

IHP Climate Change: The Politics of Land, Water, and Energy Justice: USA – Ecuador - Morocco – Nepal

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2026

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

IHP is a global comparative study abroad program – providing students a unique opportunity to examine a timely topic across four contrasting country contexts. Students analyze and compare critical global issues and challenges under an overarching theme related to the environment 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, journalists, scientists, engineers, farmers, 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 experiential and intellectual experience. **Country Coordinators** are educators and practitioners, responsible for the program in-country and are supported by a local team (program assistants, interpreters, logistics coordinators).

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IHP is an academic program which travels, not a traveling program with academics. **Your days are busy, and your learning is communal, not 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.

This kind of engaged pedagogy is not typical in most classrooms or educational spaces. It can be physically and mentally tiring, but the time, effort, passion, and curiosity that each of us puts into this work is worth it. At IHP we believe in creating learning journeys that disrupt our ways of being and knowing. The result is a uniquely powerful educational experience that calls students to consider their own potential to act in response to critical challenges of our time. Welcome to this unforgettable journey!

PROGRAM ORIENTATION

During the first few days of the program 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 country program covering country-specific details. Some of these include cultural norms, survival language lessons, local health and safety considerations, access to ATMs, banks, and local currency. The country coordination team will support students with accessing local SIM cards (see more in the section, *Phones and Email*).

This is a rigorous academic program in which courses are designed to add depth and context to extensive field-based learning. During each country orientation, you will receive a detailed program schedule. Program days are full throughout the course of the semester, and will have you engaged in field activities, classes, group assignments, community building activities, and individual homework. During weekends, optional activities may be offered. Alternatively, you may want to explore your surroundings with your peers, prepare for next week's reading, or catch up on journaling. If a student is interested in independent travel, they must complete and submit the online [Independent Travel Notification Form](#) to their academic or program director.

Further details regarding the current independent travel protocols can be found here:

[Independent Travel Policy - SIT Study Abroad](#)

PROGRAM LAUNCH IN SAN FRANCISCO

The Launch is an orientation, as well as our first country program, examining climate change within the United States in a global context using a multi-disciplinary perspective centered around justice. The launch sets the tone and pace of the program. Academic courses begin and you will hear from guest speakers and travel to different parts of the Bay Area for site visits. Because a large part of being an IHP student is participating in a unique learning community, the first few days of the launch program are focused on getting to know fellow community members, building a strong and expansive sense of community, and understanding your role in the group. Additionally, workshops will provide a space for reflection and to talk through how each of these may arise on an IHP program. During these workshops, we will also build community strategies and systems of accountability to guide the group over the course of the semester.

Many alumni have said that the Launch is “full-on” and have highlighted the importance of being organized and prepared and taking care of yourself and one another, in order to fully partake in the rich learning experience.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

The San Francisco Bay Area experiences mild temperatures in January and February. Intense rainfall, driven by ‘atmospheric rivers’ (a phenomenon increasing in frequency, size, and intensity due to climate change), can occur during this time. In Ecuador you may need some time to become acclimatized to the high altitude of our base city of Quito (9,350’). The weather during our Amazon excursion will be hot and humid, with temperatures ranging from the low 70s to high 80s and adequate protection against sunburn is a must. Temperatures in Casablanca and Rabat, where we will be spending the second half of our month in Morocco, are similar to San Francisco. We will also be traveling to Marrakech and Ouarzazete, which are slightly warmer during the day and cooler at night. In Kathmandu, Nepal (elevation 4440’), temperatures will be comfortable during the day and cool at night, and poor air quality may be a challenge. We will also experience warmer temperatures in the lowland jungle of the Terai and cooler weather in the mountains, sometimes dropping to the mid-40s.

**San Francisco, USA: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

JAN	FEB
58/47	61/48

**Quito, Ecuador: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

FEB	MAR
59/48	59/46

**Rabat, Morocco: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

MAR	APR
70/54	69/54

**Kathmandu, Nepal: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

APR	MAY
73/54	74/55

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.

Ecuador:

Ecuador is a multicultural country; each of the four regions, the Coast, Andes, Amazon, and Galápagos, present a variety of customs, which gives Ecuador an exceptional cultural richness. Even within the regions there are differences derived from rural or urban conditions.

Greeting: always greet with enthusiasm (not observing this rule may be considered rude). Saying “buenos días, buenas tardes, or buenas noches,” depending on the time of the day, is a must. It is critical to always inform your homestay family about where you are and to respect

your family hours. This is also a must for any type of family in Ecuador. Failing to adhere to this rule is considered highly disrespectful and may be a source of stress and discomfort for families.

Morocco:

Morocco is a country located in North Africa bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east and southeast by Algeria, on the south by Mauritania, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. It is 13 kilometers (8 miles) from Europe across the strait of Gibraltar. The present population of Morocco has resulted from a long history of interaction between the Amazigh (a word meaning “the free men” associated with the indigenous peoples of North Africa), the Arabs, Africans from South of the Sahara, as well as Jewish and Andalusian people.

Moroccan culture places large emphasis on family. People are not expected to move out of their houses until they are married. Thus, you could easily find a 50-year-old unmarried man or woman still living at home with his/her parents. Moroccan meals are usually sit-down meals, and strongly encourage the presence of as many family members as possible. Retirement homes are not common – older people end up moving back in with one of their unmarried children.

Moroccans tend to greet each other in two ways: handshake (common to people you are not close with, or in a professional setting) or cheek-to-cheek kisses (usually for people who know each other). The cheek kiss usually goes right cheek then left cheek.

Punctuality is not part of the average Moroccan’s vocabulary. When it comes to appointments, Moroccans usually take their time getting there. Unless the appointment is an important job interview, it is rare that a Moroccan shows up on time. Be aware of this when you are trying to plan a day trip somewhere.

Driving in Morocco is hectic and chaotic – people weaving in and out of their lanes, five cars in a three-lane street, and unlimited honking. Pedestrians pretty much cross the street wherever and whenever they please. Please be very cautious when crossing the streets.

Stray animals are literally everywhere. You will see dogs and cats all around the cities, especially next to food venues. Pets are not very common with older generations, but more

and more people are getting them nowadays. It is always fun to feed stray dogs and cats but you should avoid touching them – they probably haven't been bathed or cleaned in years.

Nepal:

"Namaste" is a common greeting done by putting the palms together in a prayer like gesture to greet anyone in Nepal. Do not take it seriously if any Nepalis hesitate to shake hands, as this is not customary in Nepal.

Use your right hand to eat and deal with food. Traditionally, Nepalis use their left-hand to wash themselves after defecating. Therefore, nothing should be accepted and especially not offered with the left hand. It is best to give or receive something with both hands.

Once your lips have touched a food item or its container, it is considered *Jutho* (polluted) for others. Don't eat off someone else's plate or offer anyone food you have taken a bite out of.

Major Hindu temples are usually off-limits to foreigners. Don't enter them or take pictures unless given permission to. Do not take leather articles inside the temple precinct as they are prohibited. Also, there will be small circular or rectangular stones or metal mandala on the ground in front of most shrines. Do not step on them.

Men should not walk around bare-chested. Shorts are acceptable, but long pants are better. Women are recommended to wear long skirts. Exposure of women's legs can bring unwanted attention, so avoid wearing shorts and short skirts.

Public display of affection between men and women is frowned upon. Kissing, cuddling, or hugging in public is discouraged.

Time in Nepal operates at a different pace. Everything is approximate. Nothing happens on time. Be patient. Anger and impatience will rarely make things better, if not worse. Also, double and triple confirm important arrangements.

When entering a house or dwelling, shoes should always be removed. Nepalis often squat when eating. Do not stand near a person who is eating, as your feet would be right next to their food. If you need to converse, it is better to sit or squat next to them.

Bargaining is very common in Nepal. You will often need to bargain while shopping or riding in cabs in Nepal.

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 consider the local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource for better understanding of the local diet. Please be aware that on this program we can 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 our office prior to the start of your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

San Francisco:

You will be provided with a free continental breakfast at your accommodation in the morning and dinner at night. Snacks will be provided on classroom days. All IHP students receive a modest daily cash stipend for meals that covers lunches and sometimes dinners. Occasionally, IHP will provide group meals (lunch or dinner). The hostel and classroom spaces are conveniently located near many restaurants and cafes.

Ecuador:

Ecuadorian food is extremely diverse, reflecting the various ecological zones and cultures. The everyday diet varies by region, but typically consists of rice, potatoes, fresh fruit, vegetables, and occasionally red meat, chicken, or seafood. The diet can be heavy on starches. Lunch is the main meal of the day and typically consists of a soup, a segundo (second) of rice, potatoes, maybe a vegetable, beans, chicken or eggs, and fresh fruit juice. Some Ecuadorian specialties that you are sure to encounter include *locro de papa* (potato, cheese, and avocado soup), *llapingachos* (mashed potato and cheese pancakes), *ceviche* (marinated seafood stew), and an abundance of fresh fruit and fruit juices.

Typically, breakfast and dinner are eaten at home, while lunch may be eaten out (for those who can afford to). Students should avoid food prepared and sold on the street as well as juice and water that has not been boiled or filtered. Bottled water is readily available in most areas.

Students adhering to a vegan or kosher diet may have significant difficulty eating a balanced diet in Ecuador, as many dairy/egg products are regularly consumed, and vegetables are not a staple. Vegetarians should be fine, especially if they are able to be flexible; be aware that even non-meat dishes may be cooked with lard, beef broth, etc. Also, vegetarians should be aware that “vegetarian” in Latin America is usually assumed to mean avoidance of red meat; you may still be served fish and chicken unless you specify.

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.

Morocco:

Food, food, and more food, along with tea, tea, and more tea! Moroccans love their food. Many people are expected to eat together during the main meals, thus allowing for huge plates of piled food. Moroccans will always insist for you to eat more and will not take no for an answer. Expect yourself to say no a couple times before giving in out of courtesy. Food is often accompanied by Mint Tea during the meal. This same tea can also be offered before the meal is ready, and after the meal to help digest. Moroccans also rely a lot on bread for their meals, so be prepared to experience multiple varieties of bread at different meals.

Nepal:

The staple of the Nepali diet that is served for most meals is daal bhaat, a meal centered around rice and lentils with sides of curried vegetables, pickle, and sometimes meat. It is quite easy to maintain a vegetarian diet in Nepal, though it is more difficult to be vegan or to maintain a kosher diet. In urban areas, most people eat three meals a day and mealtimes are similar to those in the west, but in rural areas, there are usually only two main meals, at mid-morning and late evening, supplemented by snacks. 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 current events in the countries you will be visiting. 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). Anti-malarial prophylaxis medications are also strongly recommended for our 4-5 day excursion to the Amazon Basin in Ecuador.

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 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.

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 communication, visitors, and activities of daily living.

You will be oriented as you move from place to place. Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad/IHP 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.

CLASSROOM SPACE

In all the countries you visit, you will generally have a “main” classroom location where you will attend faculty lectures and welcome guest 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 orientation/launch and while on excursions.

Significant portions of your accommodation may or may not be in homestays. You will also stay in hostels, hotels, and other types of lodging. The key is to be flexible. Many students appreciate bringing a ‘sleep sack’ (a sleeping bag liner or a sheet folded in half and sewn down the side).

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

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.

San Francisco:

San Francisco is a walking city, and a great way to get a better sense of the people and place. BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) and MUNI (municipal railway) bus systems are also easily accessible if you prefer to ride to and from the classroom. You will be provided with a pre-loaded Clipper Card, which can be used for buses, trains, ferries, cable cars, and bikes in the Bay Area.

Ecuador:

On a day-to-day basis, students should rely on Ubers and the new Metro de Quito, which costs \$.45 per ride, for transportation. Uber fares are usually low (a 15-minute ride is about \$5 USD) and generally quite safe. Students are expected to travel in pairs. The city of Quito is at an elevation of 2850 m/9350 ft, considerably higher than Kathmandu. It will take several days for your body to adjust to the change in altitude – please stay hydrated and be aware that at first walking in general and uphill in particular may require more effort than you are used to. You are encouraged to consult with your doctor at home about whether it would be advisable for you to bring along prescription medication for altitude sickness.

Conventional taxis (yellow taxis) should be taken only if these are directly arranged by the hotel, restaurant or by local program staff.

Morocco:

Classrooms are close to the medina. The medina is only a few minutes' walk from Rabat's city center and main railway station. Rabat now has a very hectic bus system due to recent changes happening in the capital to reform public transportation, including a tramway. However, most buses service all neighborhoods. City taxis are available outside the medina and the fare depends on the distance covered (taxis have meters). Taxis (small blue ones not big white ones with six passengers + driver) remain the best and most reliable means of transportation in the cities and we strongly recommend them to our students for their availability, inexpensiveness, and safety. For the program's scheduled group excursions, buses are hired and remain at the program's disposal throughout the time of the excursion. For any independent travel on weekends, it is recommended that you use the train whenever possible (not all destinations are serviced by the railway system). A high-speed rail line, Al Boraq, connects Casablanca, Rabat, and Tangier, and is an efficient and affordable way to travel between these cities. For other destinations, it is preferable to take an inter-city bus,

particularly the CTM, a reliable semi-public transportation company. You have to purchase your ticket in advance, and you can do it online.

Nepal:

In Kathmandu (elevation 1400 m/4600 ft), you will mostly travel by foot. Taxis are also widely available and reasonably priced. Students should expect traffic congestion during commuting times and pollution related to the traffic in Kathmandu. Most students prefer to walk given the chaotic nature of the streets in Kathmandu, which are narrow and frequently unpaved. Outside of the larger cities, there are many locations in Nepal that are only accessible on foot. To get to excursion locations, students will usually travel by chartered bus and on foot. You should be prepared to walk a lot. Sometimes this includes walking in areas of high altitude, and while you do not need to be an Olympic athlete, you should be in good physical shape. What are considered hills in Nepal are mountains most anywhere else.

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.

Do not set family or friends up with expected communication during arrivals and departures to/from new locations. **It is not always 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, ensuring you are well hydrated, 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.

The classroom spaces in our base cities of Rabat, Kathmandu, and Quito provide Internet access during posted hours.

San Francisco, USA:

You are required to have a working local SIM while in the US with a US phone number where local staff can reach you. There will be Internet access at the locations where student groups are staying.

Ecuador:

A local SIM card for your unlocked smartphone will cost approximately \$10, and reasonable phone usage should cost about \$25 per month.

Morocco:

Many of your host families will have Wi-Fi. Additionally, the program will provide you with a starter local SIM card that includes some data, as well as some minutes. You can add minutes and data by refilling your card for a low cost of \$2-\$5. We will have WI-FI access in most of the locations. Internet and Wi-Fi are available in most cities and even villages. Wi-Fi is free of charge in many coffee shops, restaurants, and hotels.

Nepal:

Landline calls from Nepal are very expensive (\$3/minute) and difficult to connect. Internet phones are available at many places in Kathmandu and are very inexpensive. Cell phones for use by students can be obtained from local suppliers without a contract and periodically loaded with credit. These phones can send/receive international calls and texts (calls to the US run NRs. 8/minute). The county team will assist all students with purchasing local phones and/or local SIM or eSIM cards.

There are many Internet cafes in Kathmandu from which you will be able to access your home e-mail account, but connections are slow. Most homestays do not have Internet access as it is rather expensive for locals to set up home access to the Internet.

Email and Internet access is also available through Internet cafes or coffee shops. Be aware that Internet access will be very limited during our rural excursions.

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, and 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, posted letters and should be sent to the following address:

Country, location	Services (DHL, FedEx or UPS)	Address for packages	To Whom + student name
San Francisco	DHL, FedEx or UPS	Monroe Residence Club 1870 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA	TBC

Ecuador	DHL, FedEx or UPS	EIL Ecuador, Hernando de la Cruz N31-37, Quito, Ecuador, 170508	TBC
Morocco	DHL, FedEx or UPS	LangZone Center: Av. Mouhammad V, Rue HIMS App. 1, Imm. 3, Rabat, Morocco	Jawad Moustakbal
Nepal	DHL, FedEx or UPS	Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, PO Box 42, Kathmandu Nepal, +977 9850148598	Yanik Shrestha

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 expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are average**.

A suggested total amount of personal spending money to budget ranges from **US\$2,375 to \$3,400**. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program or a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

Required Program Expenses

Visa Registration (non-US passport holders):	varies
Visa Registration (US passport holders for Nepal; visas not needed for Morocco and Ecuador):	125 USD
Immunization:	varies
Travel to Launch city:	varies
Phone credit, data top-up	100-300 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. dietary restrictions, excess baggage, laundry)	400-600 USD
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Property insurance	varies
Accident and illness insurance whilst in the US (if applicable)	varies
Personal Local Transportation:	300 USD
Estimated total:	2,375 USD+ to 3,400USD+

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Although 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 upfront for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

San Francisco:

Credit cards are widely accepted in stores, restaurants, and other businesses. ATM fees may vary between \$2.00 - \$5.00.

Ecuador:

The US Dollar is the official currency of Ecuador, so you will not need to convert money. You will notice that some locally minted Ecuadorian coins circulate alongside US coins, but all banknotes will be US dollar bills.

Most students access funds from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in Ecuador. Credit cards (VISA, American Express, MasterCard) will work in many stores in Quito, although there may be a surcharge that can be up to 8%.

Very few Ecuadorian businesses will be able to make change for larger bills (\$20 bills and higher). Please bring small denominations such as \$1, \$5, and \$10 bills. Do not bring \$50 or \$100 bills

Morocco:

The local currency is the Moroccan dirham. Many banks have ATMs, so it is relatively easy to get money. However, the program recommends that you only withdraw what money you need at the time. Keep in mind that ATMs are generally only found in cities and towns and some

branches are not available in the smaller towns and rural areas. A Visa, MasterCard, or American Express credit card is very useful for emergencies, medical or otherwise.

Nepal:

The local currency in Nepal is the Nepali Rupee. Nepal is generally inexpensive, although inflation rates are rising steadily.

Most restaurants and shops only take cash. ATMs are readily available in Kathmandu and in most large towns throughout the country and they can be relied upon to withdraw significant amounts of rupees (up to 10,000 rupees at a time).

Although possible, it is difficult and expensive to transfer or wire funds to Nepal. It is best to bring sufficient cash. It is also possible to get cash advances, in rupees, against a MasterCard or Visa, but only in limited amounts. Keep in mind that debit/ATM cards will usually not work for purchases the same as a credit card would, so we recommend both. Please consider what balance of cash and credit/debit cards you will need.

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.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes, site visits, 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, 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.

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

Be sure to research what kind of weather to expect in each of the cities you visit, as well as local clothing customs. <https://www.bbc.com/weather> has some great country guides. You will be traveling in urban and rural areas, and will need to dress accordingly in order to avoid offending anyone. When you arrive in 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, dirty, or even well-worn clothing (seen as disrespectful), and 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 washing machines 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.

If you are unsure about the clothes that you are going to wear, reach out to the country coordinator.

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, though, remember:

- 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.** Invest in reliable equipment and take care of it. 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.
- Computers can detract from the experience of studying abroad (just as they can detract from your experience at home). The more time students spend with computers, the less time they spend exploring the communities and connecting with homestay families, which are the most memorable aspects of students' experience. Be thoughtful about the quality and quantity of your use of computers.
- Computers, tablets, and phones are not allowed during guest lectures and their use can be limited on site visits.
- Wireless Internet is often not available, including in homestays. Be prepared for much less consistent and much slower access to the Internet.
- Some assignments will require online research. Some assignments are based largely on primary research in the field and assigned articles.
- For students needing more technology resources, Internet cafes are easy to find, inexpensive, and can provide word processing, Internet access, Skype, printing, and online photo-uploading capabilities.
- **Do not** bring other personal valuables – such as cameras, iPods, or recording devices – unless you are willing to guard them or to lose them. Items such as audio devices and cameras are usually safe at host family homes, but you may wish to consider how such items will be protected on field trips, on weekends, and in 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/>.



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

Packing List

These packing guidelines are **based** on suggestions from past students, visiting faculty, in-country staff, and your program director.

Packing List sample:

GENERAL

- 3-4 T-shirts
- 2-3 long-sleeved shirts (varying degrees of warmth)
- 2 warm sweaters, sweatshirts, or fleeces for layering
- 2-3 pairs of pants (that are easy to wash and air dry)
- 1 pair of non-jean pants and nice shirt (appropriate for dressier occasions)
- 1-2 pair of athletic knee-length shorts/pants
- 1-2 pairs of long shorts, skirts, or dresses that reach your shins when sitting and at least 1 pair that is loose/non-form fitting for cultural modesty (useful when visiting government, rural, or prayer buildings) and for dressier occasions.
- 7-8 pairs of underwear
- 4-5 pairs of socks
- 4-5 facemasks
- Comfortable, durable sandals; also consider dressier flat shoes or sandals. Some site visits require close-toed shoes for entry.
- A pair of sneakers, hiking shoes, or lightweight, comfortable multi-purpose shoes like trail-running shoes
- Hat(s) or cap(s) (for sun and cold weather)
- Scarf, to cover your shoulders.
- Bathing suit
- Pajamas
- 1 pair thermal leggings/long underwear and shirt
- 1 pair lightweight leggings to wear under skirt/dress to be culturally appropriate.
- Light rain jacket that you can layer over other tops and fleeces as necessary.
- Smart phone (for requirements see [Contact and Communications Policy](#))

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Proof of Covid-19 vaccine and/or booster encouraged.

- 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.
- 2 passport photos
- Photocopy of visa (if applicable)
- A driver's license or other form of identification in addition to passport
- 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, including inhalers.
- Toothbrush, 4oz toothpaste, floss
- 4oz Shampoo and/or soap
- Deodorant
- Quick-dry bath towel
- Hairbands, headbands, barrettes
- Sunscreen
- 3oz Mosquito repellent with 10-30% DEET or Picaridin
- Chapstick with SPF
- Comb or brush
- Nail clippers
- Contact lenses and solution, extra pair of glasses
- Menstruation supplies
- Earplugs

The following items are optional and (in some cases) can be purchased as needed along the way; however, 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 faculty and in-country teams will always be traveling with an Emergency Medical Kit.

- Re-hydration powder
- Imodium
- Painkillers (such as Advil or Tylenol)
- Band-Aids
- Motion sickness remedy

- Laxatives or digestive aids such as Fiber supplements
- Antacids (such as TUMS) which can be harder to find abroad
- Q-tips
- Anti-bacterial hand sanitizer gel
- Creams: Hydrocortisone, anti-fungal, anti-bacterial
- Cranberry pills
- Daily multi-vitamins and probiotics
- Cold medicine
- Cough drops
- Allergy medicine

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Re-usable water bottle with filter, such as LifeStraw Go (strongly recommended)
- Warm down jacket for the mountains (layers will also work)
- Sleep mask
- Razor, shaving cream
- Ziploc bags, plastic bags, or compression sacks
- Sleep sack (i.e., a sheet sewn at seams to make lightweight sack). This may be of good use at a hostel or on retreats/weekends.
- Money belt or small necktie bag to carry valuable documents.
- Additional journal / notebook –Note: The program provides a notebook upon arrival.
- FAA-approved locks for your luggage
- Sunglasses with UV protection
- Hard case for glasses so they don't get crushed.
- Safety pins, rubber bands, paper clips, mini stapler and/or duct tape
- Travel alarm clock or watch with alarm.
- Small flashlight or head lamp
- Flash drive for backups
- Electrical adaptors
- Batteries/charger for electronics
- Pens/pencils, notebook
- One or two books to read and then share.
- Photos of your home, family, and friends (consider bringing extra photos to give away)
- Gifts for host family in first country (unique items from your hometown work great)
- List of addresses of friends and family
- Travel pillow (or a pillowcase to hold a sweater for long plane and bus rides)
- Travel mug and coffee filter
- A4 Tyvek or plastic envelopes to keep papers organized.

- Small Tupperware
- Small backpack or purse for day or overnight use
- Thank you cards for your host families.
- Small, lightweight camera



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