

IHP Cities in the 21st Century: People, Planning, and Politics: USA – Argentina – Spain – South Africa

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Fall 2026

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

IHP is a global comparative study abroad program – providing students a unique opportunity to examine a timely topic across three contrasting country contexts. Students analyze and compare critical global issues and challenges under an overarching theme related to urbanization and social justice.

A fundamental pedagogical approach of IHP is **the learning community**. Students will be traveling, studying, reflecting, debating, and dialoguing together. The aim is to build an inclusive learning community that allows for intellectual and personal growth. Students who are committed, engaged, flexible and interested will grow immeasurably on this learning journey.

To pursue a nuanced and holistic understanding of the program's theme, students interact with activists, public figures, government and organizational leaders, innovators, artists, and citizens from all walks of life who are directly involved in the topics of study.

Classroom and in-country activities complement one another to create a cohesive intellectual experience. **Country Coordinators** are educators and practitioners, responsible for the program schedule in each country and supported by a local team (program assistants, interpreters, logistics coordinators). Two courses are taught by **Local Faculty**, scholars and professors who are experts in the program's themes within the local context of each city/country. **A Visiting Faculty travels with the student group for the duration of the**

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program. The Visiting Faculty is a professor that teaches two courses over the semester and works closely with local faculty and in-country teams. They attend and participate in most other components of each country program, including field site visits, guest speakers, etc.

IHP is an academic program which travels, and not a traveling program with academics. **Your days are scheduled with dynamic programming, and your learning is both communal and individual.** We recognize and respect that not all students learn or participate in identical ways, but we expect you to be fully prepared for classes, to engage with the highest level of respect and interest with all program participants, and to take on the intellectual work of this semester with enthusiasm.

The time, effort, passion, and curiosity that each of us puts into this work will be very rewarding. At IHP we believe in creating learning journeys that disrupt ways of being, knowing, and acting that might serve to reproduce inequality and injustice. The result is a uniquely powerful educational experience that calls students to consider their own transformative potential to act in response to critical challenges of our time. Welcome to this unforgettable journey!

PROGRAM ORIENTATIONS

During the first few days of the program launch there will be orientation sessions covering program policy, staff and student roles and responsibilities, health and safety guidelines, academic policies, culture shock, and community building.

In addition, there will be an orientation session in the first few days of each subsequent city program covering city-specific details. Some of these include cultural norms, survival language lessons, local health and safety considerations, access to ATMs, banks, and local currency, etc. The country coordination team will support students with accessing eSim or local SIM cards in each country. Students are required to maintain local and international calling capability during their tenure on the program (see more in the section, *Phones and Email*). The city coordination team will support students with all logistical needs.

Comentado [CZ1]: I would change the language here, because it shouldn't just have mobile phone service—it should also be able to make and receive international calls.

In this program courses are designed to add depth and context to extensive field-based learning. During most days you will be engaged in field activities, classes, group assignments, and individual homework. During weekends, optional activities may be offered, but the time is

yours to explore on your own, go on an adventure with your homestay family, prepare for next week's reading, catch up on journaling, exercise, etc.

LAUNCH

The Launch is an orientation as well as an immersion into the first city of the IHP Cities program, and sets the tone and pace of the program. Academic courses begin, you will hear from guest speakers and travel to different parts of the city for fieldwork and site visits. Because a large part of being an IHP student involves learning together as a group, the first few days of the launch program are focused on meeting staff and fellow students, building community, and understanding your role in the group. Additionally, workshops will provide a space for reflection on the politics of ethical travel and intercultural engagement; as well as on strategies of individual care and mutual support to guide the group over the course of the semester.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

You will experience quite a range of climates during the Fall semester. During the program Launch in New York you will be in the late summer, with hot and muggy days still possible (especially if there is a heat wave). Morning and late afternoon commutes to/from the classroom using public transit may involve a minimum of 10-15 mins of walking outside, and there will be at least two occasions where you will spend 1-2 hrs. walking outside for programmed activities. Buenos Aires will be in spring time with generally mild weather. Rain may be fairly frequent but usually in the form of short-lived thunderstorms. Expect some wet days, but generally pleasant weather with increasing warmth. Barcelona will involve similarly mild fall weather; light to moderate rain (which can occasionally be heavy) will be common but not constant. In Cape Town, summer will be around the corner, mostly warm, dry, and windy weather, but overall temperatures will still be more mild than NYC. As nights and early mornings can occasionally be chilly throughout the semester, layering accordingly is recommended. For New York, Buenos Aires, and Barcelona, pack a rainjacket, if not also a small travel umbrella.

New York, USA: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)	
AUG 84/68	SEPT 76/61
Buenos Aires, Argentina: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)	
SEPT 65/52	OCT 71/58
Barcelona, Spain: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)	
OCT 72/58	NOV 66/48
Cape Town, South Africa: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)	
NOV 72/58	DEC 75/61

LOCAL CUSTOMS

No short text can fully or meaningfully encapsulate the norms of an entire city, let alone an entire country. The sections on local context that follow are not exhaustive, but rather a starting point for your exploration and understanding of each place.

Argentina:

Regarding etiquette and courtesy, Argentina follows the common rules of most western countries. However, there are some special details to keep in mind: in informal meetings, Argentineans greet with a kiss in the cheek, while in formal ones they shake hands. It is

important to always greet your homestay family and to say good morning and goodnight. "Please" and "thank you" are mandatory when requesting something and also when shopping. Also, and very important, it is very impolite to be barefoot in the classroom and to put legs on a chair while attending a lecture or in any other academic session. Finally, it is important to note that the idea of personal space in Argentina is quite flexible. Argentineans embrace a lot and touch each other when they want or need attention.

Spain:

Spain is a colorful and beautiful country built on a generous foundation of art, culture, history, and politics. Barcelona is the second city of Spain and is home to more than 3 million people in the metropolitan area. Barcelona is also the main urban area in what is defined as Catalonia.



During the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, Barcelona was the second most industrialized region of Spain. As the industrialized economy declined in the early twentieth century, Barcelona transformed into a service city known for its art, food, culture, and architecture.

Spain is a diverse country integrated by different contrasting regions that show varying economic and social structures, as well as different languages, and historical, political, and cultural traditions. According to the Spanish constitution, it is composed of nationalities and regions to which the constitution recognizes and guarantees the right to self-government. These autonomous regions have a strong historically constituted sense of identity and language.

South Africa:

South Africa: 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. As such, it is difficult to generalize on South African etiquette and culture; however, here are a few things to keep in mind: Be polite – greet people when you meet them. Greetings are leisurely and include time for social discussion and exchanging pleasantries. If you ask someone how they

are doing, they may answer your question with a few minutes of talk. Take the time to learn the social norms for greetings from your homestay families; this means a great deal to folks in this community. People will appreciate your time and attention in all places. Clean up after yourself – especially in your homestay, in the classroom, and in hotel rooms. Remember that what you do not clean, someone else will clean. Be on time to class and meetings

LOCAL DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in country. Special or restricted diets may not always be fully understood by your host family, although they may have previously hosted a student with similar dietary restrictions. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture.

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.

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 be aware that on this program we are able to support vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free, gluten-free, Halal, and Kosher diets. However, please know the variety of food available in these diets may be more limited than you are used to at home.

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.

New York City:

During the Launch, you will receive a daily meal stipend for all meals that are not provided for by the program. While the hostel and classroom spaces are conveniently located near many restaurants and cafes, students often make a trip to the grocery store to purchase snacks to keep in their rooms. The Launch Coordinator will provide a guide for reasonable restaurants, small delis, and bodegas in the area

Buenos Aires:

Mealtimes in Argentina are generally similar to those in the United States, except dinner tends to be eaten much later in the evening (9–10 pm). The staple diet in Argentina is all types of meat, breads, pasta, sandwiches, etc., as well as the ubiquitous empanadas. It is also a common custom to drink *mate*, an infusion of herbs in hot water drunk through a metal straw called a *bombilla*. The day begins with a light breakfast, which typically includes a cup of tea or coffee, croissants/bread and marmalade. In Buenos Aires, lunch generally consists of an entrée (a type of meat, a starch option, and salad) and dessert. Argentines rarely use beans in their meals, and the food is not spicy at all. In rural communities, many families eat a type of stew called *puchero*, made up of different vegetables and meats, but the most typical food in the countryside is the *asado* (barbecue). At 5 pm, many families have what is called a *merienda*, a light meal similar to the breakfast meal. Argentine food is generally eaten with very little use of condiments.

There is a variety of food available in Buenos Aires stores: fruit, vegetables, and meats. There are also lots of restaurants. Generally, there is one individual in the home who does the majority of the cooking.

Vegetarians can manage their diets in Buenos Aires, but it may require a bit more effort on their part and is subject to availability of vegetables in the market. The Argentine diet, as mentioned before, is largely centered on meat, so it will be necessary to be very clear to your hosts about your dietary preferences. Due to the country's strict labeling laws, it is very easy to find gluten-free options in Buenos Aires. Gluten-free grocery items can be found in Dietéticas or Farmacias which are essentially health food-type stores that cater to a range of dietary needs. Lastly, it is quite possible to keep kosher in Buenos Aires.

Barcelona:

Barcelona has a rich culinary tradition based on a Mediterranean diet with a large number of culinary options from around the world. Most people in Barcelona have something light when they wake up, like toast or fruit, and then later in the morning, may have a croissant, a sandwich or something similar to hold them over until lunchtime. Many bars and cafes have breakfast specials that also include coffee or tea. Lunch is the primary meal of the day and eaten on the later side with most restaurants serving between 1–4pm. IHP student stipends will mostly go towards lunch with many restaurants offering a mid-day *menu*, typically including an

appetizer, main dish, dessert, and beverage. The city has an extensive network of markets offering anything from cured meats, olives, cheeses and fresh fruits and vegetables. Barcelona is an increasingly vegetarian/vegan-friendly city and gluten-free options aren't hard to find either. Most locals have a relatively light dinner, and many restaurants don't even open until 8pm. Small plates and finger-foods known as *tapas* are common options and are often served to share ("family style"), as mealtime is typically a social event in Barcelona.



Cape Town:

Students generally enjoy the diet in South Africa, which may be in many ways similar to your own. Food in Cape Town reflects its diverse and eclectic history, with influences from a range of colonial-era influences (Dutch, English, Portuguese), slave ancestors from the Far East and the more recent influence of hip urban food trends. There are several food markets, and fresh food and vegetables are easily bought on the street. There is a strong tradition of BBQ (*braai*) in South Africa. If you are not a meat eater, do not worry. Homestay families are used to catering to vegetarian, vegan and kosher diets. In addition, it is possible to find gluten-free items at many grocery stores. Your homestay coordinator will discuss your special needs with your family before you begin your homestays.

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 countries you will 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 countries you will be visiting.

SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date. 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 [Pre departure page](#)

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 on your program's [Pre departure page](#).

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).

HOUSING

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 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.



****All students are required to stay at all program-provided accommodations throughout the course of the semester.**

CLASSROOM SPACE

In all the countries you visit, you will generally have a “main” classroom location where you will attend faculty class sessions and welcome guest speakers/lecturers. However, the city will also become your classroom as you go on site visits, explore neighborhoods, conduct research, and travel to other sites within the region

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Students should expect to share a room with one or more students during the program Launch in New York, as well as in homestays (where placements are in pairs).

TRANSPORTATION

Across locations, students will often use public transportation. Specifics on public transportation will be discussed during the orientation upon your arrival in a country. Use of ride-hailing services, such as Uber but also local ones, is also common.

New York City:

Utilizing public transportation is a fantastic way to get to know a city. You will receive weekly passes for both MTA bus and subway access for program-related travel. In addition to the

usual ride-hailing options such as Uber and Lyft, Green and yellow taxis are still available and can be hailed on the street or by smartphone apps including Curb and Arro. Biking is also a great way to get around the city and there are bike share programs available.

Buenos Aires:

Students will primarily get around using the subway or buses. They will receive a transportation smartcard called SUBE, which they will use for paying fares on buses, subways, and trains. Buses, subways, and trains are not integrated into a single public transportation system, which means that each means of transport is independent from the others, and you pay every time you use them, and per trip. Buses work 24 hours, while subways have a limited service from 6am to 10:30pm. Taxis are a good option for late evening hours, but we encourage students to use the service of the so called radiotaxis. As for taxi apps they can use easytaxi.com, which is available in English version; while Uber is discouraged since its legal status is still unclear in the city of Buenos Aires. It is important to note that most drivers do not speak English.



Barcelona:

Students will receive a 30-day travel card that allows unlimited journeys using the integrated system of high-quality public transit options within the core metropolitan area-- metro, bus (TMB), urban railway (FGC, Zone 1), Montjuïc funicular, tram (TRAM), and regional railway (Rodalies de Catalunya, Zone 1). The city is very pedestrian-friendly and relatively compact with large areas and public plazas free from motor vehicles. Taxis and public buses are safe options for late night travel.

Cape Town:

The distances between homestays and classrooms in Cape Town are not usually walkable. Affordable mini-bus taxis are one popular means of public transport and serve most routes. The relatively recently introduced MyCiti bus service is also available for a limited (but increasing) number of routes. Taxis and Ubers are also available and quite affordable, and especially recommended in the evenings.

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 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.

Do not set family or friends up with expected communication during arrivals and departures to/from new locations. **It may not always be possible for students to gain internet or phone access immediately upon arrival in a new country.**



When you arrive in a new country, you will have many immediate obligations, including getting to your accommodations, eating a full meal, recovering from jet lag, meeting your new host family, attending required scheduled sessions, evening engagements, and getting oriented.

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 of conduct.

The SIT program center provides internet access during posted hours.

New York:

You are required to have a working local sim while in the US with a US phone number where local staff can reach you.

Buenos Aires:

Email and Internet access is readily available throughout the major cities and is often quite inexpensive.

Argentina's most common cell phone system is tri-band GSM world cell phones. You might want to ask your cell phone company in the US about your smartphone compatibility. It is most advisable to bring an unlocked phone from the US; however, if you need to purchase a cell phone in Argentina, the most economical smartphones range in cost from US\$100 - \$150. SIM cards are easy to obtain at a very low price: US\$4. You will have to charge credit on your SIM card in order to make calls. Minimum credit is US\$5.

Barcelona:

Students can pick up prepaid SIM cards from one of the four main cellular providers (passport/ID required at purchase). No matter which company you choose, 10-15 euros per month will get you a useful number of calls, texts and data. Your local Country Coordinator will provide information comparing plan options. After purchase, there are a range of ways to add money to your SIM via text, website, or in-store, but ask the company for details and for help configuring your SIM. Most locals use

WhatsApp to communicate with the texting app Telegram becoming increasingly popular.

Note: Calls from a landline to mobile numbers are more expensive. Spain is also part of the European Union, which introduced new roaming regulations in June 2017. These "roam like at home" rules effectively ended roaming charges across much of Europe, meaning you'll usually pay no more for calls, texts, and data in other EU countries than you would in the country of purchase (applicable only for mid-semester break, verify this policy when purchasing your SIM card if you plan to travel outside of Spain).



Cape Town:

Cell phones are widely used in South Africa and offer the most convenient way to communicate with your family and with program staff. Do not buy cheap international phone cards off the Internet – many will not work in South Africa. Local cell phone calls cost about \$0.25 a minute. SIM cards are provided at no cost to students.

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 either **DHL, FedEx and/or 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:

Country, location	Address for packages	To Whom + student name
New York	The Local NY Hostel 13-02 44th Ave. Queens, NY 11101	c/o Nicolas Stahelin
Argentina	Araoz 2838 Zip Code: C1425DGT City: CABA, Argentina	Carolina Rovetta
Spain	Lleialtat Santseca, Carrer d'Olzinelles,	Carne Arcarazo

	31, 08014, Barcelona, Spain	
South Africa	IHP, SIT Cape Town, 18 Station Rd, Rondebosch, Cape Town 7700, South Africa	Nokubonga Ralayo

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.

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.

The following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for personal travel, 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\$1,200 to \$2,700**. To determine where you might fall into 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 a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

Required Program Expenses

Visa Registration (non-US passport holders):	varies
Visa Registration (US passport holders):	n/a
Immunization:	varies
Phone credit, data top-up	150-200 USD
US sim card (if applicable)	50 USD
Up-front medical costs (to be reimbursed):	500 - 1000 USD

Variable Personal Out-of-Pocket Expenses

Miscellaneous personal spending (i.e. entertainment, dietary restrictions, excess baggage fees/second checked bag, regional travel, over the counter meds)	500-1200 USD+
Property insurance	varies
Personal Local Transportation:	100-300 USD
Estimated total:	1,200 USD to 2,700USD+

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.

Buenos Aires:

The local currency is the Argentine Peso. The US dollar exchange rate can be volatile so it is best to bring some USD cash and we do not encourage you to bring Argentine pesos with you from the US. It is quite easy to find money exchange offices throughout the airport and cities. Most stores in Buenos Aires also accept credit cards, the most common being Visa, MasterCard, and American Express.

Barcelona:

As in 15 other European Union countries, the official currency is the euro (€). Credit cards, including AMEX, are widely accepted in most businesses, however some smaller restaurants and shops still do not accept credit cards. ATMs are plentiful around Barcelona and are currency exchange centers. Most banks are open from 8:30am to 2pm Monday to Friday.

Cape Town:

The local currency is the South African Rand. ATMs are widely available for withdrawal in Rands. But if you want to exchange currency it is advised to go to one of the commercial banks since currency exchangers charge extra fees. During orientation you will be given an approximate estimate on expenses for additional / optional activities. It is important to exercise caution when using ATMs in South Africa. Your Country Coordinator will advise you in determining the safest ATM locations.

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT 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 during free time on weekends or 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.

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.

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, cancelation 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. 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.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON BAGGAGE

SIT strongly recommends students bring only one checked bag. SIT will not cover the cost of a second checked bag.

- A second checked bag is usually very expensive and costs vary by airline.
- Students are responsible for all costs associated with baggage beyond what is included for each flight.
- SIT often books group tickets and it is not always possible to pay in advance for a second bag. Paying at the airport during check-in is often more expensive.
- Apart from the costs, it can be very difficult to manage two checked bags throughout your travels and can slow down the group during transits to new locations.
- SIT vans have limited space and may have difficulty accommodating extra baggage.

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

Be sure to research what kind of weather to expect in each of the cities you visit, as well as local clothing customs. www.bbc.co.uk/weather has some great country guides. You will be traveling in mostly urban but also some rural areas and will need to dress accordingly in order to avoid offending anyone. When you arrive to each country, you will receive an explanation about how to dress appropriately (both culturally and climate-wise) for each setting.

You will also have the opportunity to purchase local clothing, which may help you to assimilate and feel more comfortable in public. In all settings, however, it is important to dress respectfully. This means no torn or dirty (seen as disrespectful), and possibly no hats worn indoors.

Semi-formal, professional dress will be required for visits to high-profile organizations, but one or two nice outfits should suffice. There won't be many dry cleaners and clothes washing won't have options like "delicate" or "permanent press". Clothes may be washed by hand and will typically be hung out to dry. This means you will benefit from bringing items that are durable and won't take more than an afternoon (day at most) to dry.

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/>.

When considering how you will use your computer or other electronic device on IHP, please keep in mind:

- Computers (like cell phones) are frequent targets of theft and may get stolen. Keep them safe.
- Computers can break and are frequently more difficult and expensive to repair abroad. Faculty and coordinators cannot be expected to help students with computer repair or replacement and use of your computer equipment is at your own risk.
- Digital devices can detract from the experience of studying abroad. The more time students spend on their devices, the less time they spend exploring the communities and connecting with homestay families, which are the most memorable aspects of students' experience. Start thinking about this now and plan to be thoughtful about the quality and quantity of your use of digital technology.
- Wireless internet is sometimes not available, including in homestays. Be prepared for less consistent and slower access to the internet.
- Faculty members may ask that computers be turned off and kept out of the classroom during class sessions.
- Computers, tablets, and phones might not be allowed during guest lectures and their use can be limited during site visits. Local coordinators will communicate the rules and expectations in each location.

- Any technological devices or electronics that you choose to bring are your personal property and responsibility. It is recommended that you insure them. SIT is not responsible for any theft or loss of your devices. Devices are safe at host family homes, but you may wish to consider how such items will be protected on field trips, on weekends, and in hotels/hostels.

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.

Former students have recommended calendars, picture books, postcards, music, or souvenirs from your college bookstore as gifts.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

You will be able to obtain much of what you need while traveling. However, specific products may not always be found in each country, and it can be difficult to procure items during rural homestays. If there is something you absolutely cannot live without, it's a good idea to make sure you pack it.

If you take prescription medications, make sure to obtain enough for the duration of your program before leaving your home country. It can be difficult or even impossible to obtain specific medications in other countries.

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/>.

Packing List

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

Packing List sample:

GENERAL

- 7-8 T-shirts or modest tank tops
- 3-4 long-sleeved shirts (varying degrees of warmth)
- 2 warm sweaters, sweatshirts, or fleeces for layering
- Light, packable rain jacket
- 3-4 pairs of pants
- 1 pair of non-jeans and nice shirt for men
- 1 pair of athletic shorts/pants
- 3-4 pairs of long shorts, skirts, or dresses (covering your knees)
- 12-14 pairs of underwear
- 6-8 pairs of socks
- Shower shoes
- Comfortable, durable sandals; also consider dressier flat shoes or sandals.
- Sneakers or lightweight, comfortable multi-purpose shoes like trail-running shoes
- Hat or cap (for sun)
- Scarf and/or bandana
- Bathing suit
- Pajamas
- Smart phone (for requirements see Contact & Communications Policy)

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card/International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis or print-out of your medical vaccinations record from your doctor.

- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport.
- Photocopy of visa(s)
- 2 passport photos
- A driver's license or other form of identification in addition to your passport
- A copy of your SIT Study Abroad student insurance membership card
- Medical documents and photocopies of all stored separately from the originals

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

You will be able to buy and/or restock many of these supplies while you travel. Only bring small amounts to keep your luggage a manageable size.

- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly.
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss
- Shampoo, conditioner, soap
- Deodorant
- Quick-dry bath towel & washcloth/bandana
- Razor, shaving cream
- Hairbands, headbands, barrettes
- Sunblock
- Mosquito repellent
- Chapstick with SPF
- Comb or brush
- Nail clippers
- Contact lenses and solution, extra pair of glasses.

The following health and toiletry items are **optional** and can be purchased as needed along the way, but it is recommended to have a few of these things on hand. Students may want to coordinate buying some of these items to share once they meet at the program launch. **Note: Your Visiting Faculty or local staff will have access to an Emergency Medical Kit when needed.**

- Imodium
- Painkillers (such as Advil or Tylenol)
- Band-Aids
- Motion sickness remedy
- Laxatives or digestive aids such as Fiber supplements
- Q-tips

- Anti-bacterial hand sanitizer gel
- Hydrocortisone cream
- Antibacterial cream
- Aloe or burn cream.
- Multi-vitamins
- Cold medicine (such as NyQuil)
- Decongestant
- Allergy medicine
- Re-hydration powder

OTHER OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Money belt or small necktie bag to carry valuable documents.
- Journal
- Water bottle
- Ziploc/plastic bags, or compression sacks
- FAA-approved locks for your luggage
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Hard case to protect glasses.
- Safety pins, rubber bands, paper clips, stapler and/or duct tape
- Travel alarm clock or watch with alarm.
- Pocketknife
- Small flashlight or head lamp
- Electrical adaptors
- Charger for electronics and batteries
- Pens/pencils, notebook
- One or two books to read and then share.
- Gifts for host family in first country (unique items from your hometown work great)
- Travel pillow (or a pillowcase to hold a sweater for long plane and bus rides)
- Travel mug and coffee filter
- Sewing kit
- Small Tupperware
- Stain stick



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