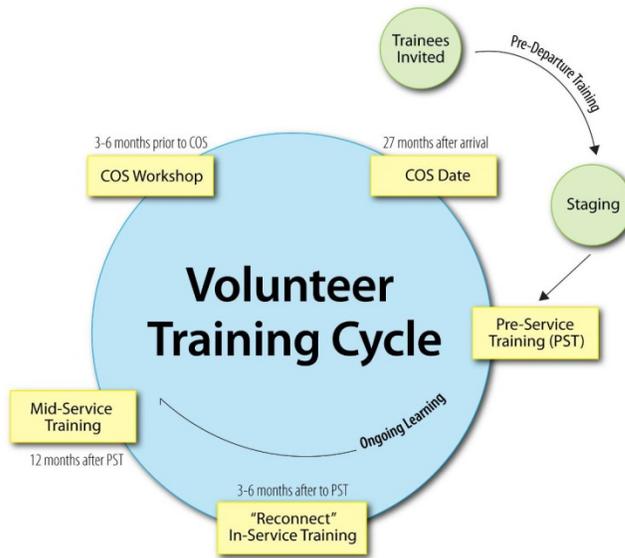
During the safety and security training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention, how to identify safety risks in-country and about Peace Corps' emergency response and support systems.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

The Peace Corps' training system provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- **In-service training:** Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- **Midservice training** (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- **Close-of-service conference:** Prepares Volunteers for their future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.



YOUR HEALTH CARE IN MICRONESIA

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Micronesia maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary health-care needs, including evaluation and treatment of most medical conditions. Additional medical services are also available in Micronesia at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill and cannot receive the care you need in Micronesia, you will be transported to a Peace Corps-approved regional medical facility. If the Office of Health Services (OHS) determines that the care is not optimal for your condition at the regional facility, you will be transported to the United States.

Health Issues in Micronesia

Common health problems among Volunteers include skin infections, diarrhea, respiratory infections, dental problems, gynecological infections, parasitic infections (skin and intestines), unintentional injuries and accidents (especially those involving bikes), mental health concerns, and water-related injuries or conditions. Dog bites are a concern in some states, but rabies is not found in Micronesia. Dengue fever, transmitted by mosquitoes, does occur, but not malaria. Volunteers have also been infected with leptospirosis (transmitted in contaminated water).

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Micronesia, you will receive a country-specific medical handbook. By the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this section.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, during this time, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Micronesia will consult with the Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., or a regional medical officer. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Micronesia, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Micronesia is to take the following preventive measures:

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Micronesia during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the most effective way to prevent infection with HIV and other STIs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your

partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STIs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

Women's Health Information

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in Micronesia will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you. Many female Volunteers take menstrual cups (The Diva Cup, The Keeper, The Moon Cup, etc.) to avoid potential problems with availability or disposal of feminine hygiene products.

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer chooses to remain in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

The Peace Corps follows the 2012 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines for screening PAP smears, which recommend women aged 21–29 receive screening PAPs every three years and women aged 30–65 receive screening PAPs every five years. As such, most Volunteers will not receive a PAP during their service, but can use Peace Corps supplied health insurance after service to have an exam.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit containing basic items to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid Handbook	Decongestant
Ace bandages	Dental floss
Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Gloves
Adhesive tape	Hydrocortisone cream
Antacid tablets	Ibuprofen
Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)	Insect repellent
Antibiotic ointment	Iodine tablets (for water purification)
Antifungal cream	Lip balm
Antihistamine	Oral rehydration salts
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner	Scissors
Band-Aids	Sore throat lozenges
Bismuth Subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol)	Sterile eye drops
Butterfly closures	Sterile gauze pads
Calagel anti-itch gel	Sunscreen
Condoms	Thermometer (Temp-a-dots)
Cough lozenges	Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Health Services (OHS). Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact OHS to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Health Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations (other than yellow fever vaccination as directed by OHS) prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or during your first six months in Micronesia. Volunteers must be willing to get all required vaccinations unless there is a documented medical contraindication. Failure to accept required vaccination is grounds for administrative separation from the Peace Corps. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements. Medications supplied may be generic or equivalent to your current medications (including birth control pills).

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs (of the current prescription) with you. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps Office of Health Services strongly discourages Volunteers from wearing contact lenses while overseas unless there is a true medical indication documented by your ophthalmologist. Contact lenses, particularly extended use soft contacts, are associated with a variety of eye infections and other inflammatory problems. One of the most serious of these problems is infectious keratitis which can lead to severe cornea damage which could result in permanent blindness requiring corneal transplantation. These risks of permanent eye damage are exacerbated in the Peace Corps environment where the Volunteer's ability to properly clean the lenses is compromised due to limited access to sterile water as well as decreased effectiveness of cleaning solutions due to prolonged storage in unsatisfactory conditions. In addition, when bacterial eye infections occur, assessment and treatment within hours by a competent ophthalmologist is indicated. This is virtually impossible in the Peace Corps setting. If you feel that you simply must be able to use your contacts occasionally, please consider using single use, daily disposable lenses which do not require cleaning.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health-care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health-care benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN DEPTH

Ensuring the safety and security of Volunteers is Peace Corps' highest priority. Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without a serious safety and security incident. Together, the Peace Corps and Volunteers can reduce risk, but cannot truly eliminate all risk.

Beyond knowing that the Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. The Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. The Peace Corps depends on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk and impact of burglary—follows:

- The Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work.
- The Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria.
- The Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country counterparts or other community leaders in your new community.
- The Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise.
- You lock your doors and windows.
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live.
- You get to know your community.
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you.
- You don't change residences before being authorized by the Peace Corps.
- You communicate your concerns to Peace Corps staff.

This welcome book contains sections on Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle, Peace Corps Training, Your Health Care, and Safety and Security, all of which include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the training and tools they need to function in the safest way possible and prepare for the unexpected, teaching you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for Micronesia there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in the United States, particularly those that are irreplaceable or have sentimental value
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the States
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in Micronesia, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in Micronesia learn to do the following:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Be careful and conscientious about using electronics (phones, cameras, laptops, iPods, etc.) in public or leaving them unattended
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime occurs in Micronesia. You can reduce the risks by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors.

The following are other security concerns in Micronesia of which you should be aware:

- While whistles and verbal harassment based on race or gender may be fairly common on the street, this behavior may be reduced if you abide by local cultural norms, dress conservatively, and respond according to the training you will receive.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

Because many Volunteer sites are in rural, isolated settings, you must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. To reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim of crime, you can take steps to make yourself less of a target such as ensuring your home is secure and developing relationships in your community. While the factors that contribute to your risk in Micronesia may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Micronesia will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers in Micronesia may find themselves spending a significant amount of time crossing open water to reach other islands. Since boating accidents can occur, the Peace Corps requires that you wear a life jacket and carry a PLB (provided by Peace Corps) whenever you are traveling by boat. All outer island PCVs are provided with a PLB and a satellite phone.

Physical or sexual assault, harassment (e.g., being called derogatory names or being the recipient of overt sexual comments), and theft can occur in Micronesia, just as they do in the United States. As in the United States, you can avoid much of the risk by changing your behavior. Conditions that contribute to risk include being alone in the evening or in isolated areas, being in a known high-crime area, and sleeping in an unlocked place. During pre-service training, you will learn how to minimize the risk of assault and discuss strategies for coping with harassment in Micronesia. Should you ever be assaulted, the medical staff will be available to help you on a confidential basis.

Support from Staff

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety and security incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also support and assist Volunteers who choose to make a formal complaint with local law enforcement. It is very important that a Volunteer reports an incident when it occurs. The reasons for this include obtaining medical care and emotional support, enabling Peace Corps staff to assess the situation to determine if there is an ongoing safety and security concern, protecting peer Volunteers and preserving the right to file a complaint. Should a Volunteer decide later in the process to file a complaint with law enforcement, this option may be compromised if evidence was not preserved at the time of the incident.

Office of Victim Advocacy

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource to Volunteers who are victims of crime, including sexual assault and stalking. Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help Volunteers understand their emotional, medical, and legal options so they may make informed decisions to meet their specific needs. The OVA provides a compassionate, coordinated, and supportive response to Volunteers who wish to access Peace Corps support services.

Contact information for the Office of Victim Advocacy

Direct phone number: 202.692.1753

Toll-free: 855.855.1961 ext. 1753

Duty phone: 202.409.2704 (available 24/7, call or text)

Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Crime Data for Micronesia

Crime data and statistics for Micronesia, updated yearly, are available at the following link: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/micronesia> .

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes. Crimes that do occur abroad are investigated and prosecuted by local jurisdictional authorities. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to file a complaint with law enforcement, who will then determine whether to prosecute. If you decide to file a complaint, the Peace Corps will help through the process. The Peace Corps staff will ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. Further, the Peace Corps will help you exercise your rights to the fullest extent possible under the laws of your host country.

The Peace Corps will train you on how to respond if you are the victim of a serious crime, including how to get to a safe location quickly and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify the Peace Corps as soon as you can so Peace Corps staff can provide assistance.

Volunteer Safety Support in Micronesia

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service. The plan includes information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Micronesia's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Micronesia office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part to ensure that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Micronesia. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Micronesia's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in Micronesia at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any safety and security incidents to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to current and future Volunteers.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OVERVIEW

The Peace Corps mission is to promote world peace and friendship and to improve people’s lives in the communities where Volunteers serve. Instituting policies and practices to support a diverse and inclusive work and Volunteer environment is essential to achieving this mission.

Through inclusive recruitment and retention of staff and Volunteers, the Peace Corps seeks to reflect the rich diversity of the United States and bring diverse perspectives and solutions to development issues. Additionally, ensuring diversity among staff and Volunteers enriches interpersonal relations and communications for the staff work environment, the Volunteer experience, and the communities in which Volunteers serve.

The Peace Corps defines diversity as a “collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. Diversity also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences.”

We define inclusion as a “culture that connects each [staff member and Volunteer] to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.” The Peace Corps promotes inclusion throughout the lifecycle of Volunteers and staff. When staff and Volunteers are able to share their rich diversity in an inclusive work environment, the Peace Corps mission is better fulfilled. More information about diversity and inclusion can be found in the Volunteer Handbook.

An inclusive agency is one that seeks input from everyone in an effort to find the best ideas and strategies possible to execute its objectives. When input is solicited, heard, and considered from a rich multitude of individuals the best course of action usually emerges. The Peace Corps seeks to improve its operations and effectiveness by ensuring that all voices and ideas are heard and that all Volunteers and staff feel welcome and appreciated. When each person’s voice is heard, the agency is stronger and the impact of Volunteers is strengthened.

Diversity and Inclusion at Your Site

Once Volunteers arrive at their sites, diversity and inclusion principles remain the same but take on a different shape, in which your host community may share a common culture and you—the Volunteer—are the outsider. You may be in the minority, if not the sole American like you, at your site. You will begin to notice diversity in perspectives, ethnicity, age, depth of conversation, and degree of support you may receive. For example, elders, youth, and middle-aged individuals all have unique points of views on topics you may discuss, from perspectives on work, new projects, and social engagements to the way community issues are addressed.

Peace Corps staff in your host country recognize the additional adjustment issues that come with living and working in new environments and will provide support and guidance to Volunteers. During pre-service training, a session will be held to discuss diversity and inclusion and how you can serve as an ally for your peers, honoring diversity, seeking inclusion, challenging prejudice and exclusion, exploring your own biases, and learning mechanisms to cope with these adjustment issues. The Peace Corps looks forward to having Volunteers from varied backgrounds that include a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities. The agency expects you to work collaboratively to create an inclusive environment that transcends differences and finds common ground.

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Outside of Micronesia's capital, residents of rural communities might have had little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical U.S. behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Micronesia are known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community where you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

As a Volunteer and representative of the United States, you are responsible not only for sharing the diversity of U.S. culture (to include your individual culture and the culture of other Americans) with your host country national counterparts, but also for learning from the diversity of your host country. An important aspect of this cultural exchange will be to demonstrate inclusiveness within your community in a sensitive manner. Additionally, you will share the responsibility of learning about the diversity of your fellow Peace Corps Volunteers and exploring how best to respect differences while serving as supportive allies as you go through this challenging new experience.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in your host country, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental, compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence they have in the United States; male Volunteers may be expected to not perform chores or other tasks ascribed to women; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead a diversity, inclusion, and sensitivity discussion during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support. This training covers how to adapt personal choices and behavior to be respectful of the host country culture, which can have a direct impact on how Volunteers are viewed and treated by their new communities. The Peace Corps emphasizes professional behavior and cross-cultural sensitivity among volunteers and within their communities to help integrate and be successful during service.

An ideal way to view the pursuit of cross-cultural adaptation and/or cultural integration is to recognize that everything done in your host country has both a specific reason for why it is done and an expected outcome. Trust that your host country counterparts are acting with positive intentions and work to mutually seek understanding and commonality. Language differences may add a communication barrier and lead to misunderstandings. Listen more than you speak and seek clarity. Remember that having the ability to laugh at yourself and at life's little surprises goes a long way—laughter is universal.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Gender Role Issues

Gender is a set of socially constructed roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and opportunities. Gender differs from sex, which refers specifically to biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Gender roles and expectations are learned, change over time, and vary within and among cultures. Volunteers are trained in gender awareness as they approach their work in the host country. Gender roles in the United States may differ greatly from those in your country of service. It is important to absorb and to attempt to understand the cultural nuances of gender where you are. For example, in many cultures males are held in higher regard than females and females may manage the households. In some places, females are encouraged to attend school, while in other countries females are discouraged from engaging in such activities and instead work inside or outside of the home.

During the pre-service training, trainees receive an introduction to gender awareness in their country of service, and examine their own thinking about gender roles and how this thinking has impacted them.

They then learn how to analyze development projects using a gender lens to better understand gender roles in their host country and to understand how these gender roles can benefit or limit what females and males may or may not do. During their 27 months of service, Volunteers will further engage in gender trainings to understand better how their gender identity impacts who they are as females or males in the host country and how this perception influences their work and relationships.

Micronesia is a traditional and predominantly Christian society. Palau is probably the most modern of the five major islands, and female Volunteers posted there find that they may be able to jog and even wear long shorts without drawing undue attention. In FSM, however, local women are more traditional and seldom wear shorts or pants, wearing longer skirts and muumuus (loose dresses) instead. In addition, there are strict rules about dating, which are likely to be imposed on female Volunteers by their host families. Micronesians have had little experience with women who have professional roles or who live independently. Micronesian women, for the most part, support the strict gender role distinctions, and female Volunteers often find that they are expected to participate in family chores, such as doing laundry. One of the larger challenges of living in Micronesia is coping effectively and constructively with the different status of women and men and the different standards of behavior to which they are held.

Depending on where they are placed, female Volunteers may find that being alone increases the possibility of being harassed. Besides receiving more unwanted and inappropriate attention from men in Micronesia than men in the United States, female Volunteers may have to work harder than male Volunteers to gain the professional respect of colleagues in the workplace. Female Volunteers may also experience resentment from Micronesian women for attitudes and behaviors that the women see as traditionally male.

Peace Corps/Micronesia encourages female Volunteers to keep a low social profile and practice discretion in public (e.g., not smoking or drinking) to help avoid unwanted attention and an undesirable reputation.

Volunteer Comment

“Being an American woman living in Micronesia is a constant challenge. Women are definitely seen differently here than in the States. Gender roles in the FSM are far more clearly defined which can make daily life here feel like an ongoing struggle. For example, women are expected to care for the children and do all of the housework. In addition, even when dressed culturally appropriately, an American woman will attract unwanted attention. But life is full of challenges and no one ever said the Peace Corps would be easy. In fact, it is a roller coaster ride full of the best and worst times of your life. I am four months in and I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

Volunteers of color sometimes, but not always, have a different Peace Corps experience than white Volunteers. Because of limited exposure, some foreign nationals will expect to see U.S. citizens who are white. Cultures of the world do not typically envision the States as a place of rich diversity with various culturally acceptable perspectives, personalities, and characteristics. Thus, a Volunteer of color may be questioned as about their U.S. citizenship.

In places where American stereotypes and/or caste system dynamics influence perception, Volunteers of color should be mindful of the reasons for these views without creating contentious environments. All too often, host country nationals are simply unaware of the diversity of the United States and require additional information and dialogue. Direct interactions with someone new or something different can take time to get used to, but those who take the time tend to be better off. Although host country nationals may assert that the United States is made up of predominately one race, we know that is not true.

If a member of your community knows of compatriots living in the United States or of notable U.S. citizens of color, you can build on this knowledge as a point of reference for discussing diversity within the States.

For Volunteers of color, the range of responses to their skin color may vary from the extremely kind to the very insensitive. In African and Latin American countries, host country nationals may say “welcome home” to African Americans or Hispanic Americans. Sometimes Volunteers expect to be “welcomed home” but are disappointed when they are not. More commonly, if a Volunteer is mistaken for a host-country national citizen, he or she is expected to behave as a male or female in that culture behaves, and to speak the local language fluently. Host country nationals are sometimes frustrated when the Volunteer does not speak the local language with ease. Conversely, some in the same country may call you a “sell out” because they feel the United States has not done enough to help with social issues. These instances can be turned into teachable moments for the Volunteer and the host country national, in which the Volunteer can ask questions surrounding perception and collaborate with respect to issues and projects at hand, while engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. All Volunteers, to include white Volunteers and those of color, should be mindful of the issues of race that are embedded in U.S. culture and within the culture in your country of service. These issues may significantly affect how Volunteers interact with fellow Volunteers and host country nationals. Being open and inclusive to everyone will improve your experience in interacting with fellow Volunteers and members of your host community.

Because America has been involved with the affairs of Micronesia for more than half a century, Micronesians are somewhat accustomed to Americans and the complexity and diversity of American society. That is not to say there is no prejudice toward people of color here. Because of the long and complex relationships between Micronesia and Asian nations, Volunteers of Asian heritage often report feeling less welcome than other Volunteers.

Volunteer Comment

“[Serving as] an African-American male was a little frustrating in the beginning. Some people here in Micronesia stereotype African-Americans from watching television. In the beginning, some Micronesians asked me, ‘Were you ever in a gang?’ I did not become upset. I sat down with them and explained that what they see on television is different from real life and that one should not judge people from the roles one sees in movies or television shows. I suggested getting to know the individual first before making any judgment calls. After I explained these things, people always agreed. And news travels fast here: I have not been questioned in a stereotypical way since.”

Possible Issues for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Ally (LGBTQA) Volunteers

For LGBTQA Volunteers: Given Micronesia’s traditional values, sexual orientation and non-conforming gender identities should not be discussed openly. While there are no laws against homosexual sex acts and/or pro-gay speech, generally speaking, the LGBTQA community is not accepted or understood and may be stigmatized. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Many LGBTQA Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host communities. Some LGBTQA Volunteers have chosen to come out to community members, with a result of positive and negative reactions, while some have come out only to select Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Dealing with questions about boyfriends, girlfriends, marriage, and children may, at times, be stressful for LGBTQA Volunteers. You may find that Micronesia is a less open and inclusive environment than you have previously experienced. Please know, however, that Peace Corps is supportive of you and Peace Corps staff welcomes dialogue about how to ensure your success as an LGBTQA Volunteer.

More information about serving as an LGBTQ Volunteer is available at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Peace Corps Alumni website at lgbprcv.org. Additionally, the Peace Corps' LGBTQ employee resource group, Spectrum, can be reached at spectrum@peacecorps.gov.

For Ally Volunteers: Peace Corps staff intends to create open, inclusive, and accepting environments. As an agency, the Peace Corps encourages Volunteers to serve as allies to their LGBTQ colleagues in order to create a safe environment.

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have served successfully in Micronesia and have very fond memories of their community and service. LGBTQ support groups may be available in your country of service, providing a network to support the needs of the Peace Corps LGBTQ community. Peace Corps staff will work with Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives.

Many local churches view homosexuality as contrary to Christian norms, and many Micronesians believe that same-sex relationships do not exist among Micronesians. Homosexual or bisexual behavior is not likely to be accepted in your host community and you may be hassled in public places or in the workplace if you are open about your sexual orientation. That being said, there are gay and lesbian Volunteers who have served successfully in Micronesia. Lesbians may face questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex (as do all women). Wearing an "engagement ring" may help. Gay men may have to deal with talk of conquests, girl watching, and dirty jokes.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Health Services determined you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without additional medical support, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in Micronesia without a significant risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/Micronesia staff will work with disabled Volunteers to support them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Possible Issues for Volunteer Couples

Before committing to Peace Corps service, couples should consider how different degrees of enthusiasm about Peace Corps service, adaptation to the physical and cultural environment, and homesickness will affect their lives. It can be helpful to recognize that your reactions to these issues will change throughout your service, and you may not always feel the same as your partner. You and your partner will have different jobs, different schedules, and difference societal pressures. One partner may learn the language faster than the other or have a more satisfying assignment. This can create competition and put different kinds of stress on each person. Anticipating how these pressures will affect you and your partner differently throughout your service can help you remain a source of support for each other. Making friends with other Volunteers is a critical part of fitting into the larger volunteer culture and can also be a good way to expand your support network.

While couples will live together during their service, they may live in separate towns during their pre-service training. This is a stressful time for most Volunteers, and it can be helpful to discuss in advance how you will deal with this potential separation. Your partner can be an important source of stability but can also add stress to your training experience. You may feel torn between traveling to visit your partner and focusing on your training, your host family, and friends you have made at your training site.

Couples often face pressure from host country nationals to change their roles to conform better with traditional Micronesia relationships. Micronesia men and women alike will often not understand American relationship dynamics and may be outwardly critical of relationships that do not adhere to traditional gender roles.

It is also helpful to think about how pressures to conform to Micronesia culture can be challenging to men and women in very different ways. Considering how your partner is being affected and discussing what, if any, aspects of your relationship should be changed can help reduce stress for you both.

All Peace Corps/Micronesia Volunteers live with families. This may present some special challenges for partnered Volunteers who are accustomed to living independently and managing their own households. In rare cases, you may have your own small house within a family compound, but more often you will be living in your own room, within a family house. This can take some getting used to for anyone, but for married couples it can be especially challenging. Privacy in general is not a strong need for most Micronesians. They are accustomed to living in larger family groups where privacy is rare and the need for privacy, even with a married couple, is not always understood or appreciated.

While the challenges are many, the benefits are significant. Living within a family unit is much safer and is a good pathway to connecting with your local community. Micronesian society is driven by family activities and obligations. Volunteers without family connections would have a much harder time integrating into their communities. By the end of service, many Volunteers feel the relationships they build with their host families are among the most rewarding aspects of serving in Micronesia.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Almost all Micronesians identify as Christian. It's hard for them to understand Volunteers who don't identify themselves with a religion. Sometimes this presents challenges between host families and Volunteers. Peace Corps staff strive to train and prepare host families and Volunteers to be respectful and accepting of each other's beliefs.

Slightly over half of the population in Micronesia is Roman Catholic and about 40 percent belongs to a variety of Protestant denominations. Volunteers are required to live with a host family, so many will be expected to attend religious services with their families. In Kosrae, no activities are permitted on Sunday except those associated with the Sabbath. Most Volunteers find effective ways to deal with this issue and come to feel quite at home in Micronesia.

Possible Issues for 50+ Volunteers

Senior Volunteers may find their age an asset in Micronesia. They will often have access to individuals and insights that are not available to younger Volunteers. On the other hand, they will be in a distinct minority within the Volunteer population and could find themselves feeling isolated, looked up to, or ignored.

Seniors are often accustomed to a greater degree of independence and freedom of movement than the Peace Corps' program focus and safety and security practices allow. Pre-service training can be particularly stressful for seniors, whose lifelong learning styles and habits may or may not lend themselves to the techniques used. A senior may be the only older person in a group of Volunteers and initially may not feel part of the group. Younger Volunteers may look to an older Volunteer for advice and support; some seniors find this to be an enjoyable experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Some seniors may find it difficult to adapt to a lack of structure and clarity in their role after having worked for many years in a very structured and demanding job.

More than younger Volunteers, older Volunteers may have challenges in maintaining lifelong friendships and dealing with financial matters from afar. They may want to consider assigning power of attorney to someone in the States.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Micronesia?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds per bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Micronesia?

It is 110 volts and standard U.S. two-prong. There are electrical surges and power outages that can put a strain on voltage converters and appliances, so a good-quality surge protector is recommended. But remember that not all Volunteers will have electricity in their homes. A variety of batteries are available in Micronesia, but the cost is up to two times what it is in the United States, and the batteries are generally of poor quality.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and you are encouraged to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, electronics, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and, in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Micronesia do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles.

What should I bring as gifts for Micronesia friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps Volunteers will not move to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. You will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns, rural villages or on outer islands.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Counseling and Outreach Unit immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The Counseling and Outreach Unit can be reached at 855.855.1961, select option 1, ext. 1470. After business hours, on weekends, and on holidays, the COU duty officer can be reached at the same number. For non-emergency questions, your family can contact your country desk staff through the main Peace Corps number: 855.855.1961.

How easy is it to call home from Micronesia?

International phone service in the FSM varies from island to island and site to site. Calling cards can be purchased for use with landline and cellphones for local and international calls.

Visit <http://www.telcom.fm/> for more information on phone service.

Should I bring a cellphone with me?

Peace Corps/Micronesia provides cellphones to all Volunteers as a safety and security measure. Your U.S. cellphone may or may not be compatible with the system and frequency used in-country.

Visit http://www.telcom.fm for more information.

Will there be email and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

While many Volunteers bring a laptop, many Volunteer sites have limited or no Internet availability. Each Peace Corps office in Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap has desktop computers with Internet and email access available for Volunteers' project-related work. Most PCVs do not have easy access to these Peace Corps offices as they are located in the more urban part of the island state and Volunteer sites tend to be more remote. Many find having their own computer useful. The Peace Corps has strict guidelines regarding Volunteer-created and maintained blogs and websites. These policies are outlined in the Volunteer Handbook and will be reviewed during pre-service training.

Volunteers who bring computers are responsible for insuring and maintaining them. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance. Because of the high value of laptops, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming a victim of crime. Heat and high humidity conditions are damaging to most electronic equipment. There is little to no technical support available and replacement parts are usually not available on the island. If you bring a laptop, be sure to buy a high-quality surge protector, as electrical lapses and surges are common. Also note that paying for Internet access via your laptop will be your responsibility, and your site may or may not have phone line service.

WELCOME LETTERS FROM MICRONESIA VOLUNTEERS

Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

What an exciting time for you! I'm sure you are nervous for the adventures that await you in the FSM. Your Peace Corps experience is an experience of a lifetime and it is one that you will cherish for the rest of your life. You will immerse yourself into a completely foreign culture and you will find yourself adopting new customs. The FSM is, hands down, the most beautiful place I have ever been to in my life. The landscape is astounding and the fresh air is something you will never want to leave behind. The hearts of the local people are so genuine and pure that it is contagious and you too will find yourself sharing everything that you have with a grateful smile. However, you will also be tested and challenged in ways that may be very unfamiliar to you, but when you overcome them, you truly feel like you can accomplish anything.

My name is Hannah Swope and I am currently an M79. I have been a Peace Corps Volunteer in Pohnpei for a little over a year teaching English as a second language to middle school students. I have two counterparts that I teach and lesson plan with. They have taught me a lot about teaching in another country and adapting my lessons for students learning English as their second language. My first year was full of learning mistakes, corrections, more mistakes, and small successes. I can say that with the help of my local friends, counterparts, and my host family I have been able to adapt to my life here on Pohnpei. It hasn't always been easy, but I am thankful for the ups and the downs. I hope you will remember that with every obstacle comes a learning experience. I wish the best for you and I hope you too will fall in love with life here in Pohnpei.

Sincerely,
—Hannah Swope

Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

I hope this letter finds you warm and cozy in your family's house. That's where this letter found me two years and two months ago. But to be honest, I wasn't feeling cozy. I remember feeling nervous, excited, and to be quite honest ... What's the word? Vulnerable. That's it. Vulnerable. It's a scary feeling. The fear of the unknown is what keeps us from reaching out into the world, and it's almost what kept me from becoming a Volunteer. But no matter how much that feeling dug at me, I knew it was just a normal reaction to leaving for two years, and guess what? If I hadn't have left for Micronesia, here's what I would have missed out on:

- Helping hundreds of Micronesian children speak better English
- Living and learning with a different culture
- Coaching three different sports teams
- Learning a new language
- Finding myself, thousands of miles away from home

So embrace that vulnerability. Hug it tight and then punch it in the mouth! You're going to have an amazing experience during the next two years. I wish you the best of luck no matter where your Volunteer service takes you, and always remember to take it one day at a time. Kasalehlia, and welcome to Peace Corps/Micronesia!

—Nick Canfield, M78

Kaselelie maingko! Hello everyone!

On behalf of myself, my fellow Volunteers, and our host country, welcome! This is an exciting time in your Peace Corps experience. I remember the excitement and anxiousness of receiving my own invitation. You are some of the lucky few who will come to Micronesia. Since only a small percentage of Volunteers come to the Pacific Islands, I was very surprised by my prospective site. All of a sudden, the experience I had in my mind changed drastically. It turned out to be a wonderful turn of events. Those of us who come here experience a culture, food, and sights so few ever have the chance to experience. The beauty of the islands is undeniable, the people are very welcoming, and I swear you'll never tire of the variety of bananas here! Now it's not all sandy beaches and coconut drinks here, but that is part of the experience. Every Volunteer has an experience all their own, but if you ask every Volunteer they all have something in common. Everyone has their ups and downs during their two years in the Peace Corps. Just remember that we didn't choose the Peace Corps because we thought it would be easy, and every down has an up. You get to meet a wonderful group of people just like you in your training group. They will be some of the best support you have here. I have made lifelong friendships and memories with people I'll never forget. When I first learned that I would be living with a host family I'll admit I was skeptical. I thought it would be awkward living in someone else's home, but I couldn't be more wrong. These people really do become your family away from family. They are so proud to have you in their homes, and treat you like one of their own. It is not just the host families, but also the community. You'll soon learn that every community shares a kinship, and being welcomed into it gives you a proud feeling. You'll learn the hierarchy of chiefs and titles, making local food, and the importance of sakau (a kava drink). In your spare time each island has much to offer including: scuba diving, mountain climbing, kayaking, fishing, sightseeing, swimming, and, yes, even sandy beaches. So enjoy this time with your family and friends, eat your favorite foods, go to your favorite places, and get ready have an experience of a lifetime! Welcome to the Peace Corps/Micronesia family!

Sincerely,
—Aidee Torres, Group M79

Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

Congratulations on being invited to join the Peace Corps! You are about to embark on an exciting adventure with so many unknowns. Don't worry about the details yet, just embrace the new experience. Learn to go with the flow.

I live on a very small island called Moch, an outer island of Chuuk. From anywhere on my island I can hear the ocean and in most cases see it too. It's beautiful and it's hot, so get ready to sweat a lot. My island had Internet for the first five months of service and it's been broken ever since. Not having Internet made my life less stressful and more enjoyable. Letters and packages from friends and family mean so much more than emails.

When I first arrived on Moch, everything was new and everything took effort. I was so worried about my family, fitting in, not doing the right thing, and being horribly inappropriate without meaning to be. About a month after my arrival it was raining in the evening. "*Sa tutu fan ut!*" ("Let's shower in the rain"), my sister called to me. We went out in the pouring rain, sang, dance, and jumped in puddles. It wasn't until that moment I realized how much I missed being myself. It was dark, I was with my sisters, and no one was watching. It was so freeing, and in that moment I realized I could be Chuukese while also being me.

I had some teaching experience in America, three years as a music teacher, but had never taught English, chemistry, or high school students. Don't worry about not having teaching experience. Just the fact that

you went to school in America and have experienced something other than lecture-style teaching will help you and give you great ideas. Be creative, talk to your fellow PCVs, know it's OK not to have all the answers, and try your best.

In the past 12 months, I've seen so many new things. I've plucked a chicken, gutted fish, learned to express myself in another language, eaten jars of peanut butter with a spoon, watched a casket be nailed shut, attempted to teach my family to trick-or-treat but discovered my family's interpretation was much more fun, been seasick for 20 hours on a ship, seen and eaten sharks, and seen beautiful sunsets. No matter how much I tell you, I can never tell you what will happen to you. Your experience will be unique. My advice? Try not to have expectations. Come with an open mind, ready for anything. Be flexible. You won't change the world, but you will make a difference. Once you get the site, find one thing you do that makes you happy and make sure you do it whenever you are feeling lost/alone or desperate. You will adjust and enjoy your life here.

Congratulations again.
—Gretchen Carrol, M78

Welcome to Micronesia!

I served for two years in the outer islands of Chuuk. Serving in the outer islands is a unique experience in many ways. Outer island PCVs typically spend four to six months at a time at their sites because transportation (ships and a six-seater airplane) to the main island only run every two to three weeks. Your community is well-defined by the ocean's edge. Letters and packages are eagerly anticipated because they are your only source of news. You're immersed in the culture and language of a rarely visited place.

A typical day at my site starts at 6 a.m., thanks to the sun and roosters. I usually do yoga and take a bucket shower before breakfast. Breakfast is normally fish and rice, but sometimes there are pancakes or island donuts. Most mornings I'm at school by 7:30, along with 10–15 kids who get to school early to read or do puzzles. School runs from 8 a.m.–12 p.m. on a good day and on a great day it runs another hour and a half in the afternoon. After school, I plan lessons with my counterparts. (This year I had four counterparts all in English classes, last year I had two counterparts with English and math classes.) Around 3 p.m. I would do a “me” activity to help unwind from the school day: reading a book on my hammock, writing a letter home, swimming, etc. Then I go find the village kids and play soccer, volleyball, or another island game. Dinner happens as the sun sets with more rice and fish, and if I'm lucky a local food as well (breadfruit, taro). After dark, my host family and I would hang out until bedtime around 8–9 p.m.

When I was in your shoes, reading the welcome book, I was most worried about integrating into the community and living with a host family. These two things turned out to be the most rewarding aspects of my service. Some advice: occupying the same room but doing separate things is OK! Play volleyball or basketball (or bring your favorite sport to teach) with your village. It is an easy way to build bonds without a lot of language skills. And advice from an M77: When you feel lonely, that's when you need to sit down in the middle of the cookhouse!

No matter where you are placed, remember that you create your Peace Corps experience. It is a “choose your own adventure” of the best kind (gastronomic and otherwise)!

Best of luck!
—Sarah Morse, M78 Mortlocks, Chuuk

Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

This is M79 Dan Parker. Greetings from Team Chuuk! By now you've already come a long way by completing the lengthy Peace Corps application process and are on your way to hanging tough in training. As you get closer to getting the experience you envisioned years ago when you made the decision to pursue the Peace Corps, your anxiety may be increasing. I've only been here a year myself, but I can confidently say that this is a time for incoming PCVs to embrace all of their anxiety and excitement as part of your overall Peace Corps experience. Think of your excitement as something that will solidify this time of transition in your memory: You will be able to look back on your early days and smile when you realize how much you've grown into your new environment. I know that reading too many platitudes in a single letter may come across as insincere, so I'll do my best to give a good mix of the realities of island life coupled with advice that I hope can make your life easier from day one.

Local food is delicious. It's rare that a person enters in to a drastically different culture and immediately takes to eating the local cuisine. Don't fret if you find yourself not liking too much of what's served to you in the beginning; it takes time for your tastes to acclimate. On the bright side, from the two groups of Volunteers I've been with, it's nearly universal that a strong affinity for local food will develop.

Schools in Chuuk need help. This is a fact that should be obvious, but from my own experience it was difficult to align what I imagined with what the reality was before I arrived. With whatever frustration may await you, please keep in mind that if these school issues were not present, there would be no need for the Peace Corps to be here in the first place. Instead of being overwhelmed, look at these existing conditions as an opportunity to make a difference in a place that needs it the most. Be patient, keep focused, stay cool, and your victories at school will start adding up.

Friends can be anywhere. In my experience, all smiles given to people are returned in kind. You might not want to be friends with everyone you meet, but, of course, doing your best to stay lighthearted and open will endear you to your community and make your experience much more enjoyable. Find a few outlets you like to consistently spend time on and invite people in; you'll find the joy in shared experiences transcends culture.

Appreciate this opportunity for what it is—a once in a lifetime experience. School life is immersive and adjusting to a new way of life can be mentally taxing, but please do whatever it takes to remember why you joined the Peace Corps to begin with. You are about to embark on an extremely unique experience and even the people who do dream of doing similar things rarely get offered this kind of opportunity. You're about to start something that, regardless of how fun or difficult or easy or unusual it all is, you will look back and be proud of yourself for accomplishing it when it's all done.

That's all! I hope this all didn't come across as either anxiety-provoking or overly flowery. Peace Corps/Micronesia offers an amazing and valuable experience (as proof by my agreeing to write this letter, haha). I've enjoyed the ride so far, I hope you do too!

—Dan Parker (M79)

Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

First, congratulations on making the decision to come to Micronesia! The Peace Corps is many things and an adventure is definitely one of them. From this moment on, everything is about to change. The best possible advice I can give you is to take a deep breath, have patience, be comfortable with not knowing everything, and remember that you have the power to choose a great experience.

There will be challenges and there will be moments that you will cherish for the rest of your life. Embrace all of it. Be kind to yourself and remember, it's OK to make mistakes. It's a part of the ride. Micronesia has four islands: Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap. All of the islands are unique. However, despite their differences, all of the Volunteers find a very common thread in our experience. I am a Volunteer in the outer islands of Chuuk. It is easy to hear "outer island" and immediately think "native," however that is not entirely the case.

The Mortlocks are an interesting mix of old and new. I spend days cooking over an open fire while listening to my cousins talk about how much they love reggae and Justin Bieber.

Houses range from concrete homes, tin houses, and local thatch roof huts. There is no electricity, however we have solar power. I've learned pretty quickly that not having electricity or running water doesn't change my daily life as much as I anticipated. After a year, I don't give it a second thought.

My island's name is Lekinioch and it is a two-mile long crescent on an atoll. There are no roads or cars, just a long flat pathway lined with coral rocks. It is 200 miles from nowhere and the only way to get there is a 25-hour ship ride or a seven-person plane. Travel days have provided me with a wealth of anecdotes I'll always keep in my back pocket.

It truly is a beautiful island and I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to live there for the past year. It's a tropical paradise and the people are warm and incredibly welcoming. There are maybe 200–300 people on my island and absolutely everyone knows my name.

At school I teach 3rd, 7th, and 8th grade English with a co-teacher. I have been very lucky to have involved, intelligent and strong women to collaborate with and through our work we've also become very good friends.

When not at school, I love to watch volleyball games, sing with my sisters under a full moon, and swim in the pink, purples, and blues of the sunset (even though my grandmother claims the ghosts will make sick). This experience has meant more to me than I could ever put into words and I have no doubt you will also discover your own unique path. Best of luck and remember that we are all so excited to have you here.

Get ready for the experience of a lifetime!

Always,
—Mariel Iezzoni, Team Chuuk, M78

PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Micronesia and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Micronesia.

Tips about packing from current Volunteers (this is a general list and is not site-specific):

- In Pohnpei, thrift stores are available as well as Ace office supplies and grocery stores.
- Med kits are issued a couple days after you arrive and include refills of bug repellent, sunscreen, over-the-counter medical needs (Band-Aids, Tylenol, etc.).
- Bring things that you are particular about, otherwise let your friends/family ship items to you. Create “maybe” bags and pre-pack boxes you may want your family to send to you. Anything you’re unsure about or that you think might be useful but you aren’t sure, take it out of the suitcase and add it to the maybe bag.
- U.S. postal rates are utilized to ship to all of FSM and Palau.
- You do not need to buy new clothes. Don’t bring anything too nice, as everything will endure a lot of wear and tear and may be lost, borrowed, or taken.

Men

- Four to five pairs of casual lightweight pants for work (many schools require you to wear pants, as does the Peace Corps during training. Quick-dry travel pants are practical.)
- Four to five button-down or polo-style shirts (anything short-sleeved with a collar, lightweight is better ; cotton-poly blends will dry completely)
- Several T-shirts
- Approximately three pairs of lightweight shorts (athletic and regular); shorts should be loose and knee-length
- Underwear

Note: Lightweight slacks, flip-flops or sandals, and a nice Hawaiian-style shirt is appropriate for almost any occasion: It is considered professional for work and is also proper church attire for males.

Women

- One or two pairs of loose, lightweight, casual long pants (cotton or linen)
- One or two long-sleeved shirts (protection from mosquitoes at night)
- One or two pairs of long loose shorts (at least knee-length); one should be quick-drying to wear over a swimsuit
- Two to three loose skirts that cover your knees. Note: Host families will most likely give you some as gifts, but skirts are required during training, so be prepared. You will accumulate many skirts throughout your Peace Corps service!
- A couple of sleeveless tops that are not too tight (you will likely only wear these in your home, depending on your island)
- Several T-shirts (plain-colored scoop or v-neck are ideal)
- One or two casual, conservative dresses (not see-through or sleeveless); you can buy local dresses and have them made, so you really only need one or two dresses to start
- Cotton half-slip (nylon is too hot) or bike shorts for wearing under skirts (due to heat rash, some Volunteers don’t recommend bike shorts.)
- Several bras, both regular and sports bras (it gets too hot and sweaty not to have a bunch)
- Underwear

Outside/over clothes

- Long-sleeved, lightweight, waterproof jacket
- Polar fleece/sweatshirt/hoodie for boat rides and plane trips
- Hat
- Flip-flops! (These will be worn 95 percent of the time, and the custom in Micronesia is to remove your shoes when entering homes or some office buildings. If you are not used to wearing flip-flops, make sure to bring a comfortable pair from the U.S. because those sold in stores here lack arch support and are made of tough plastic. Any shoe that is not slip-on is impractical.)
- Reef walkers

Exercise (optional, depending on your lifestyle)

- Basketball shorts (female and male); pockets are a plus
- Dryfit/synthetic shirts (male and female)
- Yoga capris or longer (females); also good for wearing under skirts and dresses
- Rashguard (male and female)
- Board shorts (male and female), at least knee-length
- Running shoes/socks
- Rashguard and board shorts for swimming; women can bring a one-piece or bikini for diving or to wear underneath a rashguard and shorts, but likely won't be necessary at your site

Other

- Good pair of sunglasses (including prescription sunglasses, if you need them)
- Waterproof backpack (not water resistant)
- High-quality water bottle
- Mini dry bags for electronics
- Full-sized dry bag
- Goggles/snorkel/flippers
- Good small knife or multitool (Swiss Army or Leatherman)
- Re-sealable baggies
- Duffel/overnights bag
- Very basic set of school supplies (training is like class, so bring a few pens, folders, spiral bound notebooks, though the Peace Corps will provide some too)
- Good scissors/razor for cutting hair, etc.
- Sewing kit
- Teacher bag (answer keys don't fit in backpacks)
- Good lighter (optional)
- Yoga mat (also great for sleeping)
- Quick-dry towel
- Spare flat sheet (may come in handy when some families can't spare an extra)
- Start-up supply of stationery (peel and stick envelopes) and pens. You can buy all of this on the main island. Do not bring U.S. stamps, as FSM and Palau use their own stamps.
- Baby wipes
- Watch (essential teacher item)
- Deodorant
- Hand sanitizer
- Baby powder

- Presents for host families: You should not worry about packing a lot of gifts in your luggage. Most families here are large and you won't know with whom you will be placed until you arrive. If you want to bring gifts, suggestions include: teen magazines, scholastic magazines, baby items (mainly clothing), hats, shirts, and souvenir items from your hometown. Otherwise you can buy things here. Don't overload your luggage with gifts and don't buy expensive items. Remember, you will be living with a couple of families—at least one in training and one at your permanent site. You can buy things in Pohnpei. Gifts are not required but always welcome. You may want to start out with something small for your first family, then figure out something local for the rest.
- Your favorite DVDs, books, music, pictures, etc. (Micronesians love to look at pictures over and over again)
- Travel hammock
- Playing cards and small, portable games (good to entertain yourself, your students, and your host family)
- Clothesline (optional)
- Face wash (or wipes according to preference)
- Diaper rash cream (good for heat rash)
- Tweezers/manicure set, etc.
- Comb/brush

Female-specific

- Tampons (not readily available) or other preferred feminine hygiene products
- Nail polish (optional)
- Hair ties
- Small amount of makeup (optional for town trips)

Electronics

- MP3 player
- Laptop (optional)
- Kindle (optional)
- Waterproof camera
- Shortwave radio
- Headlamp
- Waterproof flashlight
- Portable speakers
- Good surge protector
- Spare batteries

What Not To Bring

- Ties
- Anything that is especially valuable/sentimental to you. If you would be very upset if it is broken, lost, molded or rotted, or if it is stolen, reconsider your decision to bring it.
- Fancy jewelry. There is a lot of great local shell jewelry available.
- Anything leather, which molds and rots in just a few days due to the climate.

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items are relevant to everyone, and the list is not comprehensive.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Counseling and Outreach Unit at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour phone number: 855.855.1961 ext. 1470).
- Give family and friends the Peace Corps [On the Home Front](#) handbook.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish service; if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service abroad, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Keep a bank account in your name in the United States.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service. (Information about loan deferment is at peacecorps.gov/loans.)
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.

- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 855.855.1961 ext. 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.

CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

Peace Corps headquarters toll-free number: 855.855.1961, press 1, then extension number (see below)

Peace Corps mailing address: Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About	Staff	Toll-free extension	Direct/Local
Responding to an invitation	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Country information	Sasha Cooper-Morrison Desk Officer	ext. 2502 micronesiadesk@peacecorps.gov	202.692.2502
Plane tickets, passports, visas, or other travel matters	CWT SATO Travel	ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal clearance:	Office of Placement	ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical clearance and forms processing (includes dental)	Screening Nurse	ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical reimbursements (handled by a subcontractor)			800.818.8772
Loan deferments, taxes, financial operations		ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Readjustment allowance withdrawals, power of attorney, staging (pre-departure orientation), and reporting instructions	Office of Staging	ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks prior to departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas) 24 hours	Counseling and Outreach Unit	ext. 1470	202.692.1470
Office of Victim Advocacy		ext. 1753 24 hours (call or text)	202.692.1753 202.409.2704