Some questions to ask while visiting Astronomy grad schools

**Ask the Graduate Department:**
What percentage of students pass the qualifying exam the first time? How many chances?
What is the median time to obtain a PhD? Dispersion?
Why have students left without a PhD? In the past, have women left more frequently?
How successful have graduates in last 10 years been in finding jobs?
How many grad students currently lack funding?
Can I defer my offer of admission for a year? I'd like to travel/save the world/join a cult.

**Ask Current Graduate Students:**
How much interaction do you have with your research advisor? Enough?
What meetings and summer schools have you attended? Who paid?
How frequently do you go on observing runs?
Have you done research in a variety of fields? Worked with multiple faculty?
How much career mentoring have you been able to get?
What % of students have funding problems or lack funding? (Don't just accept "all our first-years have funding.")
How many semesters do students TA?
Do faculty politics adversely affect students?
Special concerns for women in the department?
Why have graduate students left without a PhD?
Why did you pick this school over others? Are you still pleased with that choice?
Scientific interactions - colloquia, tea, talking science? Who participates?
How many hours do grad students typically work?
What do students do for fun? Social life? Guilt?
Is the stipend enough to live on in this area? Is there health insurance for students? For their spouses or domestic partners?
What about the department do you wish were different?
How happy are you here?

**Ask Graduate Students working with potential advisors:**
What is it like to work with this prof? Concerns?
Personal attention, availability? How often do you meet? Do you get enough help?
Has she sent you to meetings?
Does your advisor take an active role in finding jobs for his/her students?
What jobs have her recent students found?

**Ask Potential Advisors:**
What kind of research projects could a new student start upon?
Examples of recent students and their projects?
Collaborations with other professors, other departments?
(What are the big unsolved questions in your field?)