

COUNTRY OVERVIEW



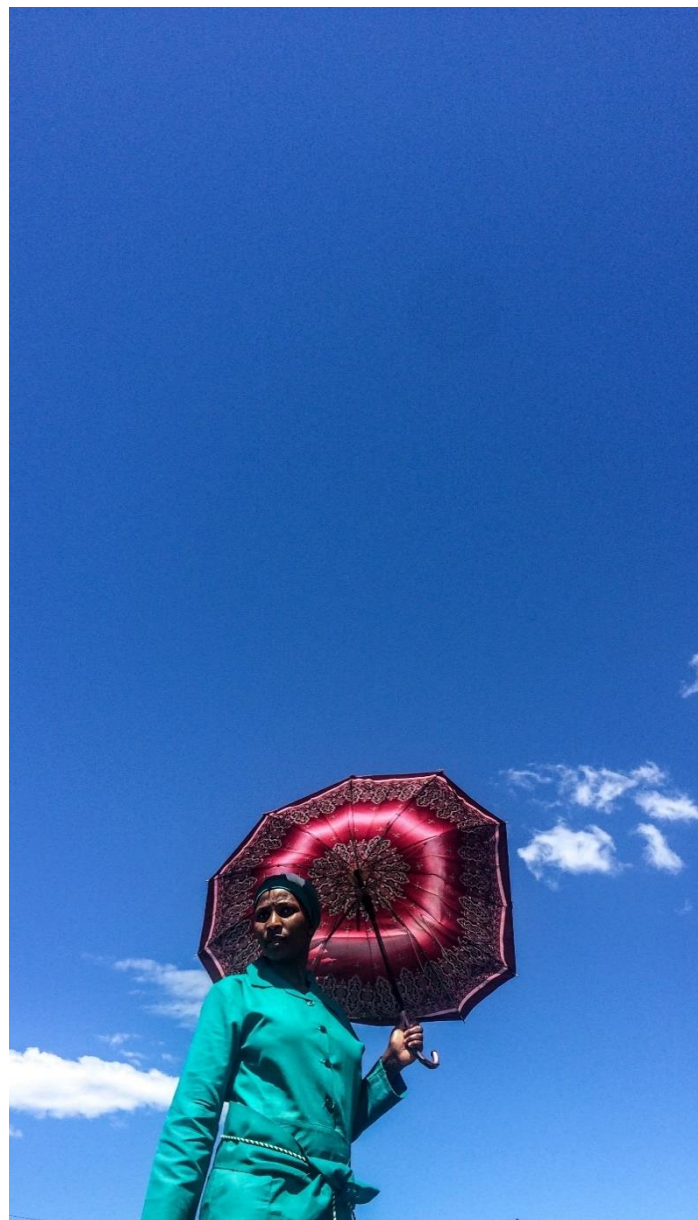
& PACKING GUIDELINES

South Africa: Social and Political Transformation
Fall 2021



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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

Given the historic events in South Africa over the last 27 years, this is an exciting time to be in the country, witnessing history as the country continues to strive toward facilitating reconciliation and development. In 27 years, South Africa has made great strides in righting the wrongs of an unjust system, but it has much further to go. Cyril Ramaphosa is South Africa's fifth post-apartheid president, and his presidency is proving to be an interesting and tumultuous one. The 'new' government of South Africa has a monumental task confronting corruption, the massive inequalities inherited from the apartheid era, as well as in trying to match a progressive national constitution with a population much more conservative in political and social outlook. It also has to deliver basic services to all communities, find the resources needed to fight the AIDS epidemic, grapple with crime and societal violence, and work through a still uneasy racial divide.

Your program will be based in Durban, which is located in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. It is a large, modern city with a population of three to four million people. The most commonly spoken languages are Zulu and English. To put its size into perspective, Seattle-Tacoma has a population of about 3.4 million, Miami-Fort Lauderdale 3.6 million, Atlanta 3.7 million, and Houston 4.4 million.

Durban has a warm, often very humid climate and many South Africans vacation in the city during South Africa's winter. In Durban, winter months are warm and mild. It also has a significant Indian population with a distinct cultural presence. It was the banning of Indians from purchasing land in central Durban in 1922 that was one of the first laws to sow the seeds of the apartheid legislation that was to follow two decades later. Durban was a center of resistance to racism long before the National Party took over the national government in 1948. Durban and KwaZulu Natal have a rich history of

political activity, with contributions by noted activists like Mahatma Gandhi, former ANC Presidents John Dube and Chief Albert Luthuli, and the foundation of organizations such as the Natal Indian Congress and the African National Congress.

Post-apartheid, the province was controlled for ten years (1994-2004) by the Zulu ethno-nationalistic political group, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), but is now under the control of the ANC, creating interesting political dynamics and tensions. Because of its historical development and present conflicts, many organizations and structures have evolved to address the problems facing the province. These issues fall into two broad categories: development and reconciliation. Obviously, these are inextricably linked, as, without reconciliation and peace, all development efforts will be fruitless. Given this background, KwaZulu Natal, with Durban as its core city, is an ideal base from which to study the extremely interesting political and developmental issues facing the country.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

South Africa extends nearly 2000km (1242 miles) from the Limpopo River in the north to Cape Town in the south and nearly 1500km (932 miles) from Port Nolloth in the west to Durban in the east. Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Swaziland run from west to east along South Africa's northern border and Lesotho is entirely contained within South Africa's borders. South Africa is the

DURBAN: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
81/69	81/69	81/68	78/64	76/57
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
74/59	75/62	77/65	79/67	

seventh largest African country and twice the size of Texas.

It's position just south of the Tropic of Capricorn makes South Africa a mostly dry and sunny place, but the climate is moderated by its topography and the surrounding oceans. The further east you go, the more useful your raingear becomes, but there are also damp pockets in the southwest, particularly around Cape Town. At 56 feet above sea level, Cape Town has a climate similar to that of California. The coast north from the Cape becomes progressively drier and hotter, culminating in the desert region just south of Namibia. Along the southern coast the weather is temperate, but due to the Agulhas current, the east coast becomes increasingly tropical the further north you go. The northeastern hump gets very hot, and there are spectacular storms here during the summer. In the winter, the days are sunny and warm. Durban's summers are warm and humid; winters are milder. The average annual rainfall is about 484 millimeters. It can get very hot and humid, with risk of sunburn and/or dehydration.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

South Africa is one of the most multicultural countries in the world, it has eleven official languages and as many different ethnic groups particularly in urban areas. It is difficult to generalize on South African etiquettes and culture due to the diversity, however, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Cultural Dos

Be polite – Greet people when you meet them. Greetings are leisurely and include time for social discussion and exchanging pleasantries. Thank people when they do something for you and say goodbye when you or someone else leaves. **Clean up after yourself** – you are expected to clean after yourself in your home stay, in the classroom, in hotel rooms. **Be on time** to class and meetings. **Respect** others, regardless of their viewpoint and respect

yourself. **Dress conservatively** – especially when meeting someone for the first time.

Gift giving is important and wrapping your gifts shows extra effort. **Offer to help** and be prepared to receive help that is offered.

Cultural Don'ts

Do not smell food at the dinner table. Do not smoke indoors. Do not bring alcohol into the hotel, lodge or classroom. Do not use laptops in class without the permission of the lecturer.



DIET

SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally from the program experience. Please consider local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

Expect to eat some form of starch (cornmeal is the local staple, but most people eat rice and bread as well), and a meat-based stew or curry. Additionally, please note that in the cities of South Africa, water is normally clean and potable out of the taps.

South Africans are great meat eaters, and the concept of vegetarianism or veganism is little known to many of the people living in the areas we will be visiting. As serving meat is thought to be a sign of hospitality and respect in South Africa, many of the vegetarian and vegan foods available in the U.S. are not available in South Africa, or may be extremely expensive. While you will not be expected to eat meat if you would rather not, students with specific diets should not expect program staff to purchase expensive items to cater to your individual needs. You will need to be flexible and sensitive on such matters when interacting with South Africans.

We do have a fridge at the program center and you are welcome to stock up on fruits, vegetables, and yogurt during the day. Vegetarian students are also advised to bring or purchase locally a small supply of protein bars to supplement your diet and to make sure you get the necessary daily protein requirements. Students wishing to follow a Kosher or Halal diet generally have success if they switch to a vegetarian diet for the duration of the program.



SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided [Health Guidelines and Requirements](#) for your program.

It is very important that you read the Health Guidelines and Requirements document as early as possible and examine it with your medical provider. The guidelines include recommended immunizations; a suggested calendar for immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease.

SIT will require COVID-19 vaccination for all U.S. students. Recognizing that not all international students will have access to vaccines by Fall 2021, SIT asks that international students who wish to travel in and who do not have access to a vaccine apply for an accommodation by emailing your admissions counselor.

The Health Guidelines and Requirements will also provide recommendations related to preventing the contraction and spread of COVID-19. Students will be provided with COVID-19 related information and requirements prior to your travel in order to provide you with the most up-to-date information. General information about SIT's response to COVID-19 can be found on our webpage here: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/covid-19-risk-management-protocols/>

Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, accident and illness insurance, and general program tips, please read the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document and [Student Handbook](#).

ACCOMMODATIONS

During your time in Durban, you will be housed in single rooms at an apartment block near the program center. Other accommodations are at backpacker hostels. These are usually situated in town or in suburbs and provide dormitory-type accommodation. They have showers, flush toilets, and electricity. Showers in backpacker hostels are shared; students can expect to share bathroom facilities with all SIT students of their gender in addition to other same gender guests residing at the respective hostels.



TRANSPORTATION

The program has the use of a minibus for daily shuttles between accommodations and the program center. The commute from Cato Manor/ hostels to our classroom takes about 10-15 minutes. For excursions and day trips, the program uses an additional 10-seat vehicle. The longest drive during the program is from Johannesburg to Durban, which takes seven hours. There is also a lengthy trip from Johannesburg to Mozambique.

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

PHONES AND E-MAIL

When you arrive in South Africa, it may not be possible for you to contact your family right away to let them know that you have arrived safely. You will also likely NOT have email contact until day five of the program, so be prepared for this and prepare your family and friends. If desired, parents can contact SIT in Vermont to confirm that you landed safely. Please allow enough time for us to help you get settled and then send a message to SIT in Vermont confirming your arrival. The SIT Program Center has limited internet access for email and research purposes during office hours. Wireless internet is available, but please note that due to bandwidth restrictions many programs and download sites are not available on our network. Internet access is widely available at Internet cafés in and around Durban.

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working smart phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to either (a) bring an open, unlocked smart phone from the U.S. to the program that is able to accept a local SIM card, and is compatible with and usable at the program location, (b) work with the academic director within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally, (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone, or (d) bring a smart phone with an international plan. During orientation, with assistance from SIT Study Abroad staff, students will learn how to use their cellphone, how to purchase and use an appropriate local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad



requires that each student have a local number for communication with the program staff.

While we recognize that alternative communication methods can be free or cheaper than cell service i.e. Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. those programs alone do not satisfy our need for regular communication with the local program staff and partners, nor do they meet our emergency communication needs. Therefore, local cellular capacity on each student's phone is required for the duration of the program. Students are required to maintain a minimum amount of phone credits at all times for emergency calls. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged.

For this program, **DHL services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

Posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name

c/o School for International Training
Postnet Suite 151
Private Bag X04
Dalbridge 4014
SOUTH AFRICA

MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP/internship period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP/internship are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

It is advisable to bring your funds in various forms so that if there is a problem with one option you will still have access to money. The local currency is the South African rand. The exchange rate usually stands at approximately R10 = US\$1. ATMs are widely available in cities. Try to get insurance in case your ATM card is lost and your PIN has been observed. Some students in the past have had their cards lost or stolen, so **do get insurance and be careful at ATMs**. You can use your credit card for purchases in stores, but not in rural areas.

Cash is used for most daily transactions and the use of checks, traveler's checks, and credit/debit

cards for *direct purchases* is rare. A VISA or MasterCard credit card (not American Express or Diner's Club) can be useful for emergencies, medical or otherwise. A money belt large enough to hold your passport and traveler's checks is useful.

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP/internship-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are averages**.

To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP/internship or a specific personal expense.

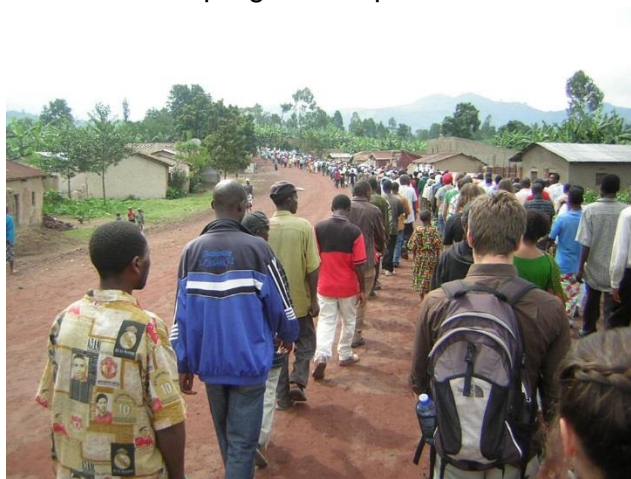
Check current exchange rates:
<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	\$500- \$700
Books, printing, supplies:	\$50
COVID-19 Entry Test(s) (may be required for entry; subject to	\$100- 250
Up-front medical costs:	\$150
Potential ISP/internship travel expenses:	\$100- \$500
Mozambique Visa:	\$100
Typical Internet café usage:	\$100
Estimated total:	\$1100- \$1650

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to



visitors. See the Attendance and Participation section of the [Student Handbook](#).

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP/internship. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic

season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

Because of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, SIT has suspended independent travel for all Fall 2021 Programs. SIT defines “independent travel” as travel that is independently organized by a student(s) and is unrelated to program activities; and involves an overnight stay.

PACKING GUIDELINES

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. South Africa's internal flights limit baggage to only one bag of 20 kilograms per person plus a carry-on. The second bag costs 15 Rand (about \$1.60) per pound. With careful planning, you should be able to bring the necessary clothing and supplies and stay within the 20kg limit. If you plan to bring more than 20 kilograms you will need to budget for extra baggage fees.

Suitcases with wheels help, but you will still be required to lift your bags into vehicles by yourself so pack lightly. Some students have recommended backpacks in place of suitcases.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the "General Health Tips" section in the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (<http://www.tsa.gov>) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

South Africans tend to dress very similarly to Americans, though there is some variation among different ethnic groups. Neat, somewhat conservative, comfortable clothes will help you to avoid the typical untidy American tourist stereotype. Many South Africans have a stereotype of Americans as "slobs" in relation to dress, so do what you can do dispel this myth. As such, do not bring sloppy clothes or clothes with immodest pictures or writing on them.

Revealing clothing and very informal clothing are not acceptable in most situations. In general, tops should cover shoulders and waists, skirts should cover knees, clothing should not be too tight or see-through, and plunging necklines are not acceptable.

Please note that tank tops and shorts will only be acceptable in certain limited settings. For your rural visit, you will need to bring one or more long (mid-calf length) skirts or sarongs. Be aware that some places are dusty and likely to stain light colors, and that fine fabrics may not be durable enough. The clothes that you bring should be washable and breathable and preferably made of drip-dry cotton and cotton-blends. Students will be required to conform to dress expectations of the program, and we reserve the right to institute a specific dress code should that become necessary.

EQUIPMENT

You will NOT need to bring items such as a sleeping bag, mosquito net, or water purifier, unless you desire to do so and/or to travel areas and situations where these would be necessary post-program.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is strongly recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure your computer, smart phone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft. SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.

There are computers at the SIT program center that students may use for conducting research and typing assignments. However, as most assignments will need to be completed after

school hours, a laptop is needed. Students in previous semesters have noted that having your own laptop provides you with a great deal of flexibility when completing assignments and working on the ISP/internship. Our wireless internet connection at the SIT program center makes conducting research from your own laptop fairly easy (at least in the South African context). You may need to make use of internet cafés during the semester – after hours and during the ISP/internship – so please bring additional funds depending on how frequently you expect to use email at Internet cafés. If you are unable to bring a laptop with you, students have been able to rent them for all or part of the semester for approximately US\$140 per month. Digital recorders are useful especially for conducting interviews during the ISP.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/> Do not bring any 110-volt electrical appliances without a step-down transformer from 220 to 110 volts. The standard voltage in South Africa is 220/230volts AC. Many electronic goods these days can handle both 220 and 110 (and other) voltage; refer to your owner's manual for your devices to investigate what will likely be needed. Please note that power surges are common here and you are advised to plug your items into outlets with surge protection only (these can be purchased locally at student expense).

Cameras are great but please note that you will likely not be able to upload images to Facebook or any web-based image service on the program's Internet connection. A USB flash drive is essential for getting copies of some lecturers' PowerPoint presentations, and great for storing the pictures you cannot download to web-based storage. Again, we suggest insuring your belongings and keeping them locked in your locker at the SIT office when not in use.

A digital recorder might come in handy when conducting interviews for your ISP or during language classes. Digital recorders are expensive in South Africa so you must consider buying one before your trip.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

If you do not already have these items, they can be obtained in South Africa. Generally, prices for most items are reasonable. Toiletries and personal care items can also all be purchased in South Africa at similar prices to the U.S. However, if you require any form of medication, bring a sufficient supply to last the duration of the program, as prescription drugs may not be mailed into South Africa. Remember to bring a spare pair of glasses or contact lenses if you wear them.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/>.

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page!

These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director.

PACKING LIST

GENERAL

- 1 warm outfit if not included in clothing below
- Underwear – one week's supply
- 4-5 pairs socks
- Lightweight pajamas or nightgown
- 1 pair **comfortable** shoes, sneakers or running shoes for hiking, running and other outdoor activities
- 1 pair sandals (not flip-flops)
- 1 pair flip-flops (for in-home wear)
- 1 pair formal shoes
- 1 sweater or light coat
- **Bathing suit** (one-pieces are generally more acceptable for women)
- Rain poncho or fold-up umbrella
- Sun hat or bandanna
- 1-3 pairs lightweight pants/jeans
- 3 pairs shorts/skirts
- 1 long skirt/pants for prison visit with restorative justice NGO
- 1 nice outfit
- 3-5 blouses or shirts
- 1 sport coat (with dress shirt and tie)
- 1 workout outfit
- 3-4 casual (not sloppy) t-shirts

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Proof of COVID-19 Vaccine
- Yellow WHO Card where applicable (see [Safety, Security, and Health](#) for more information)
- Two photocopies of your passport, stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa (*if applicable*)

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Prescription medications used regularly
- Over-the-counter medications as approved by your doctor (note that these are also available locally):
 - Pain reliever/fever reducer
 - Cold medication/decongestant
 - Laxative
 - Anti-diarrheal medication
 - Motion sickness medication

- Good quality thermometer (for taking your temperature)
- Small first aid kit
- Adhesive bandages/antiseptic/antibacterial cream
- Malaria prophylaxis (Please review the program Health Guidelines and Requirements and the Safety, Security, and Health document for your program for details). Note that you will be in a low-risk malaria zone for approximately ten nights and in a medium to high risk area for approximately four nights.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Medium-sized suitcase and a small daypack (essential for excursions)
- An extra pair of glasses or contact lenses (and saline solution), if worn
- Flashlight/headlamp

To prevent the contraction and spread of COVID-19 students should come prepared with:

- At least 3 reusable masks* and gloves for personal protection (disposable masks will also be available)
- Hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for use when soap and water is not readily available
- Anti-bacterial wipes or solution to wipe down high-touch surfaces, especially while traveling from the US

*Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others. Masks help reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 both by close contact and by airborne transmission. Masks must have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. Do not wear face shields alone (evaluation of the effectiveness of face shields is ongoing but is unknown at this time).

OPTIONAL

- Sunglasses
- Beach towel
- A notebook and pens

- A voice/tape/digital recorder if you plan to use one during ISP or language classes
- Hand sanitizer
- Sunscreen

Remember to place all valuable items and any prescriptions in your carry-on luggage while traveling and all sharp items in your checked luggage.