

Jordan: Counseling and Humanitarian Action Internship

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Summer 2025

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a small country (population: 11.5 million) with few natural resources, but it has played a pivotal role in the humanitarian action efforts in the Middle East. Jordan's significance results partly from its strategic location at the crossroads of what most Christians, Jews, and Muslims call the Holy Land. The kingdom emerged out of the post-World War I division of the Middle East by Britain and France.

The country's long-time ruler was King Hussein (1953-99). A pragmatic leader, he successfully navigated competing pressures from the major powers (US, USSR, and UK), various Arab states, Israel, and internal population of different origins and countries, despite several wars and coup attempts. In 1989 he reinstated parliamentary elections and gradual political liberalization; in 1994 he signed a peace treaty with Israel. His son, King Abdullah II, assumed the throne following his father's death in February 1999.

Unlike many of the states in the region, Jordan has no oil of its own. Its resources are limited to phosphates and agricultural produce. The economy depends largely on services, tourism, and foreign aid, for which the US is the main provider. Jordan prides itself on its health service, one of the best in the region.

Arabs comprise 98% of the population of Jordan, with the remaining 2% being Circassian and Armenian. As such, Arabic is the official and predominant language in the country with English widely

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understood among upper and middle classes. Jordanian society is characterized by religious tolerance, where Sunni Muslims represent 94% of the population and the other 6% are Christian.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Jordan is a relatively small country situated at the junction of the Levantine and Arabian areas of the Middle East. The country is bordered on the north by Syria, to the east by Iraq, and by Saudi Arabia on the east and south. To the west are Israel and the occupied West Bank, while Jordan's only outlet to the sea, the Gulf of Aqaba, is to the south. Jordan occupies an area of approximately 96,188 square kilometers including the Dead Sea, making it similar in size to Maine or Portugal. However, Jordan's diverse terrain and landscapes belie its actual size, demonstrating a variety in landscape usually found only in large countries.

Western Jordan has essentially a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers. However, about 75% of the country can be described as having a desert climate with less than 200 mm of rain annually. Jordan can be divided into three main geographic and climatic areas: the Jordan Valley, the Mountain Heights Plateau, and the eastern desert, or Badia region.

For the most part, Amman has a temperate Mediterranean climate. The southern inland areas of Jordan are usually hot and dry year-round. Come prepared for a mix of very hot daytime and cool nighttime weather.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Jordanians are known for their warm hospitality, often welcoming guests with Arabic coffee or sweet tea, and serving mansaf, the national dish, as a sign of generosity. Greetings vary, with men shaking hands, while opposite-gender interactions are more reserved unless initiated. Respect for elderly people is deeply ingrained, with people standing when they enter a room. Modest dress is preferred, especially in rural areas, reflecting the country's conservative values. Fridays are dedicated to family gatherings, where extended relatives share meals and socialize. Bargaining is common in markets, making haggling an expected part of shopping. Jordanians take pride in their tea and coffee culture, often engaging in long conversations over a cup. Lastly, hospitality is not just a custom but a way of life, with guests treated with the utmost care and respect.

Amman, Jordan:	
AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)	
JUNE	JULY
88/64	93/67

DIET

Jordanian cuisine is rich in flavors, heavily influenced by Middle Eastern and Mediterranean traditions, with lamb, chicken, rice, and bread as staples. Mansaf, the national dish, consists of lamb cooked in fermented yogurt and served with rice. Mezze, a spread of appetizers like hummus, falafel, and baba ghanoush, is common in gatherings. Fresh vegetables, olives, and dates are widely consumed, while sweets like knafeh and baklava are popular desserts. Tea and Arabic coffee play a central role in hospitality, often served after meals or during social gatherings.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform the office of Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing prior to the start of your program (studenthealth@sit.edu). We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends you do research prior to departure about the health, safety, and security specifics of the country(ies) you plan to visit. Consult the [U.S. Department of State](#) website and search their [Countries and Areas Archive](#) for international travel information and current travel advisories for each country. Search the Center for Disease Control [Traveler's Health](#) page to see travel health notices and vaccine requirements and recommendations for any country(ies) you plan to visit.

SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date on 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. You should also reference the Health, Access, and Identity information on your program's [webpage](#).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the [Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team](#). 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](#).

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.**

We seek to foster increased cross-cultural understanding in students by immersing them in local culture through daily life in a new family and community. Students are expected to assume roles as family members, respecting and following host family norms around communications, visitors, and activities of daily living.

On this program, you will stay in homestays located 15 to 20 minutes from the SIT Jordan Center by taxi. However, travel time may be longer due to traffic. You will be assigned either to a single-host family (one student per household) or share a homestay with another student (classmate of the same gender), depending on availability and the homestay’s ability to accommodate your preferences. Each student or pair of students will have a designated room and a private bathroom with a shower. Wi-Fi will be available. Summers in Jordan are hot; while most homestays have air conditioning, some do not. In such cases, a fan will be provided.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Students should expect to share a room with one or more students during orientation/launch and while on excursions.

TRANSPORTATION

Most people in Jordan travel by private car, so the fact that you, as SIT students, will be unable to drive will make life slightly more difficult in this car culture (but it will certainly be safer for you, as Jordan is well-known for its aggressive drivers). Taxis are available throughout the city for reasonable rates, and SIT will include a transportation stipend in your weekly stipend to cover your travel to and from SIT headquarters, from and to internship site. During our excursions, the program will take buses within Jordan.

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.

Visit our [Contact & Communication](#) page for practices on program communication, emergency communication, and home institution communication.

PHONES AND INTERNET

[Cell Phone Policy](#)

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, including a data plan so that your phone is operational when you are away from wi-fi. If needed, during orientation SIT staff can assist students in purchasing a local SIM card and acquiring minutes for calls and texting. Failure to maintain a working phone capable of making and receiving calls/texts will be considered a conduct violation and a breach of our student code.

Mobile phones are an essential feature of social and cultural life in Jordan, and rates are relatively inexpensive. Your AD/PA will have local smart SIM or physical SIM available to you during the first days of orientation. If you have to buy a local smart phone, it will cost you about 175JD (around 250\$) and there is no need to sign a long-term service agreement.

You can use your phone as much or little as you like, adding minutes to your account by purchasing "scratch cards" from any mobile phone store in the country—and there seem to be thousands! It doesn't cost you anything to receive calls, even from overseas, which makes a mobile phone the most convenient way for loved ones to stay in touch with you during your stay. Remember, Jordan's time zone is +2 GMT while the Eastern US is -5 GMT.

The SIT program center provides internet access during posted hours. SIT Jordan has ADSL service with wireless for its offices, and students can use the wireless between and after classes but not during class sessions. If your laptop is capable of connecting to wireless networks, then you will be able to access the Internet there. Internet cafes are widely available, with rates averaging US \$ 1.50 per hour.

You can also buy an internet USB where you can use the internet anywhere; this will cost about \$60 per month.

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. Mailing prescription medication abroad is illegal.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, UPS 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:

30 Blodan Street
Abdoun
Amman 11181
Jordan

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. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the internship are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

The currency in Jordan is the Jordanian Dinar. Each *dinar* has 100 piasters (Arabic: *girsh*, plural: *groosh*). The dinar comes in notes of 5, 10, 20, and 50 JD. The easiest way to get money in Jordan is with a bank debit card. ATM machines are widely available. This method also has the advantage of giving you the wholesale exchange rate, which is slightly better than the retail rate that you'll get at currency exchange shops. Credit cards are used often in Amman, so a Visa, MasterCard, or American

Express credit card can be used to make purchases around town, but mostly at the malls and major retailers.

Though theft is generally not a problem here, you should still be careful with your money. Be sure to bring a lock for your luggage or a small lockbox for your cash and valuables as they are your responsibility, and SIT will not reimburse lost money or valuables.

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, internship-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are averages**.

A suggested total amount of personal spending money to budget ranges from **US\$1310 to \$1630**. 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 specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	400-600 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	200-300 USD
Up-front medical costs:	500 USD
Visa:	60 USD

Cell phone:	250-270 USD
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Estimated total:	1310 – 1630 USD
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Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT's travel insurance GeoBlue, which you can read more about on our [Participant Insurance](#) page, you still may need to pay up-front for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

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 Policy](#).

If a visitor does come while a program is in progress, they 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.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Please read our full [Independent Travel](#) policy for our definition, guidelines and how to access our independent travel notification form. Please note that independent travel is only allowed during program free time and students will not be excused from program activities to travel. SIT is not responsible for any costs of student independent travel including logistics, preparations, cancellation fees, change fees, and any other costs associated with independent travel. We highly recommend you wait to book any independent travel until AFTER arriving on program and receiving the final academic schedule from your program.

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.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICIES

SIT maintains a [Code of Conduct](#) and clear institutional [policies](#) regarding student behavior through a commitment to mutual learning and respect for others. Visit the policy page for detailed policies around academic integrity, alcohol and drug use, anti-harassment and non-discrimination, attendance and participation, credit hours, equal education opportunities, grading, housing, independent travel, prohibited activities, religious holiday observance, sexual harassment and misconduct, and withdrawal among others.

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 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

For the warmer season (April to October), you need wash-and-wear summer clothes. Plan to dress in layers—as it gets warmer or colder, you can simply eliminate or add layers.

Jordanians dress more formally than Americans, and there are cultural rules concerning dress, especially for women. It is better to dress conservatively rather than not conservatively enough. Long-sleeved blouses and shirts and skirts that fall below the knee are appropriate; pants are also common attire for Jordanian women. Clothes should not be tight or see-through. (No mini-skirts, tank tops, or short shorts.) Jordan is extremely formal, so bring one dressy outfit. Amman is very sunny most of the year, so bring a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Don't forget a sweater and a bathing suit (you may feel more comfortable if you forego the bikini except for dead sea and aqaba excursions. You will need

a pair of crocs as well). Come prepared with clothing that is culturally appropriate yet will keep you cool. Also, take note of the fact that homestay families will likely not have air conditioning.

Note: Body piercing is a big taboo — eyebrow, tongue, or other piercings bring strange looks, and it is not a common cultural practice in Jordan. However, our homestay families are open minded and tolerant especially to foreigners. Just be aware people may be curious or stare.

EQUIPMENT

No extra equipment is necessary, everything will be taken care of by your host families. Mosquitoes are not a problem in Jordan, so there is no need to bring a mosquito net.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is 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, smartphone, or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft (SIT insurance does not cover personal property).

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters.

<http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/>.

Computers are not readily available to students on this program, and computer rental is almost non-existent. If you already have a laptop, it is useful to bring it with you. You should also think about having insurance in case of theft or loss. There are cyber cafes in Amman, which have word processing facilities. If you expect to use these, you should budget about US \$100 specifically to cover this expense.

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

Bring enough deodorant, toothpaste, tampons, etc. for the first two weeks or so. US toiletries are readily available. After the first week, students will move in with their host families, and family members will wash or help the students wash their clothes.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact:

<https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/contact-a-former-student/>.

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

Packing List

These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director. The clothing you bring may be adapted to your own style, within cultural norms of acceptable dress.

General

Avoid any clothes that have bad words or inappropriate drawings, especially those that are religiously and politically sensitive.

- 1 nice outfit (conservative dress/skirt for women and nice shirt/neat pants for men)
- 1-2 pair casual but neat pants
- 1 pair nice pants
- 1-2 pair jeans
- Long-sleeve cotton shirts or blouses and a few T-shirts
- 2 light sweaters
- Exercise/sports clothes (optional, depending on your interests)
- Swimsuit
- Underwear (one- to two-week supply)
- Socks (one-week supply)
- Hat and sunglasses (the desert sun will be bright)
- A warmer coat (a heavy fleece shell will work with a sweater)
- 1 pair comfortable everyday shoes that are fairly dressy and good for walking. Your shoes should be sturdy. Bring an extra pair if you have large feet, because larger sizes are difficult or impossible to find.
- 1 pair sandals for outdoors (Teva or Chacos are great)
- 1 pair sneakers and/or 1 pair light hiking boots
- 1 pair of house slippers
- 1 pair of crocs
- Scarf (large enough to cover hair: for visiting mosques, churches, and other holy places)
- 2 long cotton skirts

Travel Documents

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card or list of your vaccinations
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- 2 passport photos (in case your passport is lost or stolen)

Health/Toiletries

- Extra pair of glasses or contacts, if needed
- Contact cleaning/soaking liquid, if needed
- Sunscreen (expensive in Jordan)
- Adequate supply of prescription medication (including birth control pills) and vitamins, if needed

Other Important Items

- Money belt
- School supplies, notebook, journal, pens (to get you started during orientation)
- Book bag or small backpack for school use
- Small bath towel
- Small flashlight
- Homestay gifts
- Photos of friends/family from home to share with homestay family
- Water bottle (dehydration is an important health concern in the desert)