

COUNTRY OVERVIEW



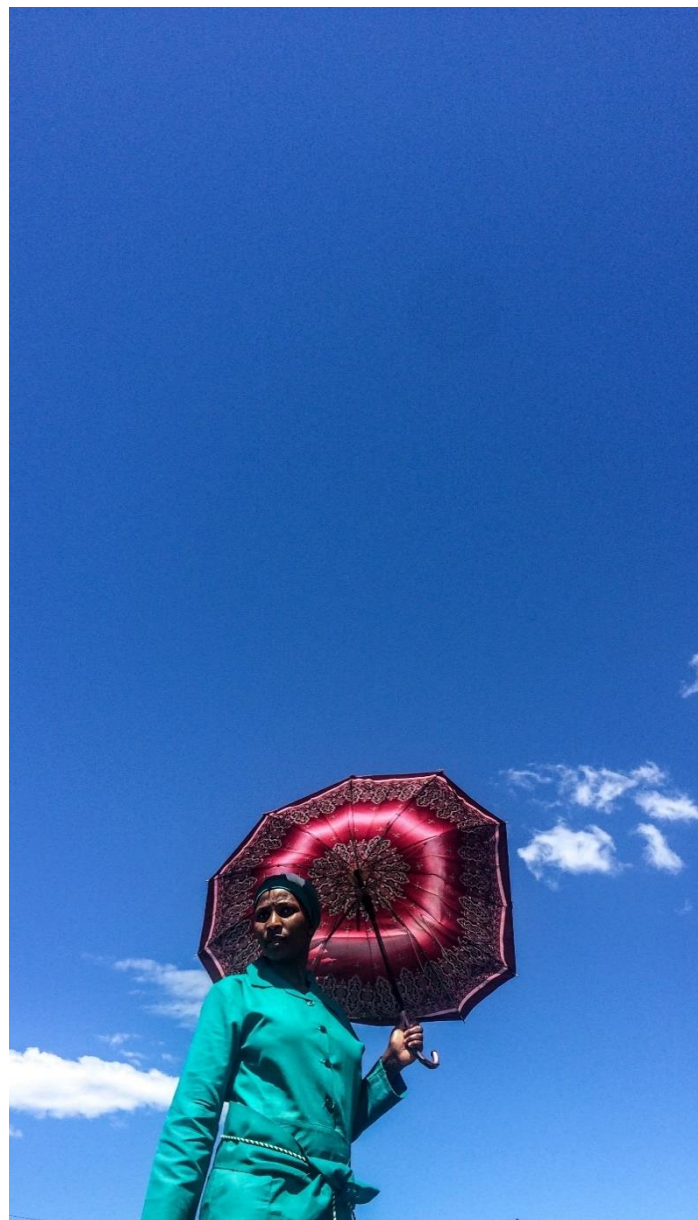
& PACKING GUIDELINES

South Africa: Internship in Diplomacy and
International Relations Summer 2024



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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)

May	June	July
62/74	58/71	56/70

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 essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends doing your own research to stay up to date on [CDC guidelines](#). It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel, and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to departure. SIT encourages students to have an informed discussion with your doctor and/or a travel clinician about what vaccines and other prophylactic medication you should receive.

Consider your normal routines for maintaining your physical and mental health & wellbeing. How might your program impact your ability to continue these routines? With this in mind, SIT strongly recommends bringing a full semester's supply of prescription medication(s). Getting a prescription filled outside of one's home country is very difficult, if not impossible. Equally challenging is receiving medication from home by mail. Therefore, students should bring an entire semester's worth of medication with them. Students are also advised to bring several extra inhalers and/or Epi-pens if prescribed.

Students should speak with their health care provider and/or a travel clinician and consult [CDC guidelines](#) regarding required and recommended immunizations and country regulations. Students participating on programs that require the yellow fever vaccine, will receive a signed and stamped "yellow card" after getting vaccinated, known as the International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP, which can be printed [here](#)). It is important to bring this card with you when traveling to the program. SIT recommends that students insert this document into their passport so that it is easily accessible when requested by immigration officials. Even if yellow fever is not a requirement for your program, it is good practice

to bring a copy of your immunization record with you, including your Covid 19 immunization card(s).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the [Student Health Office](#).

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 one homestay. Your homestay will be with Zulu-speaking families in Cato Manor, a township about 10km from the center of the city. Each student will have his/her own family but will be within a few hundred yards of other students and

within a mile of the whole group, as the program staff select families from one neighborhood. All houses will have cell phone reception, flush toilets, and electricity, and they are constructed of cinder brick. The Cato Manor homestay will be approximately two weeks in duration.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

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.

During Internship, students stay in a variety of settings, depending on need and preference. Some stay in apartments with other students, some stay at backpacker dormitories, and some choose to stay with a homestay family. Please note that self-catering apartments sometimes require a deposit, which is the student’s responsibility. If you feel you may want to stay in an apartment setting with other students, bring approximately an extra US\$300 to specifically use for this purpose. If all goes well, much of the deposit should be refundable at the end of your stay (different landlords will have different policies).



TRANSPORTATION

The program has the use of a minibus for daily shuttles between accommodations and the program center. The commute from Cato Manor 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 internet access for email and research purposes during office hours. 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

For this program, **DHL/FedEx and other courier company 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 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 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, 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 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
Up-front medical costs:	\$150
Potential 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 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.

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 of 7 kilograms. There will be a nominal fee for a second bag which is determined by weight and students will be responsible for the additional payment. 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.

Should you require prescription medication for the duration of your stay, please ensure that you bring enough for your stay as filling a prescription in South Africa may be challenging.

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. However, do remember to carry your swim wear and your sneakers and shorts for exercise. Durban is a well-known triathlon city, so the city has a huge running culture, especially along the beach.

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.

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 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 Internship – so please bring additional funds depending on how frequently you expect to use email at Internet cafés. Your phone can be used for recording.

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). A convertor plug must be obtained to fit the 3-pin plugs used in South Africa so that you are able to seamlessly charge your devices on arrival into South Africa.

A USB flash drive is not essential as copies of some lecturers' PowerPoint presentations, and storage of pictures can be done on cloud-based applications and web storage. Again, we suggest insuring your belongings and keeping them locked in your locker at the SIT office when not in use.

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.

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 – two week's supply
- 4-5 pairs socks
- Lightweight pajamas
- 1 pair **comfortable** shoes, sneakers or running shoes for hiking, running and other outdoor activities
- 1 pair sandals
- 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 cap
- 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 encouraged
- Yellow WHO Card/International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis where applicable
- Two photocopies of your passport, stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa (*if applicable*)

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Good quality thermometer (for taking your temperature)
- Small first aid kit
- Adhesive bandages/antiseptic/antibacterial cream
- Bring a full supply of any medications needed for the duration of your program including regular prescriptions as well as preventative medications such as antimalarial prophylaxis, altitude sickness

prophylaxis, antidiarrheal medication, etc. if applicable for your location(s) of travel.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

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

OPTIONAL

- Sunglasses
- Beach towel
- A notebook and pens
- A voice/tape/digital recorder if you plan to use one during internship 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.