

COUNTRY OVERVIEW & PACKING GUIDELINES

Vietnam: Traditional Medicine & Community Health

Summer 2023

SIT SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
STUDY ABROAD

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

Vietnam is located on the eastern edge of mainland Southeast Asia. It is bordered by Cambodia and Laos to the west, China to the north and the South China Sea to the east. The population of Vietnam is 100 million, making it the 13th most populous country in the world. There are 54 ethnic minority groups in the country, but 86% of the population is ethnically Vietnamese.

Bordering and having more than two thousand years of history with China, Vietnam has learned and influenced from Chinese culture, even though Vietnam has recently emerged as a prominent economic partner and an active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Vietnam and China had a long-term cooperation in trade, business, education, public health and many other socio-economic fields. Particularly, the government of Vietnam has directed relevant agencies to study and preserve traditional medicine, combining achievements of the modern scientific advances to develop efficient and sustainable medicine. Vietnam now has 67 traditional medicine hospitals. Traditional medicine has been expanded to nearly 85 per cent of healthcare centers at communal level according to the 2018 report of the Ministry of Health in Vietnam. Annually, an estimated 30 per cent of patients are diagnosed and treated with traditional medicine or a combination of traditional and western medicine. To promote the development of traditional medicine, the Government of Vietnam indicated that it was necessary to complete the management of traditional medicine system and improve policies about it. Attention should be paid to develop the human resource as well as medicinal herbs, according to the current direction of health sector in Vietnam.

SIT Vietnam's *Traditional Medicine and Community Health* program focuses on alternative health concepts, traditional practices, and the realities of contemporary healthcare among the Vietnamese and ethnic minorities peoples. Course content includes indigenous visions of health and healing and community health. Students examine the intercultural components of the Vietnamese healthcare system, and the proposed integration of traditional medicine alongside biomedical practices. Concepts of community health and the role of the community in health promotion and prevention in the rural context are also explored. Students learn about these topics through lectures, reading materials, discussion, and extensive field experiences.

SIT Vietnam's *Traditional Medicine and Community Health* program is founded on the principles of experiential learning which take place both inside and outside formal institutional structures. A key goal of this course is to increase each student's capacity to think critically and creatively, and to integrate and analyze information from a variety of primary and secondary sources. In the process, students develop self-motivated learning skills with potential lifetime applications, which are directly linked to an integrated understanding of the reciprocal relationship between health, community and holistic practice.



CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Vietnam has a diverse climate because of its wide range of latitude and altitudes. Vietnam is located in both a tropical and a temperate zone. It is characterized by strong monsoon influences, but has a considerable amount of sun, a high rate of rainfall, and high humidity. Southern Vietnam lies entirely within the tropics, which has two main seasons: the wet and the dry. The wet season is May to November. During this period, there are heavy, short lived downpours almost daily. The dry season is December to April. April and May are very hot. Hats are essential to avoid sunstroke.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Most of the Vietnamese in urban areas no longer bow when they meet each other. The custom of handshaking is now achieving popularity due to the Western influence in the country. Men will generally

shake hands and say the equivalent of "how are you" and tip their hats when greeting people. Women, especially those in the countryside, still shy away from shaking hands, especially with men from their own country. It is best not to offer to shake hands with a woman unless she offers her hand first.

Whereas Americans often immediately introduce themselves in given situations, the ordinary people of Vietnam think this to be rather bold and like to have a mutual acquaintance make the introduction. They will rarely introduce themselves when going into a home or office until asked to do so. This may be due to their innate shyness and modesty.

Names carry great importance in Vietnam. Most Vietnamese names consist of a family name, middle name and a personal or given name. The order is reverse to the American custom. For instance, Miss Hoang Ngoc Van. Hoang is the family name. We would call her Miss Van.

Vietnamese people have a habit of not looking into your eyes when they talk to you. This is often because of shyness, but one of the main reasons is that traditionally they do not look into the eyes of those they respect or those higher in rank when talking to them. This indicates politeness.

The smile of a Vietnamese can be very confusing in Vietnam to an outsider and cause misunderstandings. In Vietnam, it may indicate a polite, but perhaps skeptical reaction to something, compliance or toleration of a blunder or misunderstanding or on occasion represents submission to judgment that may be wrong or unfair. This is particularly true if the one making the judgment is at a superior level and perhaps has lost his temper. For instance, a laundress may ruin a favorite shirt and is called in by her employer to be asked about it. She may smile. This does not mean that she thinks it is funny that she burned the shirt, but instead is submission to the fact. If the owner of the shirt loses his temper, she may keep smiling indicating politeness or patience with superiors.

Because of this, foreigners should be very cautious in voicing their opinions and perhaps be a little more delicate, more tolerant and restrain from being obstinate.

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 (including with your host family) 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.





Vietnamese cuisine shows diversity from north to south, as well as similarities with Chinese and Southeast Asian cuisine. Even French cuisine and food culture has been adapted in striking ways. There is an emphasis on fresh vegetables and herbs, often served in a broth or light sauce. The most common meats used in Vietnamese cuisine are pork, beef, prawns, various kinds of fish, and chicken.

Ho Chi Minh City offers a fantastic range of food choices that can compete with any world city – ranging from small outdoor food stalls, to Asian, European and American-style restaurants, and even some familiar fast food chains. A good choice for breakfast is the world-renowned *pho*, a noodle soup usually made with beef or chicken. Lunch will typically consist of rice with meat or fish, plus a side vegetable dish and soup. Bread, or more specifically the baguette (*bánh mì)* or sandwiches with pâté and other fillings are also common quick meals. Vietnamese dinners are often more elaborate, including several shared meat and vegetable dishes, usually accompanied by rice and soup.

Though it is possible to maintain a vegetarian diet while in Vietnam, you may wish to ask whether fish or meat products have been added to vegetable dishes. Fish and fish products are somewhat unavoidable in Vietnamese cuisine and therefore students with severe fish allergies and who are *strict* vegetarians and do not eat fish or fish products, might want to consider a different location. For

strictly vegetarians, keep your eyes peeled for premises with a "Cơm Chay" sign. The food in those vegetarian eateries often contains meat-like chunks or slices, but they are imaginative creations using tofu, pulses or soya beans.

Elsewhere, the situation is somewhat more difficult. The words "vegetable" and "vegetarian" are often confused in Vietnam, and even though menus may have a vegetarian section, the dishes listed tend to be along the lines of spinach with beef, cabbage with chicken and so on. Even without the added meat, the vegetables are often cooked with fish sauce or shrimp paste. Fried rice often contains tiny pieces of pork and noodles may be fried with pork fat and splashed with fish sauce. Vegetable pho (noodle soup) is invariably made with chicken or beef stock.

In addition to the "Cơm Chay," which translates as vegetarian rice, look for "Món Chay" on the menus, which translates as vegetarian dishes and is more common.

Realize that there are a good number of Buddhists in Viet Nam, (not as many as people think because ancestor worship is not Buddhism, but that's a different story) and staunch Buddhists are strict vegetarians. You will be able to find plenty of good food to eat, and everywhere you go, fresh fruit is plentiful.

In Ho Chi Minh City or in Hanoi Capital, you will find restaurant Italian dishes along with the more traditional fare.

Veganism is practiced by some Vietnamese Buddhists, particularly on festival days, and there are some vegan restaurants.

For those wishing to remain Kosher, pork is a popular meat and flavoring, but milk and dairy products are rarely used in cooking. Yogurt is available and often used in blended fruit drinks.



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.

Based on evolving conditions of the pandemic including higher vaccination rates, increased protection with many individuals from previous infections, lower rates of serious illness associated with positive cases, and the removal of vaccine mandates in most SIT locations, SIT no longer requires vaccination to participate on programs except for locations where host country governments require it.

However, we strongly encourage students to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 per CDC recommendations. SIT continues to closely monitor COVID-19 conditions in each program location and will advise students on any location-specific COVID-19 requirements and regulations prior to and during their program.

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/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, health and personal property insurance, and general program tips, please read

the **Safety, Security, and Health** document and **Student Handbook.**

The traffic in Vietnam is chaotic, and it is important to be alert and careful at all times when moving in traffic, walking or crossing the street. One of the greatest risks to your safety is traffic and vehicular accidents.

During your time in Vietnam, you will have many opportunities to make Vietnamese friends and socialize with local students. However, please be aware that unforeseen misunderstandings can occur due to cultural differences. Traditional, conservative family values play a role in Vietnamese society at all levels, and as a result, dating between Vietnamese and foreigners can be the subject of severe criticism. When you socialize with local Vietnamese friends, be very sensitive to the traditional cultural expectations of your friends, your homestay family, your teachers and others. Do not hesitate to talk to program staff about any questions or concerns.

During orientation, you will be given contact information for several recommended clinics and hospitals. Vietnam has good medical services and most illnesses can be treated at the international clinics or national hospitals. Some hospitals in Vietnam accept payment by credit card, but many local clinics require cash payment. Please remember to carry a credit card and have access to cash in case of emergency.

Counseling and psychiatric care is not as widely available nor utilized in Vietnam in the same way as in the United States. Students should **not** plan on having regular access to local psychological services. In emergencies, students may be able to consult with a Vermont-based SIT therapist by phone or a counselor/psychiatrist in Ho Chi Minh City or in Hanoi Capital.

HOMESTAYS



As many SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both.

Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” may be different from what you expect. You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities and expectations.

Each program’s homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: in order to ensure the best fit for students and families, SIT may make final adjustments to homestay placements after student arrival in country. Therefore, SIT will not provide information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**

On this program, you will be staying in homestays in HCMC, the program-base, each student will have around more than one month homestay. You might have your own room or sometime share room with a university student of the same age and gender. During the different Excursions throughout Vietnam,

you will pair up with one student to stay in a guest house or hotel in towns or cities.

Most homes will be located within commuting distance of the center of town and university campus. Most students will have a commute of between 15 and 45 minutes via bus or private taxi, though there may be traffic jams during rush hour..

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

In addition to the homestay in HCMC, other accommodations during the program include guesthouses, hostels, educational institutions, or small hotels. When you first arrive in Vietnam, you will share a hotel room with another student. The rooms are furnished with beds, wardrobes, writing tables, televisions, and all have bathroom facilities (towels and sheets are provided).

TRANSPORTATION

Vietnam has a comprehensive transportation system ranging from jets, trains and buses to cars, scooters, bicycles, and three-wheeled motorized buggies. Transportation depends on the region and its economics. The traffic pattern will probably seem chaotic to you at first because the roads aren't very wide and traffic moves quickly without an apparent system; however, having grown up within this system, local people follow a group sense of order, which you will pick up on after a short time. For example, horns are used as a warning to others. Keep in mind that in larger towns and cities, air and noise pollution may be a problem because it is not regulated and the number of motorized vehicles on the roads is increasing each year.

It is recommended that students commute to class each day by the frequent public buses. You also have the option of travel by taxi, bicycle, or motorcycle.

For many years, SIT Study Abroad participants have been prohibited from riding as a passenger on motorbikes at any time during their study abroad program. In fact, on most of our programs, students are strictly forbidden from riding as passenger and can be immediately dismissed from the program if they do so. In all programs, students are prohibited from driving motorbikes.

In recent years however, as public transportation options have changed, motorbikes are becoming one of the dominant forms of transportation in Vietnam. As a result of this shift, SIT Study Abroad staff have evaluated the risks and instituted a policy that permits students to choose to travel as passenger on motorbikes under limited circumstances and only in certain localities where motorbikes are the dominant mode of transportation for local people.

All students will undergo an orientation to the motorbike culture in Vietnam, and will receive instructions on how to ride a motorbike and visually identify a mechanically sound bike and driver. Students will be required to sign a waiver before using motorbike transportation, and may only ride a motorbike while wearing a helmet. Any violation of the waiver and/or policy may result in immediate dismissal from the program.

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 cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to bring a smart phone from the U.S and either a) confirm they have an open phone thus enabling you to insert a local SIM card into your U.S. phone upon arrival or b) bring along a dual SIM card smartphone. Your local SIT
Study Abroad staff will assist you during orientation to purchase an appropriate local SIM card and required minimum minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad requires that each student has a local number for communication with the homestay family, program staff, etc.

While we recognize that alternative communication methods can be free or cheaper than cell service i.e. facetime, skype, WhatsApp, etc. those 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. Full compliance with this policy is expected. Students are responsible for maintaining a minimum number of credits, keeping their phones charged and on their person at all times.

Telecommunications is not cheap in Vietnam and international phone calls are expensive, however, access to local and international phone lines is easy throughout HCMC. Phone calls from Vietnam cost about US$1-2 per minute, and faxes may cost US$1-2 per page. It is much less expensive to call from the U.S. to Vietnam.

When you travel outside of HCMC you will find a range of access to local and international phone lines, but should have reliable. SIT students can also make calls at the post office, though these rates can be rather high.



Some students may currently be using a phone that is compatible with the Vietnamese cellular phone networks. Check your phone to see if it is functional on a GSM 900/1800 network, and has an unlocked SIM card. You may need to contact your provider to have it unlocked.

Keep in mind the time difference when calling or receiving an international call. Vietnam is 12 hours ahead of EST, 11 hours ahead during Daylight Savings Time (April - October).

Most places that you stay in Vietnam will offer internet services, and many places have wireless internet available. In addition, there are some up-market coffee shops in HCMC with wireless Internet access. There will be times during the semester, particularly when on excursion, when you will not have Internet access. For this program we expect all students to bring their own laptop to Vietnam. Students take full responsibility for their own belongings.

Note: Using pen and paper to communicate with home is encouraged! In these days of instant communication, this mode allows you to retain your cultural immersion while still sharing your experience with your friends and family. Mail to and from Vietnam usually takes two weeks or longer.

The SIT program center provides internet access during posted hours.

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 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.

If it is necessary for someone to send you mail then posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
Room 801, Number 49 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Street,
District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Zip Code 70 000
Tel. 84 283 9100 423

[Packages should be sent to the following address via ***DHL or FedEx.***

[**Student Name**
Room 801, Number 49 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Zip Code 70 000
Tel. (848) 3832 8623] 84 283 9100 423

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.

Vietnamese Dong can be purchased in some large U.S. banks, but it is also very easy to get upon arrival in Vietnam. Students may exchange U.S. currency or withdraw Vietnamese Dong from an ATM machine inside the international airport in Ho Chi Minh City upon arrival.



ATM machines are in abundance throughout Vietnam. Accessing money should not be a problem for you. Many restaurants, large department stores and tourist boutiques take major credit cards, such as Visa and MasterCard. A Visa or MasterCard can also be helpful in emergencies, medical or otherwise.

For your valuable items, such as passports, air-tickets, major credit cards, you should ask the front desk of your guesthouse to place them in the safe box. During your homestay period, you should ask your homestay family to store these things in a safe place, although the homestay family does not take responsibility for their security. Otherwise, you can put these in the locked box in your room.

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

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, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are averages**.

A suggested total amount of money to budget ranges from **US$800 to $1,200**. 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 or a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	300 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	100 USD
Up-front medical costs:	100 USD Per visit
COVID-19 Test(s) **(subject to change and cost may vary)**	100-250 USD

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; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students' guests.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments. 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 advises against independent travel. If a student wishes to travel independently, they must submit a request that will be reviewed by the Academic Director and the Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing Regional Manager. SIT reserves the right to deny independent travel requests. Further details regarding the current independent travel protocols can be found here: https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/covid-19-risk-management-protocols/.

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. Usually only one carry-on is permitted on the plane: we recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.

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

Vietnam is becoming more open to contemporary influences and global trends, but you will find that the dress code for college students is still conservative. By following local customs, you will show your respect for the people you meet here. Even on a hot day, long and short-sleeved shirts and blouses, long pants and skirts are good choices for most occasions, especially when you might meet people older than yourself. In most situations, you should avoid sleeveless shirts, short skirts, shorts and torn clothing. These can be considered very disrespectful, and so if you wear them, it is possible you may be criticized – even by complete strangers! Keep in mind you should wear proper clothes when you visit religious sites.

You should wear smart casual clothing to class on all campuses of different colleges/universities throughout the semester, although jeans and t-shirts may be fine with some of your younger teachers. You can wear less formal clothing when you are in your hotel or homestay, but please use your judgment when going out with friends, since you might encounter situations where conservative dress is more appropriate. There are many inexpensive markets to buy any clothes you might need, although larger-sized clothes and shoes are not readily available.

There will be formal occasions when you meet lecturers from local universities, or attend functions with homestay families and other guests. For these occasions, you will need to dress in a more formal style. This means a nice dress and dress sandals for women, nice pants and shirt and good shoes for men.

For traveling, you should bring wash-and-wear and light-colored clothes that you can wash by hand and dry quickly. It may get cold during the excursions to the north or in the mountains, so you should bring some warmer items, such as sweaters and windbreakers. Dampness and the lack of heating can make it feel colder than it is.

Tailor-made garments are inexpensive in Vietnam. You may want to pack less and have things made.

For the rainy season, you will need a rain jacket or a rain poncho (which can be easily bought in Vietnam).

EQUIPMENT

Students do not need to bring bed linens or pillows, though they should bring one towel. Students also do not need sleeping bags, tents, or other camping equipment. Students can bring mosquito nets, but many rooms use electric fans as a method of keeping mosquitoes off your body.

It is a good rule whenever you travel to pack all your gear inside your pack in Ziploc and/or garbage bags. If you are bringing expensive camera gear, have a strategy to protect your camera and lenses from moisture and humidity.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is required that you bring a laptop computer. It will be your personal property and responsibility. Before leaving home, remember to back up your computer to the cloud or on a hard drive that you leave at home to safeguard all your data in case your computer is lost or stolen. It is also recommended that you insure your computer, smart phone, and other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss

or theft. SIT is not responsible for theft, loss, or any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country.

Not all computer manufacturers have service centers in Vietnam, so even if your computer is covered by an international warranty, service may not always be available. Students in the past who have had computer problems have not been able to get their computers repaired in a timely manner here. If your computer breaks down, you will still be expected to soldier on and do your work.

Internet cafes are quite common now where students can have access to Wi-Fi services. The great majority of computers in Vietnam are PCs. These facilities also allow customers to transfer digital photos from cameras to flash drives or blank CDs. You should bring your camera docking cord if you would like to transfer photos.

When using public computers, you are cautioned to save your work frequently and send it to yourself as an email attachment from time to time. You should also be familiar with anti-virus software and use it regularly.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/.

If you plan to bring electrical equipment you will need to bring a voltage adapter and plug converter. The voltage in Vietnam is 220v, AC 50 Hz. There can be frequent power surges, and the current is not always stable. Keep in mind that you might need to have a two-prong adapter if your computer has a three-prong grounded plug because most of the wall outlets in Vietnam are equipped with two ground prong.

GIFTS

As you might imagine, it is best to be prepared with a gift to offer your homestay family in gratitude for their hospitality and as a means to share a part of your culture with them. We suggest one or two gifts that the whole family can enjoy. You may also wish to consider gifts for people outside your homestay family. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Pack a couple of small gifts for children, such as small games, bubbles, or a



Frisbee. Even if your homestay family does not have small children, chances are that you will engage with children in your homestay community. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will discover other ways to thank your family. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share.

Gifts are an important form of social interaction in Vietnam. Successful lightweight gifts in the past have been framed photographs of yourself or family, T-shirts, calendars or posters with scenes of your home locations. CDs, small musical instruments (harmonicas, recorders, etc.), match box cars, small toys, fancy soaps and cosmetics, shampoos, lotions and bottles of perfume have also been popular gift items for homestay brothers and sisters.

Photographs of you, your family and friends, your home, school or town, are an excellent means of bridging language and cultural gaps. When selecting photographs to share with those you meet in Vietnam, you should remain aware of Vietnamese attitudes regarding dress and displays of affection between men and women. It may be taken as a sign of disrespect rather than informality to appear

disheveled or untidily dressed. Photos of women in bikinis will not likely result in greater cultural understanding, but instead lead to greater confusion over what are already many conceptions of women in the West. Similarly, photos in which men and women openly display affection for each other can often result in embarrassment and/or discomfort to Vietnamese unaccustomed to what appears to them to be inappropriate public behavior or a serious relationship. Extreme affluence, as demonstrated by photos of many homes, cars, and boats may also have an effect of which you should be aware.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

In Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) you will be able to obtain film (it is not overly expensive), soap, toilet paper, cosmetics, deodorant, razor blades and other items but specific brands may not be available. Indeed, most basic consumer items are available in Vietnam.

Sun hats are very nice to wear in HCMC. If you do not have a wide brim hat there is a better selection and variety in Vietnam. If you have a bigger than average head, you may want to purchase one before arriving in Vietnam.

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

- Loose cotton pants
- T-shirts or blouses (anything light, long and loose)
- Sweater and light jacket or coat
- Dressy outfit for presentations, dinners, professional meetings
- Several pairs of longer, moderate-length shorts - no short shorts please!
- Nightgown/pajamas (light for sleeping)
- Underwear - (two week supply) - 100% cotton undergarments are recommended to avoid skin rashes, infections, and other irritations
- A few pairs of socks
- Walking sandals good for rain and mud, such as Tevas (not flip flops)
- Flip-flops for shower
- Tennis shoes
- Nice shoes for presentations, dinners and professional meetings (closed-toe is best)
- Hiking boots

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card/International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis
- Two photocopies of your passport, stored separately from your actual passport
- Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination and/or booster encouraged
- Photocopy of visa

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- An adequate supply of any medication you use regularly including birth control (drugs for use other than for medical purposes is strictly forbidden on your program and strict penalties are in effect)
- A list of any medications you are currently taking with the generic name of each (if there is one)
- Small first aid kit with band-aids, hydrogen peroxide, antiseptic cleanser/alcohol pads, moist towelettes, rehydration salts or powder form of Gatorade, and over-the-counter drugs for minor pain, diarrhea, anti-itching, and motion sickness, as approved by your doctor (chewable tablets when possible as water is not always available)
- Multi-vitamins
- An extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses, if worn
- Plenty of contact lens cleaning solution, if used
- Eye drops (the dusty and polluted air is quite irritating)
- Hand and face lotion, lip moisturizer
- Tampons (not available in Vietnam)

To prevent the contraction and spread of COVID-19 you should come prepared with an appropriate number of face masks. Some individual venues may still require masks for entrance. The CDC recommends a close-fitting and protective mask that is comfortable for daily use.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Sunglasses
- Raincoat (poncho can be bought in Vietnam and is good for bike riding in rain)
- Luggage locks for your bags
- Insect repellent with DEET of 20/30% for use on skin and 100% DEET or Permethrin for use on clothing
- Plenty of sunscreen
- Travel alarm clock and/or watch
- Notebook and paper, journal and pens
- Daypack
- Homestay gifts
- Photos of friends/family to share with homestay family
- Discreet-sized money belt - important
- Digital camera

OPTIONAL

- Linens: A travel sheet is very helpful and a lightweight towel and washcloth (most hotels/guest houses in Vietnam provide one per guest)
- Athletic/running clothing
- Novels (bring a few so that you can trade with classmates; novels can be hard to find)
- Ear-plugs
- CD/MP3 player/recorder and favorite music