

COUNTRY OVERVIEW & PACKING GUIDELINES

South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights

Fall 2021.

SIT SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
STUDY ABROAD

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON SHIFTING CONDITIONS IN THE US AND SOUTH AFRICA.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Twenty-seven years into democracy, we find ourselves at an interesting moment to examine both the progress and challenges faced by South Africa. Twenty-seven years is also the number of years Nelson Mandela spent incarcerated, most of which he spent on Robben Island. Large-scale war was averted, and a negotiation process brought about a peaceful transition to a democratic system, yet socioeconomic issues remain a problem. Development policy aims to promote economic growth and social transformation, yet the rural-urban divide as well as inequality within the rural areas and urban centers continues. Discriminatory legal and institutional practices of the colonial and apartheid areas have been effectively challenged, and a new, progressive constitution put in place. Yet these rights are often at odds with cultural practices and the broader public opinion. South Africa now faces new challenges, including an education system in crisis and a raging HIV/AIDs and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic—which are placing considerable strain on the resources and the social fabric of society. Recently South Africa has been inundated with several student-led protests, starting with #RhodesMustFall at the end of 2015. The year 2016 was dominated by the #FeesMustFall protests, in which the students among other things demanded free education and a decolonized education system. In response the government has recently announced "a free education" policy for lower income first year students attending university. The pragmatics of implementing this policy are yet to be tested, but 2018 was dominated by issues directly related to this policy. The protection of human rights is enshrined in the Constitution – hailed as one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world – but these rights are challenged by poverty and inequality and further compromised by the nature and makeup of South Africa's multicultural society (manifested in terms of race, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, culture, and disability.) South Africa today provides a fertile environment for examining these dynamics and reflecting on questions about rights and multiculturalism in the post-apartheid era.

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 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.

CAPE TOWN: 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

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. In winter, the days are sunny and warm. Cape Town summers (December - March) are dry and warm; winters (June - August) are generally wet and cool.

Students should have some sort of sun hat and sun block available to them while here as the temperatures can reach the mid-70s in November and December.



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 the classroom and in hotel rooms. **Be on time** to class and meetings. **Respect** others whatever their views and respect yourself. **Dress conservatively** – especially when meeting someone for the first time. **Gift giving is important** and wrapping your gifts show extra effort. **Offer to help** and be prepared to receive offers of help.

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.

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. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

Many traditional rituals involve food, and it is a sign of pride and generosity that even in the poorest houses there is always a meal waiting for the unexpected visitor. Students generally enjoy the diet in South Africa, which may be in many ways not dissimilar to your own. However, it tends to include more starch and meat than you would normally be used to. The staple food is *pap*, made from ground up corn, but potatoes, rice, and pasta will be equally as common. South Africa's main contribution to the world culinary repertoire is the *braai*, known in the U.S. as the barbeque, which is taken out at the first possible opportunity, and you will enjoy many of these during your time here.

South Africans enjoy their meat, but if you are not a meat eater do not worry. Recognizing that meat plays a central role in South African cultures, some students have decided to eat it on certain occasions. However, if this is not possible for you, you can still be flexible and supplement your diet as necessary.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

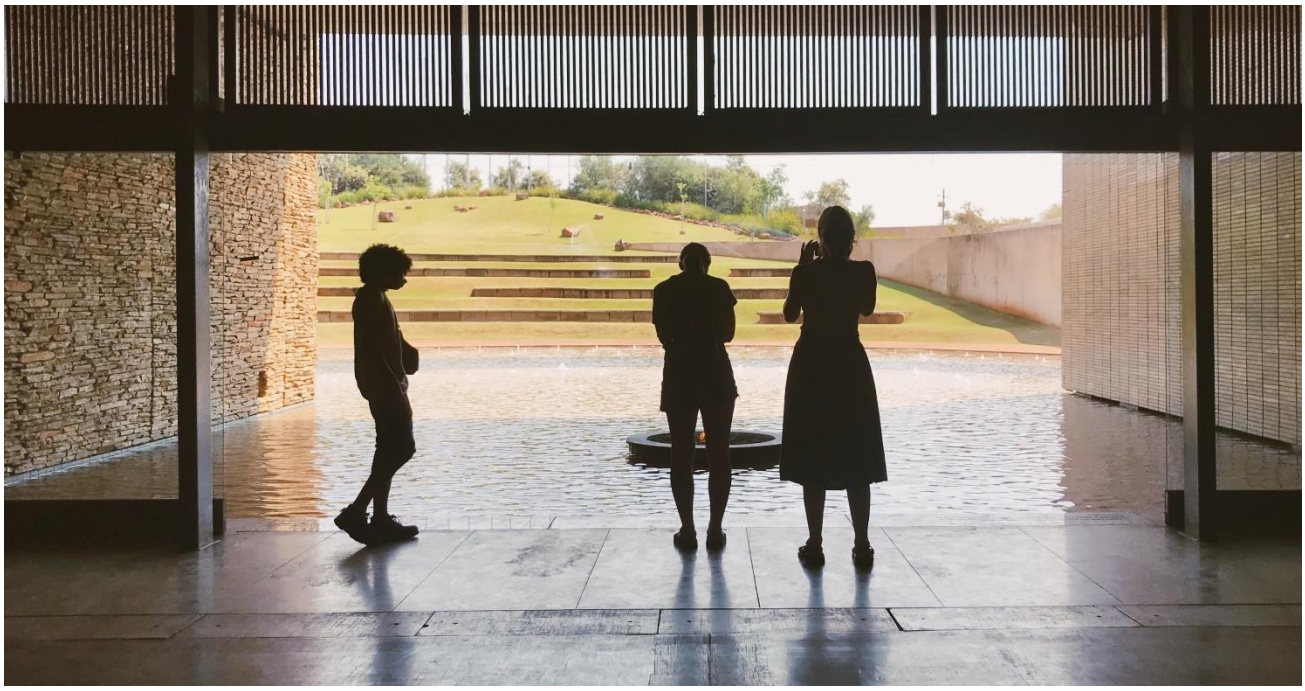
Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided **Health Guidelines and Requirements** for your program.

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 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/sit-health-and-safety-update-in-response-to-covid-19/

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

While most pre-ISP/internship accommodations are in guesthouses, you will also stay at guest-lodges for approximately two weeks. This occurs for a few days during the Mpumalanga excursion and after the Eastern Cape excursions.

During the independent study project period, some students choose to rent an apartment with classmates, but Airbnb has opened other options that students may consider.

TRANSPORTATION

SIT generally provides private transport to and from class each day up until the beginning of ISP/internship, in the form of hired minibuses with drivers. It is for this reason that we require students to stay in one location before ISP/Internship. For you to feel confident using public transport on your own during ISP/internship time, the program will also give you exposure to the main forms of public transport used by commuters: minibuses and trains. While in Cape Town you can expect a commute of up to 40 minutes each morning and evening, depending on the traffic, as you will be traveling during peak traffic times.

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

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.

We strongly recommend that you consider buying a smart phone in South Africa as some US cell phones may not work in South Africa.

Email is accessible during most of the semester. The program does provide a certain amount of wireless access every month to each student. If you need more Internet time, there are also Internet cafés with high-speed wireless access near the classroom if you prefer that option. When you are away from the classroom in Cape Town, email access is much more limited.

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.

The mail service is good, though somewhat slow. A letter to or from the US usually takes from seven days to three weeks; postcards are slower. Make sure mail is **clearly marked AIR MAIL.** Packages often take longer and are expensive to send (either direction). There are a wide variety of courier services available in South Africa including DHL and FedEx. At current rates, you could send a package of up to one pound for approximately US$50 to arrive within two working days.

For this program, **DHL and FedEx 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 SIT Study Abroad
P.O. Box 45
Newlands, 7725
SOUTH AFRICA

Packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
c/o SIT Study Abroad
18 Station Road
Rondebosch
Cape Town 7700
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 hovers between approximately R10 = US$1. During the second week of the program after you arrive in Cape Town the SIT program will help you open up a local bank account with a South African bank. All of your stipends for food and accommodation will be paid into this account. You can access this account via ATMs, which are widely available in all towns and cities. You can also arrange to have money transferred into this account from overseas if the need arises.

Cash is used for most daily transactions and the use of checks, traveler's checks, and credit/debit cards for *direct purchases* is rare.

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.

Above 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/

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	$350-500
Books, printing, supplies:	$200-250
COVID-19 Entry Test(s) (may be required for entry; subject to change and costs may vary)	$100-250
Up-front medical costs:	$200
Potential ISP/internship travel expenses:	$50-300
Typical Internet café usage:	$100-150
Estimated total:	$1000-1650

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 or 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.

Given the current global health situation, SIT strongly advises against independent travel. Yet, if a student chooses to travel independently, they must have their independent travel approved in advance and they will be required to follow established independent travel protocols.

In fall 2021, independent travel requests for in-country destinations may be authorized under the following conditions: a) students are vaccinated; b) key COVID-19 metrics being monitored by SIT are favorable in the region being visited; c) there are no movement restrictions imposed by the host country government that would impede the travel and d) the independent travel request is submitted consistent with the process steps detailed in the Independent Travel Policy, to include submission of a detailed travel itinerary/lodging information within the proscribed timeframe so that a proper review can occur with the Academic Director and the Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing Regional Manager.

Note: “Independent Travel” is defined as travel within the host country* that: a) occurs during the program’s defined enrollment period; b) is independently organized by a student; c) is unrelated to program activities; d) does not interfere with scheduled program activities; and e) involves an overnight stay. *For purposes of Independent Travel, the countries within the European Schengen zone are considered “within the host country”. Further details regarding the independent travel policy can be found in the **Student Handbook.**

Students are not permitted to leave South Africa at any time during the program.

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. We **strongly** recommend that students bring one big, wheeled duffel bag or a large backpack and a **smaller** bag. The smaller bag will be useful to carry your luggage on shorter excursions. The checked luggage maximum weight should be **44 pounds** and carry-on weight should be **16 pounds**. Only one checked luggage and one carry on will be allowed on flights inside South Africa.

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

In general, dress in most parts of South Africa is similar to that of the U.S. Neat, somewhat conservative, comfortable clothes will help you to avoid the typical American tourist stereotype.

Cape Town summers (October-May) are hot and dry; winters (June-September) are generally wet and chilly. Night temperatures tend to drop at higher elevations. **Since the program will spend some time at high elevations, you will need a sweater, light coat or jacket, and waterproof rainwear. Due to the range of temperatures, we recommend bringing clothing that can be layered for warmth.**

EQUIPMENT

Please bring at least two academic notebooks with you, one to use for your academic field journal notes and one to use as your Independent Study Project or internship journal. These are in addition to any personal journals you may wish to keep for this semester. Students do not need a water purifier.

COMPUTERS AND INTERNET

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 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.

The SIT classroom has a wireless internet connection which is intended for academic research and email purposes only. There are a number of Internet cafés in the immediate area to facilitate use of sites such as Facebook.



Students generally store their computers at the program office while on excursion. Generally, most US laptops require only a plug adapter but no voltage converter; it is your responsibility to confirm this for your own laptop.
Students who do not bring their own laptop computers will have access to computers through internet cafes. Internet cafes are widely available, but the costs can add up as students are required to type all assignments, including their ISP or internship paper. Internet cafes charge about US$2 per hour. It is possible to rent laptops or purchase used laptops in country. Students that have had their computers broken have received good repair service at nearby computer shops.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters: https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/ . The standard voltage in South Africa is 220/230volts AC.

IPods and other music players are great for whiling away the hours in the buses and you can add South African music to your collection. A USB flash drive is essential for getting electronic reading material, copies of lecturer's PowerPoint presentations, and great for storing the pictures you cannot download to web-based storage.

A digital recorder might come in handy when conducting interviews for your ISP or internship. It is an individual choice whether you want to use one or not. Some students find them useful, while others are happier to write notes or use their phone. Many academics, professional and experts do not object to the use of a voice recorder, but many lay people and rural folk tend to feel a little intimidated or uncomfortable with the device. 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 find you need some new clothing, you can buy virtually anything in S.A. at reasonable prices too. If you do not already have other items, these can be obtained in South Africa as well. Generally, prices for most items are reasonable. Many of the items you find in the U.S. are available in South Africa from local manufacturers. Toiletries and personal care items can also be purchased in S.A. 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. You must also bring a copy of your prescription. Remember to bring a spare pair of glasses or contact lenses if you wear them. You will be able to do laundry about once a week during most of the program, an average load, wash and dry, costing about US$6.

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.

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

PACKING LIST

GENERAL

- Underwear – 7 days' supply
- Socks - 4-5 pairs
- Lightweight pajamas
- 1 set of clothes suitable for a night out or a more formal occasion
- 1 pair **comfortable** everyday shoes or sneakers
- 1 pair more formal shoes
- 1 pair of flip-flops and/or sandals
- 1-2 fleece or wool sweaters **(Cape Town can get cold in winter)**
- Light to medium coat or jacket
- Waterproof rainwear
- Bathing suit (modern fashions are acceptable)
- Rain poncho or fold-up umbrella
- 1 sun hat
- 4 pairs of shorts/skirts (including long sarong or wrap)
- 2 pairs jeans
- 2 pairs lightweight pants or slacks
- 4 casual t-shirts
- 4 dress shirts, blouses, polo shirts, collared shirts, etc.
- 1 "workout" outfit (t-shirts, conservative shorts, sports bras)

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Proof of COVID-19 Vaccine
- Yellow WHO Card where applicable
- 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:
  - Pain reliever/fever reducer
  - Cold medication/decongestant
  - Laxative
  - Anti-diarrheal medication such as Imodium
  - Travel sickness medication
  - Vitamin supplements
- Good quality thermometer (for taking your temperature)
- Small first aid kit
- Sunscreen
- Adhesive bandages/antiseptic/antibacterial cream
- Mosquito repellent
- Antibacterial wipes and/or antibacterial hand sanitizer or wash

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).

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- A towel and a washcloth
- Flashlight (with small extra bulb and extra batteries)
- Sports bag and a small daypack
- Good quality, small locks (for luggage and locker)
- Photos of your family & friends & small portable book about your State
- Academic Journals (see above, "Equipment")
- Flash cards
- Student ID or if possible International Student ID (for discounts)

OPTIONAL

- Camera
- Sunglasses An extra pair of glasses or contact lenses, if worn
- Army knife with bottle opener
- Pocket sewing kit.