Argentina: People, environment and Climate Change in Patagonia and Antarctica

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

GENERAL INFORMATION

Argentina, the second-largest country in South America, is a Federal Republic composed of 23 provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, in addition to other territories claimed by the country, including a sector of Antarctica and the Malvinas Islands. Known for its geographical and ecological diversity, Argentina stretches from subtropical forests in the north to the icy wilderness of Patagonia and Antarctica in the south. Specifically, Patagonia landscapes include the towering Andes mountains, arid steppes, and glacial lakes and channels, making it an ideal setting to explore the complex relationships between people, environments, and climate change.



With around 45 million people, Argentina is mostly urban and Spanish-speaking. Its population is shaped by Indigenous communities, European immigration, and more recent migration from across Latin America and beyond. The southernmost region of the country, Patagonia, is known for its vast landscapes, glaciers, forests, and steppe—and also for being the least populated part of Argentina. Ushuaia, the program base, is a city of about 80,000 inhabitants nestled between the mountains and the sea. Its population includes locals and internal migrants from across the country, giving it a unique blend of regional cultures and

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histories. These diverse identities influence how communities relate to land, nature, and sustainability.



The economy relies on agriculture, energy, tourism, and manufacturing—but is also shaped by recurring financial crises. These economic dynamics affect environmental policy, land use, and access to natural resources. In Patagonia, where your program will take place, you'll witness both extraordinary natural beauty and the environmental tensions brought on by extractive industries and climate impacts.

Argentina has a strong culture of civic engagement. From scientific communities to youth and Indigenous movements, many voices are actively shaping the national conversation around justice, environment, and the future. As you travel and learn here, you'll gain valuable insight into how people are organizing, adapting, and imagining new ways of living with the land.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Located on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, Ushuaia is surrounded by the Andes mountain range and the Beagle Channel. Known as the "End of the World," the city has a cool, ocean-moderated climate with fresh air and changing skies. Summers (January) average around 49°F and winters (July) around 34°F. Snow is common from June to September, and wind, rain, and cloudy weather are part of the local character. That said, the scenery is spectacular year-round, and clear, sunny days can also surprise you—sometimes all in the same day! Weather can be unpredictable, with some winters bringing extended snow cover, while others see snow quickly melting after storms. Snowfall can even happen during the summer, though it usually doesn't last long. Homes and public buildings are well heated, so students will often remove layers when moving between indoors and outdoors.

During the Antarctic Peninsula excursion, daytime temperatures typically range between 20° and 40°F. Although the sun can be strong and skies stunningly clear, it's important to be ready for rain, snow, fog, and wind chill. With good gear and an open mind, the ever-changing weather becomes part of the immersive experience in this extraordinary part of the world.

[Ushuaia]: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)				
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
58/43	58/43	55/41	50/37	45/35
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
47/34	51/37	55/39	57/41	

LOCAL CUSTOMS



In Argentina, local customs are deeply rooted in a culture that values social interaction and warmth. Greetings are typically friendly and informal, often beginning with a kiss on the right cheek, even among acquaintances. A firm handshake is common in professional settings, but it's accompanied by a friendly smile and eye contact. When meeting someone for the first time, it's customary to use formal titles (Señor or Señora) until invited to use first names.

Argentinians often engage in small talk, especially during extended mealtimes or while sharing mate, discussing topics such as family, food, politics, and football, which reflects their sociable nature. Overall, embracing the local customs of warmth and sociability will enhance interactions and foster deeper connections during your stay in Argentina.

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.

Argentina's diet is heavily influenced by Mediterranean cuisine, with mealtimes generally resembling those in the United States but with later dinners (around 9–10 PM) and lighter breakfasts. The staple diet includes various types of meat, bread, fresh vegetables, pasta, and sandwiches. Breakfast typically consists of coffee or tea with croissants or bread and marmalade, while lunch includes a meat entrée with starch and salad. At 5 PM, families often have a *merienda*, a light meal similar to breakfast.

Dinner is the most important meal, where families gather, and it's expected that guests will join unless informed otherwise. For vegetarians and those on gluten-free diets, accommodations can be made in Ushuaia, but it may require extra effort and sharing additional costs, as gluten-free options can be expensive. While many families can prepare vegetarian dishes, not eating meat may result in missing out on cultural gatherings, such as asados (barbecues). Keeping a kosher diet can be more challenging during the program.

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 (studentwellbeing@sit.edu). We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

MEAL PLANNING

Homestay families provide breakfast and dinner during the week and weekends. The estimated cost for meals that are not provided is based on modest eating out and buying groceries to make your own meals when facilities are available for the meals that are not provided during program activities. If you plan on eating out regularly, you should budget more money.

Please remember to budget at least $1,300 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.

On this program, you will be staying in one homestay in Ushuaia for the entire semester. Some are closer to lecture locations, while some are further away. The families are generally middle class, and you will have your own bedroom.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Students should expect to share a room with one or more students during orientation/launch and while on excursions. Other accommodations include shared cabins on a polar vessel, hotels, or small hotels. During the ISP and internship portion of the program, students will also be staying in homestays, unless their research takes them outside Ushuaia. In that case, the student will have to make his/her own lodging arrangement with the program staff's assistance and approval.

TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation in Ushuaia is very good. Participants can travel throughout the city by public bus. This mode of transportation is cheap and safe during the daytime but sometimes may be unpredictable. Using taxis is also affordable, safe and recommended. Transportation on a daily basis will include either public bus, walking, biking or sharing a taxi with some colleagues. Specifics on public transportation in Ushuaia are discussed in detail during your orientation upon arrival in-country. During excursions, the group will primarily be using private vehicles. The program uses minibuses for long distance trips to educational sites such as Tierra del Fuego National Park and Río Grande. They are very comfortable buses and have very good service (but no toilet). Within each site we usually rent a van for the group. The program will also use boats for Beagle Channel excursions and a polar vessel for the 10-day expedition to Antarctica.



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.

If you need to purchase a local SIM card, there is only one company in Argentina that sells SIM cards to foreigners: Claro. The staff will assist you with this process during orientation week. If you do not have an unlocked smartphone, one can be purchased locally for about $200. You can buy calling plans, similar to prepaid cards, to manage your cell phone expenses. Argentina's main cell phone systems are CDMA and TDMA.



To call someone on a land line in Argentina from outside of Argentina, callers will need to dial their country's international access code, then Argentina's country code (54), then the city's area code, and finally the number itself. The area code for Ushuaia is 2901.

Email and Internet access is readily available throughout the major cities and is often quite inexpensive. During excursions connectivity will be poor and often impossible. The program office in Ushuaia has Wi-Fi access.

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 (including ***DHL, FedEx, or UPS***) should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
Juan Manuel de Rosas 392
Ushuaia, CP 9410
Argentina

MONEY

We do not encourage you to bring Argentine pesos with you from the US. It is quite easy to find money exchange offices throughout the airport and cities. Some students also prefer to bring more US dollars in cash because you might get a more convenient exchange than paying with a credit card. Some students have also utilized Western Union as a method to self-transfer funds, paying with a credit card (or debit card) and then withdrawing the local Argentine pesos at the agent locations in Ushuaia. Many stores accept credit cards, the most common being Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. 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 the country. Students will not be able to get US dollars from ATMs (only Argentine pesos).



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$3,800 – 4,200 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):	$1,000 USD
Meals not provided	$1,300 USD
Cell phone / communication	$200 USD

Books, printing, supplies:	$100 USD
Up-front medical costs:	$500 USD
Local transportation:	$400 USD
Potential ISP/INT expenses:	$400 USD
Estimated total:	$3,900 USD

Please note that up-front medical costs can vary widely. Though you are completely covered by SIT's travel insurance Blue Cross Blue Shield Global Solutions (BCBS) , 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

While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. Jeans with holes, sloppy shirts, etc., are discouraged. People in offices and development agencies are apt to be much more open and responsive if the visitor shows respect by dressing accordingly. It is not necessary to be fashionable, just neat and clean. It is very important to have at least one set of clothes for formal occasions.

You will need warm and winter clothes for both the spring and fall semester. It is a good idea to bring clothes for all seasons. It would be good to have a fleece, warm pants, and boots as well as lighter layers. Convertible pants (with a zipper that can change the length) are very practical. For the excursions, bring clothes that are easy to wash, no iron needed, and lightweight. Some comfortable trekking shoes are highly recommended.

Plan to dress in layers—as it gets warmer or colder, you can simply eliminate or add layers. A waterproof outer layer with a hood over wool sweater or heavy fleece pullover and a light base layer is commonly worn by locals. We will be walking in urban areas and hiking in the wilderness, so be sure you have comfortable, waterproof footwear, as well as a rain jacket. You will also need warm headgear, a scarf, and gloves.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is strongly 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/.

During the program you will need to upload your homework to the web so a laptop will be very useful during the ISP/internship period. Host families have Internet access at home. In addition, the program office in Ushuaia has Wi-Fi access, so a laptop with this capability can prove quite useful.

We do not recommend bringing your computer or other electronics on excursions. You can leave your computer at the office if you do not wish to carry it around. If you have a warranty or repair plan, be sure to bring that information with you in case of any technical problems.

Be aware that Antarctic conditions can be very harsh on camera equipment. It is recommended to bring a waterproof day pack or a dry bag to protect your camera against salt spray, snow or rain.

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

Ushuaia is a well-developed city that has many of the amenities like any small city in the United States. However, please note that to stick to a favorite brand, you might pay elevated prices due to import taxes. We recommend you either bring or buy locally (in Argentina) any cosmetics, food, clothes, or electronic devices, that you will need during the program. If you are taking any prescription medicine, please bring enough for the duration of the program. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain your prescription medicine in Ushuaia. If you have any preference for US brand over-the-counter medicine (such as ibuprofen), please also bring it with you. If any of the above is mailed to you from the US it may be withheld by customs, and it is very expensive and difficult to get them once they are retained

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.

Clothing

- 1 nicer outfit for special occasion
- 3-4 pairs of pants
- 6-7 shirts (one fairly dressy)
- 3-4 sweaters or fleeces
- Underwear (2-week supply)
- Thermal underwear and base layers (wool and synthetic materials are recommended)
- Warm socks (2-week supply; wool is recommended)
- Warm pajamas
- Cold-weather, waterproof, hooded, coat/parka (quality down is recommended)
- Rain/snow jacket and pants
- Warm hat, scarf/face protection, and waterproof gloves
- Appropriate clothes for outdoor activities and hiking
- Swimsuit

Shoes

- 1 pair comfortable rubber-soled walking shoes
- 1 pair waterproof cold weather shoes or boots
- 1 pair of nice shoes
- House slippers/indoor shoes/shower shoes

Travel Documents

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa *(if applicable)*
- Digital copy of your passport
- College or university ID or other picture ID

Health/Toiletries

- Sunscreen & lip protection (at least SPF 30)
- Sunglasses
- Basic toiletry items
- Hat
- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly, including birth control. ***Please bring all the medications you will need during the program with you**, as your prescription or dosage will be difficult to obtain locally and will be withheld in customs if sent by mail once you are in Argentina.
- Small first aid kit with Band-Aids, hydrogen peroxide, moist towelettes, and over-the-counter drugs for minor pain, diarrhea, anti-itching, and motion/sea sickness, as approved by your doctor, extra eyeglasses or contacts.
- Any relevant vaccine records/documents

Other Important Items

- An open, **unlocked** smart phone (see Phones section for more details)
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Waterproof day pack/ backpack
- “Dry bags” or sturdy Ziplock bags
- Homestay family gifts
- Spanish/English dictionary
- Durable water bottle
- Lock for luggage
- Back up memory cards/external hard drive
- Field Notebook
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector
- Universal plug adaptors

Optional

- Travel guide (if doing post-program travel)
- Camera
- Binoculars (strongly recommended)
- Headlamp
- Waterless anti-bacterial hand soap/cleansing towelettes