



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau with



West African
Vocational Schools

November 2017

Our trip back to
Guinea-Bissau starts
on December 10th!

Leaving Home To Go Home *by Jason*

As our time in the U.S. draws to a close, we're often asked how we're getting back to Guinea-Bissau. Sometimes we've been able to find good deals on direct-ish routes, and other times we've taken more interesting routes to save money. This return to Guinea-Bissau is going to fall more into the second

camp. Miriam's second birthday in October means that we now need 5 whole tickets to go anywhere, and even small costs, when multiplied by 5, add up fast!

We'll leave Michigan Sunday morning on an Amtrak train to Chicago. The kids love trains, and the run from Lapeer to Chicago is only 5 hours. That afternoon will be an overnight pair of flights to Frankfurt, Germany via a quick layover in Iceland. Arriving in Germany early Monday we'll have a couple of days to recover from the sleep lost during the night flights and adjust to the time change. (Germany is 6 hours ahead of Michigan.) We'll be in Germany with our friends the Lutzes (who have kids close to our kids' ages) until Thursday morning. From there we'll fly to Portugal for a long layover (mid-afternoon to Friday morning) where we'll get a hotel and do a little exploring. Friday morning, we have a direct flight down to Dakar, Senegal (which is about 200 miles, or about 12 hours of driving on terrible roads, from our house in Guinea-Bissau). That same day, we'll board an overnight ocean ferry (in a private room with A/C, beds, and a hot shower!) and arrive the Saturday morning in Ziguinchor, Senegal, on the border of Guinea-Bissau. A four hour trip in a bush taxi will take us to our home in Canchungo! So, planes, trains, and automobiles—and a boat!

We weighed several options, but for five tickets, this route saves about \$1,500 compared to flying the "direct" route into Bissau (which would still involve an overnight flight and 12-hour layover in Casablanca.) Lest we scare off any of you who are considering visiting, that flight isn't so long if you're doing it without three little kids in tow!

Staff Training *by Emily*

When people ask me if I'm getting excited to go back to Guinea-Bissau, I often get a glazed look in my eyes as my brain swirls around the list of things to do before we go. It's everything from saying goodbye to friends and family and the details of the week-long trip from here to there to the process of settling and readjusting when we arrive. However, once I get past all of that, there are lots of things I'm excited about.

One of the things I love the most is planning and teaching spiritual development and continuing education workshops for the Guinean staff at the WAVS vocational school, and I'll actually have the chance to get back to that in our first week. We will arrive at our house in Canchungo late on Saturday, December 16th. The following Monday I will spend the morning leading an all-staff spiritual development workshop. Then in the afternoon I will have some time working specifically with the English and French teachers as they prepare for the next semester.

I love teaching—taking truth from God's word, a lesson from my life, or even vocabulary words and grammar, and making it understandable and relevant for the people I'm speaking to. I love the process of thinking things through, making connections, and looking at things from a different perspective as I pass information and experiences



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on to others. I'm really looking forward to seeing the different ways that God will use the love of teaching that He has given me to encourage our staff and improve our programs over the next few years.

Avalanche! *by Jason*

November is busy as we speak in different churches, pack for the voyage back, and prepare the kids for the trip and arrival. One of my main jobs in November was preparing and outfitting our new-to-us Chevy Avalanche for transit to Guinea-Bissau! It will be trucked from Michigan to a sea port (Baltimore, I believe) where it will be loaded onto a container ship and taken to West Africa. When it arrives 6 weeks later, we hope to have taken care of all of the paperwork required (a lengthy process, sometimes) to import it. Once all of that is in order, I'll make the day trip up to the neighboring country whose port it will be unloaded at, and drive it down.

The work on the vehicle in November ranged from things that are routine (tires, brakes, light bulbs, and oil change) to things that a 6-year-old, 140,000-mile vehicle might need (wheel bearings, half shaft, and a few driveline seals) to things caused by the accident it was in (it was missing its hitch receiver) and some upgrades for the tough environment where it's headed (skid plates, police grille guard, LED light bar, and mud tires). It was already in pretty good shape, but now is (hopefully!) ready for the rigors of West African driving!



I'm not used to wrenching while in insulated hoodies anymore!



As we return to our home in Guinea-Bissau, please pray with us for settledness, peace, and energy to dive back into the mission to which we've been called.

Thanksgiving day in front of our "Thankful Tree"—a family tradition each November. Throughout the month we all write things we are thankful for on leaves and tape them to the tree. It's the opposite of fall outside, because as the month passes the tree gets fuller, but it's one of our favorite ways to intentionally focus on gratitude each year.



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