Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

Indonesia is an archipelago of approximately 17,000 islands, and spans over 3,000 miles from Sabang to Merauke (Sumatra to Papua). The five largest islands are Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua. There are over 275 million residents, making Indonesia the fourth most populous country in the world, and the country with the largest population of Muslims. Indonesia is a republic, with an elected parliament and president. The nation's capital city is Jakarta, located in West Java.

Although there are over 700 ethnic languages spoken in Indonesia, *Bahasa Indonesia* is spoken by nearly all of the population. Indonesia is a dialect of the Malay language and was originally a lingua franca of traders and migrants of Southeast Asia. It was adopted as the language of Indonesian nationalism at the Bandung Youth Conference of 1928 and became the official language of Indonesia upon Independence in 1945. It remains very similar to Malay, which is rich in adopted words from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Chinese, but has been further enriched with adoptions of words from other languages, notably Javanese, Portuguese, Dutch and English.



Indonesia is rich in natural resources, particularly petroleum, natural gas, and various precious gems and minerals. Likewise, the agriculture sector is strong and varied, producing rice, tea, coffee, spices, rubber, and palm oil. However, it is the service sector that is the largest contributor to GDP at approximately 45%, followed by industry and agriculture.

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CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

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.

[City/location]: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)				
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
90/75	87/75	88/75	88/75	87/74
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
88/69	90/71	91/74	90/74	

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 head 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.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

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, mau ke 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, lower 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.

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.

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.

MEAL PLANNING

Homestay families generally provide breakfast and dinner during the week and breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the weekend. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy traditional meals and immerse yourself in the local culture.

The estimated cost for meals not provided during the program is based on the cost of modestly eating out or buying groceries to prepare your own meals, when cooking facilities are available. If you plan on eating out regularly, you should budget more money. Exploring local food is one of the highlights of living abroad, so give yourself room to savor the experience.

Please remember to budget at least **$720** for your meals not provided during the semester. For a breakdown of your program's estimated out-of-pocket expenses, please see the table in the **Money** section of this document.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

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

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

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

If you have any questions, please reach out to the Student Health, Safety, & Wellbeing Team. Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. For information regarding safety and security, emergency communications, SIT policies, health and personal property insurance, and general program tips, please read the Safety, Security, and Health document and Student Handbook on your program's predeparture page.

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.



Family structures vary in every culture. SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families, and your family may include a single mother of two small children or a large extended family with many people coming and going all the time. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a "home" may be different from what you expect.

You will need to be prepared to adapt to a new life with a new diet, a new schedule, new people, and new priorities, and expectations.

Each program's homestay coordinator will be responsible for placing students in homestays. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: in order to ensure the best fit for students and families, SIT may make final adjustments to homestay placements after student arrival in country. Therefore, SIT will not provide information about your homestay family before you depart for the program.**

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

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

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

In addition to the homestays, students will stay in small boarding houses, hotels, or tourist camping facilities. Most accommodations, except for the homestay, are double occupancy or twin bedrooms with linens, towels, pillows, and basic furniture.

TRANSPORTATION

One of the challenges of running the program in Kerambitan is public transportation. If students need transportation, 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. During orientation, you will be provided a handout giving more information on local transportation.



While public transportation such as buses exist in Bali, there are no railways or trains. This is different from Java where public transportation of all kinds are available. For the most part, transportation in Indonesia will either be by car or motorbike. Helmets will be provided by the program for students to use throughout their time in Bali.

Motorbike transport is one of the dominant forms 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.

COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

Visit our Contact & Communication page for practices on program communication, emergency communication, and home institution communication.

PHONES AND INTERNET

Cell Phone Policy

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

We recommend that students check whether their US smartphone is "locked." Verify with your carrier on whether or not you can use your smartphone while in Indonesia. As long as the device is sim-unlocked, you will be able to purchase a sim card (or e-sim) for use in Indonesia. A recent change in laws on smartphones require registration in Indonesia. If the smartphone cannot accept a sim (or e-sim), we advise that students purchase an international data plan.

Alternatively, students may want to purchase a cheaper smartphone for use during program. You are able to purchase one that is about $100 equivalent for personal use while in Indonesia. This method will not disrupt the usual smartphone programing you have for use in the States.

Android smartphones and iPhones are commonly used by Indonesians. And Whatsapp is the most common method for texting, calling, or video calling. Keep in mind that there will be a significant time difference between Indonesia and the US.

The country code for Indonesia is **+62** which is equivalent to **0** for local sim cards.

Internet access: Internet services including Wi-Fi are available at the program center, Internet Café's in many major cities and tourist areas of Bali and Java. The rates are not exorbitant, but the cost can add up. Many students use these places for working on their assignments and/or their Independent Study Project.

Students should be reminded that if their homestay or host family does offer access to their internet services, the family pays a hefty amount and this generous offer should not be abused. The students can come to the program center for internet use at any time during the day.

The SIT program center provides internet access during posted hours.

MAILINGS

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

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

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

Student Name
SIT Indonesia Bali Program
Recipient: Govinda Dasa
Toko Karya Cipta Ayu, Jl. P. Batam No. 7B, Br. Dauh Pala, Kel. Dauh Peken, Kec. Tabanan, Kab. Tabanan, Provinsi Bali, Indonesia 82111

Phone: +62 818 387 379

Packages should be sent to the following address via ***DHL, FedEx, or UPS***:

Student Name
C/O Yudhistira Kazuhiro Budiono
Puri Gading Blok C5 no. 6, Kuta Selatan, Bali, Indonesia 80361
Phone: +62 818 387 379

MONEY

Unlike some countries in Asia where US dollars are accepted, travelers must use the Indonesian currency, called *rupiah*, for all purchases in Indonesia. *Rupiah*'s 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.



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.

We suggest that you budget between **US$2000 to $3000** for out-of-pocket costs not covered by the Tuition and Housing Fees. 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. Please carefully consider your personal spending habits when creating your out-of-pocket expense budget. Some items to consider are meals not provided by the program, textbooks, Independent Study Project or Internship-related expenses not covered by the program, interpretation services, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Use the average estimates below as a guide to help you plan for out-of-pocket expenses.

Please budget approximately:

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	$1,200
Meals Not Provided	$720
Books, printing, supplies:	$50
Up-front medical costs:	$300
Potential ISP travel expenses:	$500
Visa:	$150
Typical Internet café usage:	$20-30
Estimated total:	$2,930

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT's travel insurance BlueCross BlueShield, which you can read more about on our Participant Insurance page, you still may need to pay up-front for medical care and then file for reimbursement.

VISITORS AND FREE TIME

SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation Policy.

If a visitor does come while a program is in progress, they must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned



student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students' guests.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

Please read our full Independent Travel policy for our definition, guidelines and how to access our independent travel notification form. Please note that independent travel is only allowed during program free time and students will not be excused from program activities to travel. SIT is not responsible for any costs of student independent travel including logistics, preparations, 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, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND POLICIES

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

Packing Guidelines

LUGGAGE



Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad. We recommend a small daypack, which will also be useful for short excursions when on the program.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the "General Health Tips" section in the Safety, Security, and Health pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (http://www.tsa.gov) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

The weather will be the main determiner in what you will wear other than our trip to Java. Clothes should be cool and lightweight as long as they are clean and modest. Your clothing should also permit ventilation and full freedom of movement. University students in Indonesia dress very formally, almost "preppy," and the importance of dressing neatly cannot be over-emphasized, especially for classes held at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, and Universitas Negeri Malang in Malang. Dress styles are still largely conservative in Java, and it is now very common to see women of all ages wearing a headscarf, or the more complete head-covering called *jilbab* or *hijab*. However, dress styles are much more relaxed in Bali, especially for informal occasions and in tourist areas, but students will tend to dress modestly.

Halter tops, sleeveless tank tops, etc., are **inappropriate** in and out of the classroom. Jeans should only be worn on informal occasions but past students strongly recommend bringing 1-2 pairs for these occasions. Flip-flops are very handy in Bali and Java for informal occasions, particularly because we have to take off our shoes any time we enter a building or sacred places.

There will be formal occasions when we will be required to meet Immigration officials or members of the faculty of our program associates during formal occasions. For these, you will need to dress in a more formal style. This means bringing along at least one nice dress and appropriate shoes.

You will be asked to purchase *pakaian adat* or traditional temple outfit early during the semester. This outfit is required when attending many rituals or temple events. Purchasing and wearing this has always been a part of the immersion into the culture, it brings a wonderful sense of appreciation for the local host families, peers and associates.

EQUIPMENT

You **do not** need to bring bed linens or pillows, though you should consider bringing along at least one towel. It is not necessary to bring sleeping bags, tents, or other camping equipment. You may bring mosquito nets, but many rooms use electric fans and/or electric mosquito coils as a method of keeping mosquitos away while sleeping.

If you are a serious photographer, it is a good idea to take along a supply of silica gel to protect your equipment from humidity, as well as negatives and a good flash and/or fluorescent filter.

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/.

You should consider bringing a computer sleeve to protect your laptop. This is helpful in keeping humidity away. Silica gel packets are also highly recommended to use when storing and carrying your computer. You and your computer will often be in very humid conditions. Storing your computer with silica gel packets will help keep it dry and avoid problems due to moisture and humidity common in the tropics.

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.

The most usual forms of gift-giving involve bringing something back from a place you visit that is distinctive to that region, often in the form of special food, or passing along a memento that represents either your home area or something special to your life that will remind the recipients of you and your visit.

You will be staying in homestays in Java (about one week), Bali (almost two months), and another site in rural Bali. If you hope to give gifts to the families you stay with, it will only be possible if you bring a few things that are lightweight. This is why we often recommend textile products (t-shirts, bandanas, tea-towels) or similar light-weight items that bear some logo or other distinctive sign of "being from where you are from." Some other suggestions are postcards, calendars, toys, playing cards and other souvenirs from your town or university.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Fortunately, you can obtain basically anything you want or need in Indonesia. However, named brands and western items may be more expensive or of limited availability. For women, tampons are expensive and of limited variety. Ready-made clothing and shoes may be more difficult for large or tall people to find in Indonesia.

Crucially, Indonesia is very strict on bringing all illegal substances. **Do not** bring any substances even if they are legal in the state you are coming from. The Indonesian law is very strict and unforgiving for all illegal substances.

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.

GENERAL

- 1 or 2 nice outfit suitable for a social event
- Lightweight clothes including pants, long-sleeved shirts, light T-shirts
- Underwear and socks (10-day supply)
- Pajamas or nightgown
- Slippers or flip flops (for use inside house. Flip flops not recommended for use outdoors because of the cobble stone sidewalks and roads.)
- 1 pair comfortable sneakers
- 1 pair sandals (Tevas or Chacos are ideal)
- 1 pair nice shoes
- Rain gear (waterproof jacket, poncho, or umbrella)
- 2–4 pairs pants or jeans
- 1 skirt and/or dress
- 5–6 mixed long and short-sleeved t-shirts
- 2–3 blouses or button-down shirts
- Sweater
- Jacket or fleece
- Scarf
- Bathing suit (one-piece as well as two-piece swimsuits)
- Optional – workout clothes

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa
- 2 passport photos
- Any relevant vaccine records/documents

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- **Adequate supply** of any medications you use regularly (At least 115 days' worth)
- Small first aid kit (most supplies can be bought here)
- Extra eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 30)
- Sunglasses
- Wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap (for sun protection)

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Medium-sized day pack (to pack clothes for 3–4 days for excursions)
- Small, quick-drying towel
- Flashlight
- Insect repellent with 20/20% DEET for skin
- Reusable water bottle
- Small luggage lock
- Laptop computer *(please insure it)*
- Bag for used laundry
- Homestay gifts
- Students are encouraged to bring a **battery-operated carbon monoxide detector***)*