

Pre-departure Advice from 2011-2012 ETAs

Congratulations! You're going to Indonesia! Now what?

Last year, ETAs participated in a pre-departure orientation to help them prepare for life in Indonesia. Since that will not happen this year (or will only happen virtually), the 2011-2012 ETAs decided to put together this short document of information we wished we had known or were glad to have known prior to departure. This should not be viewed as a substitute for the ETA Guidebook (which you will also receive during the pre-departure period), but rather supplementary information that will hopefully make the pre-departure period a little less stressful – these are the things we wish we would have known last June. It should also be made clear that this is not written by AMINEF, but by the group of 2011-2012 ETAs.

The first bit of advice and one that you will, inevitably, hear repeated countless times is that *IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOUR SITE* or *EVERY SITE IS DIFFERENT*. Indonesia is an incredibly diverse country, and very few generalizations can be applied to all of the sites. Placements vary from locations that are incredibly isolated to places in the center of everything. You can be in an urban center, in a fishing village on the beach, or in a small town in the mountains. By now, you have likely seen a variety of images depicting Indonesia's beauty; you will definitely experience this during your time here; just don't assume that it will be your backyard.

Now here is some more specific advice about preparing for your trip to Indonesia:

Visa

- To legally serve as an ETA in Indonesia, you will need a limited stay visa. This process can be stressful and confusing, but it is important to know: (1) you CANNOT get a visa without the necessary documentation from AMINEF; (2) AMINEF does not always receive all of the necessary paperwork from Indonesian government agencies until it is very close to your departure date—BE PREPARED TO HAVE TO APPLY FOR YOUR VISA AT THE LAST MINUTE—it usually works out just fine; (3) in order to make things as smooth as possible even if you do have to wait until the last minute to make a visa run, you should start researching NOW which Consulate serves your area and what documentation they will require you to provide when you finally do apply for the visa. The following list includes items that are usually required, but *keep in mind that exact lists are difficult to obtain and requirements can vary from city to city* – for details, contact the Consulate with jurisdiction over your location):
 - 2 copies of the application (get it from the website of the Consulate/Embassy that serves your state)
 - 2 color passport photos
 - Authorization letter from AMINEF (AMINEF will send this to you)
 - \$100 dollars (if you apply in person, this has to be in the form of a money order)
 - Resume/CV (most did not actually require this, but you may want to have it in case, especially if you are travelling a long distance to the Embassy/Consulate)

- Letter of good conduct from your local police station (most did not actually require this, but you may want to have it in case, especially if you are travelling a long distance to the Embassy/Consulate)
- Copy of airline ticket to Indonesia
- ETAs usually experience no problems in getting visas, other than the confusing and potentially last-minute process. Try not to stress too much about this!
- Make sure you have at least 10 blank pages in your passport (if you do not, you can get extra pages now or pay to do it later in Jakarta – but you'll need a handful of pages to get the visa, possibly transit in Singapore, and then enter Indonesia)
- Your passport should be valid at least until March 2015.
- Bring extra passport photos.
- Scan your important documents once you arrive in Indonesia, and email them to yourself. That way in a pinch (like when you're traveling), you can find them on the Internet and print them. It is also a good idea to carry photocopies of everything and to leave copies with someone at home. Hopefully, you never experience any problems, but it is definitely better to be prepared!

Teaching

- Topics from the curriculum you will be teaching include (don't worry much about this now, but we wanted to provide an outline in case you want to bring anything from home to help you teach – realia, photos, etc.): greetings, accepting invitations, making/cancelling promises, expressing happiness, showing sympathy, giving instructions, advertisements, recount, narrative, how to, procedure, giving compliments, giving congratulations, expressing surprise, news items.
- Photos of you from home are especially exciting for students.
- Note: There is a good chance that you will have to give an introductory lesson your first week- start thinking about how you will want to introduce yourself to your students.

Health

- There will be many vaccinations recommended for travelers to Indonesia. It is up to you and your doctor to decide which ones are necessary for you. However, some vaccinations must be administered on a very specific schedule. Past ETAs have been frustrated to not learn about these until it is too late to follow the schedule; so, it might be helpful for you to know that:
 - Hepatitis A (Given in two doses, often paired with Hepatitis B; time between doses ranges from 6-18 months apart)
 - Hepatitis B (Often given during childhood; when paired with Hepatitis A the schedule follows one and six month intervals between three doses)
 - Typhoid (Choices are available; consult a doctor approximately one month before departure)
 - Japanese Encephalitis (Two doses administered 28 days apart; should be completed at least one week prior to departure) **(Most ETAs do not get this before coming to Indonesia, although some want it for traveling to neighboring countries. Also, it can be gotten in Indonesia for MUCH cheaper than in America.)**

- Rabies (Series of three shots over a one month period—can be done in Indonesia pre- or post-exposure for cheaper than in the U.S., but recommended pre-departure)
- Malaria is a health concern in Indonesia, though taking or not taking anti-malarial drugs is a personal choice due to possibly uncomfortable side effects. However, it may be a good idea to bring a small supply for use during camping, trekking, hiking or other activities with exposure to insects. AGAIN, IT IS YOUR DECISION TO USE MALARIA PROPHYLAXIS OR NOT, BUT IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR OR PHARMACIST ABOUT THE VARIOUS PROS AND CONS. (Note: most ETAs from previous years have not taken malaria medication and have been fine – although at least one who WAS taking prophylaxis did contract malaria – he recovered without problems.)
- If you plan on additional traveling in Southeast Asia, be sure to research the vaccination requirements for countries of interest as they may differ from Indonesia's.

Safety/Security

- One of the best ways to keep yourself safe in an unfamiliar environment is to get to know your new neighbors. To do this **you will need to be able to communicate in Bahasa Indonesia**. Consider investing **significant** time, pre-departure, into studying the language—at most sites, it is necessary to be at least marginally communicative in Bahasa Indonesia. Though language training will be provided during the in-country orientation, the more you learn before coming the better off you will be.
 - Rosetta Stone is not very beneficial for Bahasa Indonesia
 - Learning Indonesian Podcast (with Shawn and Chi Chi) is great
 - Instant Indonesian (book with a green cover) has been helpful
- ETAs' sites utilize a variety of transportation methods. A popular way to get around is via motorbike, and many ETAs find this to be the most convenient and efficient way to move around their sites (however it is not necessary in any site). Different islands, cities and villages all enforce or ignore traffic laws differently. Therefore, it may be a good idea to consider learning to drive a motorcycle and to obtain a motorcycle license while still in the U.S. Although many grantees do it, motorcycling is one of the leading causes of death in Indonesia and AMINEF will discourage it.

Money

- If possible, **open a Charles Schwab account**. There are no ATM or wire transfer fees! (You may need to do this in person- call to find out)
- You should also maintain your primary bank account—just in case your card for one account is lost/stolen/inactivated, then you can still access money.
- In the event of a lost or stolen ATM/Debit Card, you should make sure to have a back-up card that you keep in a **separate** place.

Packing – (Consult the ETA Guidebook for a more comprehensive list. Also, contact the ETA who was at/near your site last year to ask about what you need to bring – ask one of the returners to put you in touch.)

- Every site is different, and there is no way of knowing what, if any, preparations have been made at your home before you arrive. It may be smart to bring some Clorox/Lysol wipes as well as a bed sheet, in case you arrive in the middle of the night and your house is lacking what you would likely consider basic necessities. These will be easy to obtain, but maybe not on the first night.
- Tide-To-Go or other stain removers—Indonesian laundry services are great about making your clothes smell nice but not so much about making them stain free.
- Your school will likely be picky about what you wear while teaching and ask you to buy (or even have made) traditional batik uniforms or other specific clothing. Bring a few teaching outfits to start; but **pack light**, since in all likelihood you will have to get new clothes at your site (note: shoes and clothes are much cheaper here!). We can't emphasize enough how important it is to dress in a way that's consistent with how other people in your community are dressing. Past ETAs have occasionally assumed they could get away with bending some dress code rules by virtue of being foreign – don't do this. When you arrive at your site, look carefully at what other teachers are wearing and then go out and get the clothes you need to follow suit.
- Invest in a Kindle (or other e-reader)!!
- Contact solution is difficult to find in Indonesia. If you wear contacts, you will want to consider packing enough to last through your time in Indonesia.
- Research the weight restrictions of the airlines on which you be flying **before** you start packing!
- “Your Thing”—For many ETAs, their time in Indonesia is full of amazing and unforgettable experiences, but they also undoubtedly experience some low points as well, possibly made worse by the absence of familiar things. You will likely have a good deal of free time and may possibly feel bored, lonely, unproductive, or stressed. You should think about “your thing” and what you may need to help you feel better during those low points. If you're a runner, make sure you bring good sneakers. If you like to cook, bring some fun recipes for stove top cooking (you will not have an oven)—some ETAs make their “thing” experimenting with recipes using Indonesian ingredients as substitutions for the original ingredients. Bring your favorite music, TV shows, DVDs, or something silly such as coloring books, chalk, bubbles, or bouncy balls. Anything that helps put you in a better mood.
- Oleh-oleh is a term that will become very familiar to you in Indonesia. Oleh-oleh are small, location-specific gifts that you bring back for EVERYONE after traveling somewhere. One ETA from 2011-2012 recommends: “I called my university, explained to them about the educational exchange Obama and SBY are working to promote, and asked if they would be interested in contributing small items (like pens and pencils), so that my students think about their school if they consider studying in the USA. It worked sooo well! They sent the items directly to my school so I didn't have to worry about lugging them in my suitcases, and sent enough things for all of my students (pens, pencils, t-shirts, notebooks, pendants, etc). It was a great, free way to get oleh-oleh for everyone.”
 - Other good oleh-oleh: pennies, candy from America, postcards, etc.

- Granola bars or other small snacks could be nice to have while you are still adjusting to the Indonesian diet or just want a little home comfort every now and then.

This information is reviewed in the separate document “Unofficial Pre-Departure Checklist.”

We hope this information, paired with the ETA Guidebook, helps you prepare for your grant year in Indonesia. As always, remember that every site is different, and you are sure to be surprised no matter how much you prepare. Enjoy everything, the positives and negatives. Happy teaching. Happy traveling. Happy living.