Short History

American International School of Brazzaville (AISB)

Founded in 2012, the American International School of Brazzaville was created to provide a quality education for the children of families living in Brazzaville, who wish to have their children educated in English. Initially affiliated with the American School of Yaoundé, in 2013 AISB became an independent school.

AISB Today

THE SCHOOL
The American International School of Brazzaville is a coeducational independent school, which offers an educational program from Pre-Kindergarten 3 through Grade 8 for students of all nationalities. The school year is comprised of four quarters with a total of 180 days of instruction. A five-member Board appointed by its founding foundation governs the school. The Director of the school is a non-voting member of the Board.

THE PROGRAM
The American International School of Brazzaville offers an educational program that is comprehensive, gained through an enriched American curriculum in a secure and diverse environment. In addition to core academic subjects (English, Math, Social Studies, Science), additional classes are offered in information technology, music, art, drama, and physical education. The language of instruction is English, with French taught as the world language. English as a Second Language is offered to students in grades 1 through 8. In 2014-15 the school will be Pre K 3 – grade 8 with distinct division between the elementary and middle school program. AISB will endeavor to add one grade each year until it reaches a full high school program.

AISB sponsors extra-curricular activities and considers these activities to be an integral part of education. Expanding the extra-curricular program will be a focus as the school grows. The school also operates a small Recreation Center that offers some activities and classes for students, parents, and community members.

FACILITIES
AISB is located in the Bacongo area of the city of Brazzaville. The school has 7 classrooms, a multi-purpose room, 1 computer lab, a small library, swimming pool, covered volleyball/basketball court, and a cafeteria/canteen. The playground includes an area with equipment for smaller children and a small field for soccer and other outdoor activities.

TECHNOLOGY at AISB
Technology is a very important component at AISB. The campus is wireless with a one-to-one iPad program in the middle school and iPad carts for the elementary school. Teachers all have laptops with smart boards in most classrooms.

Republic of Congo and Brazzaville

IN BRIEF
The Congo is situated in west-central Africa astride the equator. It borders Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Angola exclave of Cabinda, with a short stretch of coast on the South Atlantic. Its area is nearly three times that of Pennsylvania, USA. Most of the inland is tropical rain forest, drained by tributaries of the Congo River.
In pre-colonial times, three kingdoms dominated the region now called the Republic of Congo: Kongo (originating about 1000), the Loango (flourishing in the 17th century), and Tio. After the Portuguese located the Congo River in 1482, commerce was carried on with the tribes, especially the slave trade.

The area came under French sovereignty in the 1880s. Pierre Savorgnon de Brazza, a French empire builder, competed with agents of Belgian King Leopold's International Congo Association (later Zaire) for control of the Congo River basin. Between 1882 and 1891, treaties were secured with all the main local rulers on the river's right bank, placing their lands under French protection. In 1908, France organized French Equatorial Africa (AEF), comprising its colonies of Middle Congo (modern Congo), Gabon, Chad, and Oubangui-Chari (modern Central African Republic). Brazzaville was selected as the federal capital. The Congo proclaimed its independence without leaving the French Community in 1960, calling itself the Republic of Congo.

(Fact Monster/Information Please® Database)

LANGUAGE
French is the official language of the Republic of Congo and is used in governmental activities. Lingala and Monokutuba are commonly spoken trade languages. To get around the city a working knowledge of French is helpful.

FOOD IN DAILY LIFE
The rain forest soil is not nutrient-rich; less than 3 percent of the land is cultivated for food production. Chicken and fish are the most commonly eaten proteins. Bananas, pineapples, taro, peanuts, manioc, cassava, rice, and bread are the staples.

BASIC ECONOMY
Agriculture, industry, and services dominate the economy. The most important products are lumber, plywood, sugar, cocoa, coffee, diamonds, and especially oil.

LOCAL CURRENCY
The Republic of Congo CFA Franc (CFA) is the official local currency. The U.S. dollar is not accepted. Reference http://www.xe.com/ucc/ for the most up to date exchange rate. There are several ATMs in Brazzaville, which are safe to use. ALL business is conducted in cash (grocery stores, restaurants, domestic help, etc.).

LIVING IN BRAZZAVILLE
Though Pointe Noire is the economic center of the country, Brazzaville, is the capital city. Brazzaville enjoys mild cool evenings and warm afternoons most of the year, with fairly mild humidity. The harmattan, seasonal dust that floats down from the Sahara, occurs in Brazzaville in February - March, giving the atmosphere a hazy quality. Electricity and water cuts are not frequent but do occur at times and may last for several hours.

DRIVING IN BRAZZAVILLE
A 4x4 isn’t necessary for driving in the city, but is recommended. The key is a high clearance, which is beneficial during the rainy season when the roads tend to flood. For weekend trips outside of Brazzaville, you will definitely want that 4x4.

TAXIS
Taxis are plentiful between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., and are generally in reasonably sound mechanical order, although they lack air conditioning. It is recommended to use your best judgment BEFORE entering a taxi. If it doesn’t look to be in good shape it is probably best to wait for another taxi.

There is usually no need to bargain; the fare in town is usually fixed at around 1,000 CFA (approximately US $2), no matter how many passengers. Tipping is not expected, but a 100 CFA tip is appreciated. Trips
to the airport are about CFA 3,000. Yes, taxi fares are 1000 CFA, but you can ask for change if the distance is reasonably short otherwise the taxi men will collect the usual 1000 CFA. Short distances are valued at 700-800 CFA.

You can also hire a taxi for the day, but be prepared to pay between 35,000 and 40,000 CFA.

SECURITY
As in any city there are incidents that can occur. One can avoid most problems by practicing personal security measures. While most people drive, shop, walk and jog without problems, be prepared for local people approaching you. Though the crime rate is typical of most big cities, ordinary precautions should be followed, such as avoiding traveling or walking alone at night in unfamiliar areas, locking your car, and being aware of your surroundings.

WEATHER
This is a warm and tropical locale. There are two rainy seasons and two dry seasons:

- Big rainy season: beginning of March until about May 15
- Big dry season: second half of May until the end of September
- Small rainy season: beginning of October until the end of December
- Small dry season: January to February

During the dry season, temperatures range from 65F (18C) to 80F (26C) with low humidity and during the rainy season temperatures range from 75F (24C) to 95F (35C) with high humidity.

Sudden and thunderstorms are possible during the rainy season and care must be taken while driving on the flooded roads. The climate lends itself to mosquitoes and sunburns so bring lots of bug repellant and sunscreen! UMBRELLA (s) Highly Recommended!

DRESS
Low maintenance, loose fitting cotton clothing is appropriate year round. A long sleeve shirt or light sweater is necessary at times if you are working in air-conditioning.

WHAT TO DO IN BRAZZAVILLE
Though Brazzaville can be a bit of a sleepy town, there are activities to keep you busy in your free time. There are a few private clubs that offer golf, tennis, swimming, and riding, but they all require purchasing monthly or annual membership. The prices are a little higher than private club memberships in the US.

There is a French Cultural Center located near the American Embassy. They host many activities and events throughout the year. Schedules for concerts, movies (usually in French), and sporting events are published on their website http://institutfrancais-congo.com/.

There are a number of good restaurants of varied cuisine in Brazzaville, but the prices of even the inexpensive places may seem expensive when compared to the US. There are also a few bars and dance clubs in town. Some of the area hotels offer specials events at their restaurants on holidays (some can be good deals). A few of them also have nice pools for non-guest use (Ledger Hotel, Hotel Mikhael, the Olympic Palace Hotel & the Brazzaville Beach Hotel).

There are several craft markets with a wide variety of African art and crafts. There is also an art school in the city, which offers an impressive selection of paintings from up-and-coming and well-known Congolese artists.
Medical Information / Health Issues

You must have a Yellow Fever vaccination to be able to enter the Congo. Your vaccinations must be up-to-date. Your Yellow Fever certificate will become valid TEN (10) days after the vaccine is administered and will be valid for ten (10) years.

Other vaccines for the Congo to consider are: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Typhoid, Rabies, Meningococcal Meningitis and Influenza. It is recommended that you share this information with your doctor and consider his/her advice.

Malaria is common in Brazzaville and throughout Central and West Africa. Consulting your physician regarding medication is recommended.

Recommended Websites

www.countrywatch.com
www.lonelyplanet.com/congo

Recommended Books

Mango Elephants in the Sun: How life in an African Village let me be in my skin    By Susana Herrera
The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a mud hut          By Nigel Barley
Malaria Dreams: An African Adventure          By Stuart Stevens
Lonely Planet West Africa          By Mary Fitzpatrick
Brazzaville Charms          By Cassie Knight

Recognition

We appreciate all the information, thoughts and suggestions provided by contributing community members.

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