

IHP Death & Dying: Perspectives, Practices & Policies USA- Ghana – Mexico - Indonesia

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, government and organizational leaders, deathcare workers, scientists, indigenous assemblies knowledge keepers, 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 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, and 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 ORIENTATIONS

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. Overnight in-country travel may occasionally be permitted on weekends if approved in advance by the country coordinator.

Launch

The program begins in New York City, where students will explore the intersection of death, memory, and public policy. NYC has a unique history with death and dying, from being ground zero of the 9/11 attacks to experiencing significant loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. These events shape how the city remembers, mourns, and processes death on both a neighborhood and national scale.

Throughout the launch period, students will:

- Learn about the rise of death denial and death reformation movements that shape Death Studies today
- Visit rural cemeteries, public monuments, and the mausoleums of Gilded Age families to explore the history of death and dying in New York City
- Begin a journey into revaluing deaths lost to historic violences through an examination of death, inequality, and collective mourning as a foundation to restorative justice
- Meet with deathcare workers, dark tourism operators, and community organizers.
- Engage with spiritual leaders who offer diverse perspectives on rituals and mourning.
- Travel across NYC's boroughs and Westchester County to explore program themes in context.

This immersive experience will provide students with a foundation for understanding the broader themes of the program, setting the stage for further global exploration.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

New York City experiences cold humid conditions in late January and early February, with temperatures ranging from 28°F to 40°F (-10°C to 4°C). Snow is very possible this time of year. In February, Accra, Ghana, remains warm and humid, with temperatures averaging between 75°F and 90°F (24°C to 32°C). While Ghana will be in the dry season, light rain may still occur. By March, Oaxaca, Mexico, offers mild weather, with temperatures ranging from 53°F to 80°F (12°C to 27°C). Higher elevations bring cooler evenings, so layering is recommended, and Oaxaca will be moving from its dry to wet season transition. Finally, in April and early May, Bali, Indonesia, is also moving from its wet to dry period. Warm temperatures between 75°F and 88°F (24°C to 31°C) are accompanied by higher humidity and rain in April. Bali has experienced much greater climactic variability in recent years, making lightweight, quick-drying clothing and waterproof gear essential for comfort.

Ghana has three main climatic regions: a humid coastal region due to the cooler offshore waters and the west-southwest to east-northeast prevailing winds; the inland hill plateau country where the rainfall increases; and the drier harmattan of the north. Accra and Cape Coast are representative of the drier coastal strip and are quite sunny. Kumasi and Sunyani, further inland, have greater amounts of rainfall, while Tamale, Wa, and Bolgatanga experience harmattan weather.

Mexico's climate varies greatly according to altitude, ranging from humid, tropical and rainy in the south and on the coast to semi-arid in the north. The rainy season runs from early summer through October, with September being generally the rainiest month. "Rainy season" does not mean guaranteed rain, though; more often it means sunny mornings and a rainstorm in the afternoon. The city of Oaxaca has a pleasant spring-like climate with regular showers from June to early September. You should be prepared for all of these climate and temperature variations.

Bali and Java are located just south of the equator, and the temperature varies from 70° to 90°F year-round, though it is somewhat cooler in the hills and mountains. Both islands experience moderate rainfall and high humidity throughout the year, though some relief comes during the dry season, which normally runs from April/May to September. Rains from October to April (rainy season) generally come overnight and in the early mornings, but late afternoon downpours are also common, especially after heat and humidity builds up during the day. The rainy season has been starting later in recent years, sometimes not getting into full swing until mid-February, and has been lasting later in the year, with rain still frequent in mid-June.

**New York, USA: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

JAN	FEB
39/26	43/29

**Accra, Ghana: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

FEB	MAR
91/70	93/79

**Oaxaca, Mexico: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

MAR	ABR
86/72	88/73

**Bali, Indonesia: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW
TEMPERATURES (°F)**

ABR	MAY
89/73	88/73

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.

Ghana:

Ghana is known for its deep sense of community, hospitality, and rich cultural heritage. Greetings are an essential part of social interactions, and it is customary to exchange pleasantries before engaging in conversation. A handshake, often accompanied by a snap of the fingers, is a common form of greeting. Elders are highly respected, and it is important to acknowledge them first in any social setting.

Ghanaians place a significant emphasis on funerals, which are elaborate, multi-day affairs that celebrate the life of the deceased. Attending a funeral is a communal event, and guests often wear black and red or white, depending on the circumstances of the passing. Traditional music and dancing are central components of these ceremonies, reflecting a belief in honoring ancestors and ensuring a smooth transition to the afterlife.

When staying with a host family, it is polite to inform them of your whereabouts and adhere to household expectations. Eating customs vary, but many traditional meals, such as fufu and banku, are eaten with the hands. It is recommended to use the right hand for eating and giving or receiving objects, as the left hand is considered unclean in many contexts.

Punctuality is flexible in social settings, but it is expected to be on time for formal meetings and academic engagements. Engaging with local customs with respect and openness will enhance

your experience and foster meaningful connections with the community.

Due to Ghanaian cultural norms, female students may find that host families might be overly interested in their activities outside the homestay due to security concerns. This can be very disconcerting for many students, so be sure you are ready to make some lifestyle changes before you get here. You can also discuss discomfort with this and have them adjust. We do our best to match students to families where they will best fit, though some individual needs are not always met. It is helpful to use all these experiences as learning moments. Greetings are important and expressions such as “I am sorry” (i.e. American “excuse me”) and the use of honorifics and appropriate salutations— especially with older persons—are a normal part of everyday protocol and etiquette. You will usually not call your elders by the first names but will typically use titles (Mr., Mrs., Dr., Prof.) or “Auntie”, “Sister”, “Brother”, or “Uncle” even if they are no relation to you. The use of the left hand is strongly discouraged and highly undesirable in most contexts, especially in interpersonal transactions such as greetings, giving and receiving, and even raising up hands in a classroom. Young people often preface their statements and responses to older persons with the word) “Please” (mepa wo ky&w), a sign of respect.

Mexico:

Oaxaca is a region rich in cultural traditions, indigenous heritage, and vibrant festivities. Greetings are warm and respectful, often accompanied by a handshake or a light hug among friends. A simple “buenos días” or “buenas tardes” is customary when addressing locals. Family and community play a central role in daily life, and it is common for multiple generations to live together.

The peoples of Oaxaca have a strong value system where politeness, reciprocity and respect play a significant role in the making of their communal identity. Unlike western cultures, individualism is not given as much value as the ability to function in the collective. Social and family networks are especially important and therefore, a person’s responsibility to contribute to these networks is essential to maintain her membership. This shows in the way Oaxacan people talk to each other, in the time invested in everyday interactions, as well as in their ability to foster and maintain relationships. 3 This cultural system, therefore, requires outsiders to understand that a quick, informal hello during introductions may, for the most part, be seen as rude. The expectation is that you take the time to stop whatever you are doing, make eye contact, shake hands, and state how much pleasure it gives you to meet the new person (mucho gusto), followed by your first and last name. Oaxacans take pride in acknowledging

people around them, which reflects on how people make efforts to make eye contact and kindly greet or nod, even in less formal context such as a restaurant or a store.

Indonesia:

While Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, Bali is deeply rooted in Hindu traditions, where spirituality and rituals play an essential role in everyday life. Greetings are polite and accompanied by a slight bow with hands pressed together in a gesture called “Salam.”

Respect for elders and religious leaders is fundamental, and visitors are expected to act with humility when engaging with locals.

Death and the afterlife hold a significant place in Balinese culture. The Ngaben, or cremation ceremony, is one of the most important rituals, symbolizing the soul’s release from the physical body. These ceremonies are often elaborate and can last for several days, involving music, dance, and processions. Participation in or observation of these rituals should be done with the utmost respect.

Temple etiquette is crucial; visitors must wear a sarong and sash when entering sacred spaces. It is considered disrespectful to point feet at religious altars or touch someone’s head, as the head is viewed as the most sacred part of the body. Public displays of affection are generally discouraged, and patience is valued in social interactions. Time flows at a more relaxed pace, emphasizing mindfulness and presence

Balinese and Javanese are generally expected to be friendly and to greet each other when passing by on the street. Typical greetings are: Selamat pagi, ma uke mana?: “Good morning, where are you going?” Jalan-jalan saja: “I’m just taking a walk.” The most common Indonesian greetings are very useful: Selamat pagi/siang/sore/malam: “Good morning/day/afternoon/night”

Cultural Tips:

- Be friendly and smile often
- Be open-minded, manage your expectations
- Go with the flow with the way of life
- Only give and receive with the right hand
- Don’t go out at night alone
- Be patient and flexible

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. **Students should communicate all food allergies prior to embarking on the program.**

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 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.

Ghana:

Ghanaian cuisine is diverse and flavorful with staple foods including rice, maize, cassava, and plantains. One of the most common dishes is jollof rice, a tomato-based rice dish often served

with fried plantains and grilled chicken or fish. Another popular dish is fufu, a starchy dough made from cassava and plantains, typically eaten with a rich soup such as groundnut (peanut) soup or light soup. Meals are usually eaten with the right hand, and sharing food is a sign of hospitality.

Maintaining a vegetarian diet in Ghana is possible but may require flexibility, as many traditional dishes incorporate fish or meat-based broths. Street food is common and delicious, but travelers should be mindful of food hygiene and opt for freshly prepared meals. Drinking bottled or filtered water is strongly advised.

Most Ghanaians begin and end the day early and so you will have to make some adjustments when it comes to mealtimes. You should expect to eat breakfast around 7am, lunch at 12pm, and dinner around 6:30pm with a little variation as may be needed during excursions. Rice, plantain, yam, and fufu are the staple foods of Ghana. These are usually served with beans, spinach, a spicy peanut/palmtree soup, or tomato-based sauce that often includes fish, meat, or eggs. Your homestay family will clarify such issues with you once you move into their home.

Mexico:

Mexican cuisine is known for its intense and varied flavors, colorful decoration, and variety of spices. Oaxaca itself boasts a tremendous diversity of regional cuisine and is , known for its deep flavors. An abundance of fruits and vegetables are grown in the central valley, tropical fruits are found throughout the north, and fish and seafood dominate the cuisine of southern Oaxaca. The state is known for its chocolate, cheese (quesillo) and tlayudas – big handmade tortillas stuffed with beans, meat and cheese. One of the most iconic dishes is mole, a complex sauce made with a blend of chili peppers, chocolate, and various spices, often served over chicken or turkey. Another specialty is chapulines, that is, barbecued grasshoppers. Corn is the staple food and the preparation of corn dough varies widely, from tortillas and empanadas (turnovers) to tamales and entomadas (tortilla ribbons bathed in salsa and cheese). Black beans are another common ingredient, as is the Oaxacan chili pepper, which gives many dishes a distinctive hot, smoky taste and red color. Oaxaca is also famous for its tamales, which are wrapped in banana leaves and filled with ingredients like mole, black beans, or chicken.

Cooked food is safe to eat in homes and restaurants; raw vegetables and food items sold on

the street usually are not. Tap water is not potable and should not be used anywhere in Mexico. Program facilities and accommodations will provide boiled or filtered water at all times. Maintaining a vegetarian diet in Oaxaca is possible, as many traditional dishes are plant-based or can be adapted. Students who are vegan or gluten-free may encounter challenges but the Oaxacan diet is varied and with effort and communication students should be able to follow their diets during the program. There is not a strong Jewish presence in Oaxaca; thus keeping kosher would be very difficult

Indonesia:

Balinese cuisine is vibrant and aromatic, featuring staple ingredients such as rice, coconut, spices, and fresh vegetables. One of the most well-known dishes is nasi goreng, a flavorful fried rice often served with a fried egg, prawns, or chicken. Another popular dish is babi guling, a spiced roasted pork dish commonly prepared for special occasions. Street food is widely available and delicious, but travelers should be mindful of food hygiene and choose freshly prepared meals. Drinking bottled or filtered water is strongly advised.

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. Rice is the staple grain in Bali and Java, as it is in all of Indonesia. While this may be the case, vegetarianism or veganism is quite foreign to Indonesians. It is possible to accommodate such a diet, but in some cases, Balinese and Javanese homestay families may not know exactly what is expected. Meals are also not part of a social activity as they might be in the States. In Bali, for instance, traditional Balinese compounds may not have a dining room, whereas it is more likely that in Java they exist. Mealtimes also vary depending on individual homestay families.

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](https://www.state.gov) website and search their [Countries and Areas Archive](https://www.state.gov/countries-and-areas) for international travel information and current travel advisories for each country. Search the Center for Disease Control [Traveler's Health](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) page to

see travel health notices and vaccine requirements and recommendations for any country(ies) you plan to visit.

SIT recommends doing research ahead of time to stay up to date on It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to departure. You should also reference the Health, Access, and Identity information on your program's [Pre departure webpage](#).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the [Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team](#). Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester should 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 and IHP alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. We hope you will come prepared for the experience and committed to moving beyond cultural immersion as you begin to question, distinguish, and analyze the host culture vis-à-vis your own culture and come to a deeper understanding of both.

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

Each country team 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.

New York:

In New York City, you will receive weekly passes for both MTA bus and subway access for program-related travel. App based taxis like Uber and Lyft are widely available in the city. Green and yellow taxis are also 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.

Ghana:

For daily transportation in Accra, students are advised to use ride-hailing services like **Uber** and **Bolt**, which are generally affordable and safe. As of March 2025, Uber's fare structure in Accra includes a base fare of **GHS 1.70**, a per-kilometer charge of **GHS 1.30**, and a per-minute charge of **GHS 0.19**, with a minimum fare of **GHS 5**. Therefore, a 15-minute ride covering approximately 8 kilometers would cost around **GHS 17.50** (about **\$2.50 USD**), depending on traffic and demand.

Conventional taxis in Accra often lack meters, leading to inconsistent fare negotiations. It is advisable to use taxis arranged by reputable sources such as hotels, restaurants, or local program staff to ensure fair pricing and safety. While **tro-tros**—shared minibuses operating on fixed routes—are an extremely economical way to navigate the city, they can be crowded and less predictable.

Students are encouraged to travel in pairs, especially at night, to enhance safety. During excursions and long trips, we will use tour buses.

Mexico:

The program office is centrally located in Oaxaca City, and students will be able to walk to many destinations in the center. For daily transportation in Oaxaca, it is recommended to use services like Uber and Didi, as they are affordable and safe. A 15-minute ride typically costs between 70 and 100 Mexican pesos, depending on traffic and demand. While conventional taxis are widely available, it is best to use those requested through apps or arranged by hotels, restaurants, or local program staff, as most do not have meters, which can lead to inconsistent fare negotiations.

Public transportation options include colectivos (shared taxis) and local buses that service the main routes in and around Oaxaca, which are inexpensive but can be crowded. Students are advised to travel in pairs, especially at night, and to always be mindful of their belongings in busy areas.

Indonesia:

One of the challenges of running the program in Kerambitan is public transportation. While Bali has inexpensive public transportation options such as bemos (shared minibuses) and local buses, they can be crowded and less punctual. They are also limited in their service area.

Motorbike transport is the dominant form of transportation in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Because the roads are small and oftentimes congested, using the motorbike for ease of transport is common. All students will undergo an orientation to the motorbike culture in Bali and will receive instructions on how to be a passenger on a motorbike ride. Students will be required to sign a waiver before using motorbike transportation and may only get a ride on a motorbike while wearing a helmet and with a licensed driver.

For daily transportation in Bali, it is recommended to use **Grab** and **Gojek**, as they are affordable and safe. A 15-minute ride typically costs between **50,000 and 70,000 Indonesian rupiahs (approximately \$3.50 to \$5 USD)**, depending on traffic and demand. While conventional taxis are widely available, it is best to use those requested through apps or arranged by hotels, restaurants, or local program staff, as most do not have meters, which can lead to inconsistent fare negotiations.

If students need to travel greater distances in Bali, they should inform program staff who can help organize a vehicle. It is also possible to use online taxis (GoCar or Grab Car), which requires students to download the App on their smartphones.

Students are advised to travel in pairs, especially at night, and to always be mindful of their belongings in busy areas.

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.

New York, 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.

Ghana:

A local SIM card in Accra typically costs around \$1–\$2 and can be easily purchased upon arrival. Students are responsible for topping up their phones with credit, and reasonable monthly phone and data usage usually costs about \$15–\$25, depending on usage. Major providers such as MTN and Telecel offer reliable prepaid plans with data packages. If you do not have an unlocked smartphone, a basic smartphone can be purchased locally for approximately \$70–\$100. Email and internet access are widely available in urban areas like Accra through mobile data and Wi-Fi in cafes and guesthouses. Connection quality is generally good in cities but may be slower or less consistent in rural areas

Mexico:

A local SIM card will cost approximately \$10. Students will be responsible for maintaining minutes on their phones and reasonable phone usage should cost about \$20 per month. If you

do not have an unlocked smartphone, a smartphone can be purchased locally and may cost upwards of \$80. E-mail and internet access is readily available in urban areas through internet cafes in Oaxaca.

Indonesia:

A local SIM card in Indonesia typically costs around IDR 500,000 per month (approximately \$35) and can be easily purchased upon arrival. Students are responsible for topping up their phones with credit, and this amount usually covers reasonable monthly phone and data usage. Please note that using a local SIM card requires an unlocked smartphone, so students should check with their home providers in advance to confirm whether their phones are unlocked. For those without an unlocked phone, a basic smartphone can be purchased locally for around \$100, in addition to the cost of the SIM card. Email and internet access are widely available in urban areas through mobile data and Wi-Fi in cafes and guesthouses. Connection quality is generally reliable in cities but may be slower or less consistent in rural areas.

MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. Mailing prescription medication abroad is illegal.

For this program **DHL, FedEx, UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

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

Country, location	Services (DHL, FedEx or UPS)	Address for packages	To Whom + student name
New York	DHL, FedEx or UPS	Q4 Hotel: 29-09 Queens Plaza North, Long Island City, NY 11101	Dilpreet Singh
Ghana	DHL, FedEx or UPS	3 Starfruit Street Haatso, Accra	Dr Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang,
Mexico	DHL, FedEx or UPS	Melchor Ocampo 710, Centro, C.P. 68000 Oaxaca, Oax., México	Omar Nunez
Indonesia	DHL, FedEx or UPS	Puri Gading Blok C5 no. 6, Kuta Selatan, Bali, Indonesia 80361	Yudhistira Kazuhiro Budiono

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.

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\$2,780 to \$3,330**. 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 Ghana; visas not needed for Morocco and Ecuador):	50 –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:	2,780 USD+ to 3,330USD+

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.

New York:

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

Ghana:

Everyone will have the chance to change dollars into the local currency during orientation. Ghana's currency is known as the Ghana Cedi (GH¢). Cash is used for most daily transactions and the use of checks and traveler's checks for direct purchases is rare. Cash can be exchanged at the bank or Foreign Exchange Bureaus (Forex Bureaus). Larger denominations such as US\$50 or US\$100 bills attract a higher exchange rate than US\$20, US\$10, US\$5, or US\$1 bills. Credit and debit cards, on the other hand, are mainly restricted to restaurants, bars, clubs, and hotels. Although debit and credit cards (VISA preferred) are not in common use as direct forms of payment, they can be used to withdraw cash at ATMs depending on the issuing bank. It may also be possible to get a cash advance on your VISA or MasterCard credit card by going into a bank such as Barclays in Accra (again, VISA preferred). You will need to take your passport with you for this kind of transaction. For security reasons, using credit cards to make direct payments is not recommended. ATMs are mostly available in major cities and are harder to find in the smaller towns.

Mexico:

Students from other programs in Oaxaca recommend that you bring some cash and debit cards. Debit cards, particularly those with a Cirrus, Visa, or Mastercard logo, will work to

withdraw money at ATMs up to a certain daily limit in pesos (the official currency). Please be aware that ATMs often do not operate 24 hours and sometimes are “down” for several hours at a time. It can be difficult to exchange traveler’s checks, so it is not recommended that you bring them. Wire transfers through companies like Western Union are very expensive but safe and reliable in the case of an emergency. The Mexican currency is the peso.

Indonesia:

Unlike some countries in Asia where US dollars are accepted, travelers must use the Indonesian currency, called rupiah, for all purchases in Indonesia. Rupiahs can be obtained in some large US banks, but it is also very easy to exchange money in Bali. You may exchange US dollars at a money changer or withdraw rupiah from an ATM machine that accepts your US card/bank. An authorized money changer will only accept neat or undamaged US bills. They may also request a legal ID card or a valid passport to facilitate the exchange.

ATM machines are available and scattered around the developed areas of Indonesia. Accessing money should not really be a problem. However, most, if not all, ATM machines in Indonesia can only accept 6-digit pins as opposed to 4-digit pins. Please check with your bank on whether or not they can accommodate 6-digit pins and to change it accordingly before arrival. Many touristic facilities accept major credit cards, such as Visa and MasterCard.

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, 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

IHP is a program on the move – even within host countries. In addition to air travel, students will also be traveling on major excursions that include transitions between hotels and homestays – sometimes located on undeveloped streets. Please pack lightly and include only necessary items as this will ensure a far more pleasant travel experience. 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. A single large checked bag, or two easy to carry checked bag and hiking pack, are recommended. We also 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. www.bbc.co.uk/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. Please note that not all countries have inclusive sizing. 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.

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.
- Screens can detract from the experience of studying abroad (just as they can detract from your experience at home). The more time students spend online, 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 screentime.
- Personal usage of devices is 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. Internet access is available at the program center but may be slow. 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, Zoom, printing, and online photo-uploading capabilities.
- **Do not** bring other personal valuables – such as cameras, handheld game consoles, 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 and your academic 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
- A copy of Student SOS Insurance card

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.
- Malaria medication is recommended for Ghana and excursions within Indonesia
- Typhoid vaccination is also recommended for this travel
- 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, Picaridin, or lemon eucalyptus
- 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 will always be traveling with an Emergency Medical Kit.

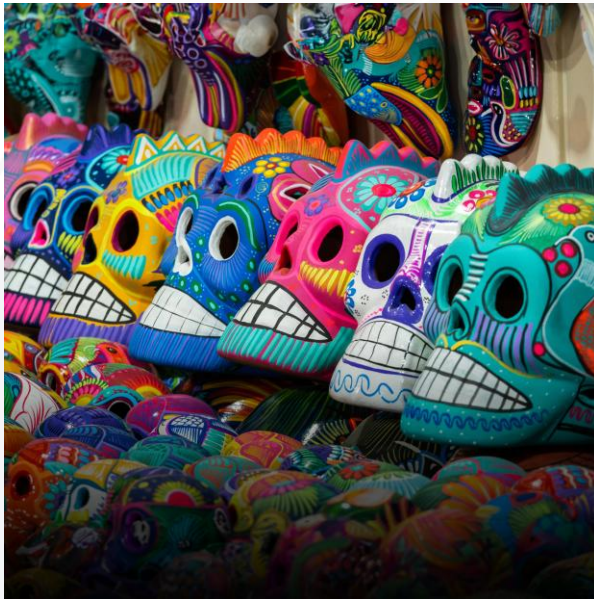
- Re-hydration powder
- Imodium
- Painkillers (such as Advil or Tylenol)

- Band-Aids
- Motion sickness remedy
- Laxatives or digestive aids such as Fiber supplements
- 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
- 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/TAA approved powerbank 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.***