SIT SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
STUDY ABROAD

Switzerland: Global Health and Development Policy

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

Switzerland lies in the heart of Western Europe. It is a small (41,285 square kilometers) country, but with its mountains, hills, rivers, and lakes, it boasts a diverse landscape from west to east. It's a federal republic with a semi-direct democracy and three political levels: the central government, the 26 cantons, and about 2,700 communes. The modern Swiss Confederation was established in 1848. Switzerland has a high population density, is divided between four different language regions, and reflects a number of cultures. Over seven million people live in Switzerland. Of these, 20% are foreigners.

Switzerland's most important "natural resource" is education. Otherwise, the country has no raw materials to speak of. Its economy is based on the development and production of high-quality goods. The standard of living in Switzerland is high. Its neutrality, development, cooperation, and humanitarianism form the foundations of its foreign policy. The Swiss have strong political and economic ties with the rest of the world, and Switzerland is a member of various international organizations. They also signed bilateral agreements with the European Union on various issues.



School for International Training
1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA
P: 888 272-7881
F: 802 258-3296
studyabroad@sit.edu
studyabroad.sit.edu

The program will also go to Morocco, a North African monarchy with access to the Mediterranean sea and to the Atlantic Ocean. Students will stay 1st in Rabat, the capital city and then in Marrakech in the South.

Geneva, Switzerland:
AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
42/30	51/36	59/42	59/42

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
69/53	58/44	47/37	41/31

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Switzerland is a country of lakes and mountains with a continental climate. You will experience mild temperatures in the Spring and Fall and rather cold temperatures in winter and hot one in Summer.

Morocco enjoys a Mediterranean climate that varies according to the proximity of the ocean and of the mountains like the Riff and the Atlas. Despite the presence of major rivers, water scarcity and highly variable flows represent a major problem for Morocco, particularly for agriculture (both irrigated and non-irrigated). The whole country is facing a situation of acute water stress, with per capita water resources divided by five between 1960 and 2019, dropping from 2,500 m3 per capita per year to 500 m3.

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

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
73/37	75/38	84/40	85/44	93/47

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
93/55	89/50	82/42	75/39

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Although Geneva is an international place, the professional and social relationships between individuals are relatively formal. It is not considered polite to call immediate superiors or teachers by their first name unless being invited to do so. For example, when addressing professors or lecturers, as well as SIT staff members, students are expected to use the titles Dr., Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Men and women greet each other by shaking hands in both business and professional settings. When sitting in a classroom, resting area, or during dinner with homestay family, the student should sit squared and avoid negligent manners. Although laptops are allowed in classrooms, the use of mobile phones is strictly forbidden. Homestay families might be conservative with computer usage.



Moroccan society is more conservative than the Swiss one and students are expected to dress modestly and avoid negligent manners.

LOCAL DIET

Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in country. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. In the cities, all kinds of food can be found, including for special diets (gluten-free, lactose-free, vegan, and vegetarian).

Generally, people in Switzerland eat three times a day. In the morning between 7:00AM and 8:30AM is breakfast time, a midday meal takes place between 12:00PM and 2:00PM, and the evening meal usually takes place between 7:00PM and 8:30PM.

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

MEAL PLANNING

For students staying in homestays:

Homestay families provide breakfast and dinner during the week and breakfast, lunch, and dinner on the weekend (except when students are not at home and of course during the study trip). All meals are provided during the study trip. Lunches on weekdays are not provided.

The estimated cost for meals that are provided is based on average prices in local groceries stores (for sandwiches and snacks) and fast foods/restaurants. If you plan on eating in restaurants every day, you should budget more money.

Please remember to budget at least **$2,000** 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.

For students staying in residences:

You will be responsible for ALL your meals (breakfasts, lunches and dinners), with costs varying based on whether you purchase groceries and cook your own meals or eat in restaurants. (see the Money section of this document). All meals are provided during the study trip.

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.

HOUSING

The housing fee covers accommodations during the entire program period. This includes during orientation, homestays or residence while at the program base, on all excursions, and during the evaluation period.

This program offers the option of choosing either a homestay or residence.

HOMESTAY

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 a homestay family in Switzerland and one in Morocco. In Switzerland, you will be living with a Swiss or international family outside of Geneva in a small city, town, or village for the duration of the semester. Most of these communities are northeast of Geneva, between Nyon and Morges. Each family will welcome one, two or up to three students in their home. However, **each student will have a separate bedroom**. All homes have access to internet and wifi.

Please note that despite some hot temperatures in summer, homes are not commonly equipped with air conditioning.

RESIDENCE

As an alternative housing option, some students will stay in a residence offering individual rooms in shared apartments. The residence is located in Geneva, close to the program center, not far from the railway station and the airport, with convenient access to public transportation. Daily travel to the program center is included and covered by the Swiss Pass provided to students.
Each student will have a private room, while restrooms/bathrooms, kitchen and lounge room are shared with 3-4 other students. Students are responsible for arranging their own breakfast, lunches and dinners.
The building welcomes other international students, fostering a dynamic and multicultural atmosphere. Living in the residence requires a degree of independence, as students are expected to manage their daily routines—such as cooking, doing laundry, taking care of their physical and mental health, and maintaining their living space—while engaging respectfully in shared areas. This will also require goodwill and mutual support among the students living in the dormitory

Liability insurance is included, with a deductible of CHF 500 per incident, payable by the student (a check-in will be conducted at both the beginning and the end of the stay).
Further details about the residence and its facilities will be provided during the in-country orientation in Geneva.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Students should expect to share a room with one or more students during orientation and while on excursions. Upon your arrival, you will stay for three nights in a shared bedroom at the youth hostel of Geneva, prior to your transfer to homestays. During the ISP period, students generally continue to live with their homestay family. If, in rare cases, students elect to conduct ISP research outside of Geneva, and are approved, the student is responsible for arranging different accommodations and for any additional costs incurred.



During the study trip to Morocco, you will share a room when hosted in hotels.

TRANSPORTATION

Like thousands of others who live and work in the area, you will commute up to an hour daily by train and by bus. The transportation system is excellent. However, depending on where you live, you may be somewhat limited in terms of evening activities. As is always the case when living abroad, some adjustment on your part will be required.

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.

Several local providers can sell plans or prepaid cards according to each students' needs. During orientation, the academic coordinator will take the group to a mobile phone shop where all the options will be explained. You will have free access to email at the cyberspace of the United Nations library, as well as at cyber cafes in Geneva, Nyon, or Lausanne, and the shopping mall in Nyon near the office. 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, and UPS services are available in the 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:

School for International Training—SIT Study Abroad
Student Name
Avenue Reverdil 6
1260 Nyon – VD
SUISSE

MONEY

Switzerland has an excellent banking system. In every city, it is easy to find banks to do all kinds of transactions, including cash withdrawal, changing currencies, and traveler checks. Banks are open on weekdays between 9:00AM and 5:00PM, and some banks are also open on Saturday morning between 9:00AM and 12:00PM. So, no need to change currency before arriving. Just **make sure you have informed your bank about your travel plan, to avoid any trouble with your credit or debit card once in Switzerland.** If you don't inform them 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$3850 to $7400 **(for students staying in homestay), and between USD 6000-12'100 USD** (for students staying in a residence) 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.

Personal spending: (from past student suggestions)	$1,000 - $3,000
Meals not provided (for students in Homestay Family)	$2,000
Meals not provided (for students in residence)	4000-6500
Laundry (for student staying in residences)	150-200 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	$50
Potential independent travel expenses:	$500 - 2000
Cell phone:	$300 - 350
Estimated total for students staying in homestays:	$3850 – 7,400
Estimated total for students staying in residence:	$6000-12100
Up-front medical costs: (reimbursed by insurance)	$500-800

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.

Visas and commune permit fees : 232 and 265 chf

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. Any booked travel conflicting with the schedule will not be allowed**.

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

For your stay in Switzerland, you should bring a two- to three-week supply of clothes. Europeans tend to dress more formally than Americans, particularly in Geneva. Remember that you may need clothes that are suitable to a business environment, interviews, and/or for volunteer hours.

The temperature and humidity will vary significantly; make sure to bring a variety of clothes to match with these differences, especially warm and waterproof clothes and shoes for the winter season. Several families have chalets in the mountains or go skiing on weekends so you may want to plan accordingly.

For the excursion to Morocco, SIT prefers that students dress like the majority of the young people: modest and conservative. Students have always found jeans very practical. Do not forget sneakers or comfortable shoes for outdoor activities.

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).



In addition to your laptop, you will also need to a voltage converter and a plug adapter. If you want to have constant, easy access to a computer, it is a good idea to have an extended warranty in Europe in case of repairs. Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/.

Electrical appliances from the US will require a voltage converter and 2-prong adapter; the electrical current is 220 volts in Europe. Outlets in Switzerland use plug types C and F. You can also purchase adapter plugs and converters in Switzerland if needed.

GIFTS (FOR STUDENTS STAYING IN HOMESATY FAMILY)

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. Maybe spices you like so that you can share a dish with the family.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Only bring enough shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, tampons, etc. for the first month or so. These items are often heavy and space-consuming, and they can easily be bought in Switzerland. However, if you are interested in saving your spending money for other things, bring enough for the entire semester, as everything, including toiletries, is much more expensive in Switzerland.

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

- 1 nice outfit suitable for a social event
- Lightweight clothes including pants, long-sleeved shirts, light T-shirts
- Underwear and socks (10-day supply)
- Warm 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 and pair of hiking shoes for outdoors activities
- 1 pair sandals
- 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
- 1 cold weather, all-purpose coat is necessary (perhaps a raincoat with a zip-in lining would be better than both a raincoat and a winter coat)
- Hat, scarf, and gloves Bathing suit
- Optional – workout clothes
- For Morocco :
  - a shawl for women
  - a backpack for a week trip

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa
- 2 passport photos
- Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination encouraged
- Any relevant vaccine records/documents

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly
- 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
- French/English dictionary
- Reusable water bottle
- Small luggage lock
- Laptop computer *(please insure it)*
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector

