Samoa: Social and Environmental Change in Oceania

Country Overview & Packing Guidelines

Spring 2027

Country Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION

Samoa and Fiji are Pacific Island nations with unique political, economic, and cultural characteristics. Samoa, part of Polynesia, consists of the main islands of Upolu and Savai'i. Samoa, formerly known as Western Samoa, became independent in 1962, making it the first independent Pacific nation. Samoa is a stable parliamentary democracy with a chiefly system known as the Pule a Matai, which plays a significant role in governance and social structure. Fiji, located in Melanesia, consists of over 300 islands, with the largest being Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. It gained independence from the UK in 1970, though its politics have been marked by instability, including four coups since 1987. Fiji is a parliamentary democracy but has seen military intervention in governance, with Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka elected in 2022.

Economically, both Fiji and Samoa rely on agriculture, tourism, and remittances. Samoa's economy is more reliant on agriculture, with taro, and cocoa as key exports, and tourism playing an increasingly important role. Samoa's economy is smaller and more dependent on remittances from its diaspora. Both countries are vulnerable to external shocks, such as natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, which affect their development prospects. Fiji has a more diversified economy, with sugar, gold mining, and manufacturing contributing significantly, while tourism is a major source of foreign exchange. However, political instability has at times affected its economic performance.



Culturally, both nations are deeply rooted in traditional customs and values. Samoan society is more homogenous, with over 90% of the population identifying as ethnically Samoan. The Fa'a Samoa (Samoan way) emphasizes

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communal living, respect for elders, and the importance of the matai system. Both countries recognize English as an official language, with Fijian and Hindi spoken in Fiji, while Samoan is the primary language in Samoa. Christianity plays a central role in the social and cultural life of both countries. Fijian society is divided into two main ethnic groups: Indigenous Fijians (iTaukei) and Indo-Fijians, descendants of indentured laborers brought by the British. Indigenous customs, known as iTaukei, remain central to Fijian identity, though tensions between ethnic groups have shaped its political landscape.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

[Samoa/Fiji]: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
98/78	95/75	95/75	95/75	65/45

SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
70/58	75/61	77/63	85/75

Samoa and Fiji both have tropical climates, characterized by warm temperatures, high humidity, and distinct wet and dry seasons. Samoa experiences average temperatures between 24°C and 30°C (75°F to 86°F) throughout the year, with the wet season from November to April bringing heavy rainfall and occasional cyclones. Annual rainfall ranges from 2,500 mm to 5,000 mm, depending on location. Fiji has similar temperatures, ranging from 23°C to 31°C (73°F to 88°F), with rainfall varying between 1,800 mm and 3,500 mm annually, with the wetter season also from November to April. Both countries enjoy plenty of sunshine year-round, though sun exposure can lead to risks like dehydration, especially during the hotter months. Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to flooding, and both countries face increasing challenges due to climate change, such as rising sea levels and more intense tropical storms.

Students should be aware of the intense sun exposure, risks of dehydration, and the effects of extreme temperatures common to tropical islands. Both countries experience high UV radiation year-round, making sun protection essential. Students should apply sunscreen regularly, wear hats and sunglasses, and limit sun exposure during peak hours from 10 AM to 4 PM to prevent sunburn and long-term skin damage. The hot and humid climate can lead to rapid dehydration, especially during outdoor activities. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day, even when not feeling thirsty, is crucial to avoid heat-related illnesses. With temperatures typically ranging between 75°F and 88°F (24°C to 31°C), and higher during the wet season (November to April), the combination of heat and humidity can cause heat exhaustion. Students should wear light, breathable clothing, take breaks in the shade, and be mindful of symptoms like dizziness or fatigue, which may indicate dehydration or overheating.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

In both Samoa and Fiji, local customs and mannerisms for men and women are shaped by traditional roles and cultural expectations. Both genders are expected to observe specific

customs in greetings and social interactions. In Samoa, local customs and traditional values are deeply rooted in the concept of fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way), which emphasizes respect, family, and community. Greetings are important in Samoan culture, with a customary greeting of "Talofa" (hello) and a handshake. Respect is paramount. Especially for elders. When greeting or addressing them, individuals should do so with deference, often lowering posture as a sign of respect. Samoan customs also place emphasis on modesty, particularly in terms of clothing. Women are expected to dress conservatively, especially when visiting villages, and it is common for both men and women to wear ie lavalava (sarongs). When entering a home or meeting space, it's important to remove shoes.

Fiji shares many similar customs with Samoa in terms of respect for community and elders but has its own unique practices. Fijians typically greet with the word "Bula" (hello) accompanied by a handshake, often warm and prolonged. In formal or traditional settings, especially in rural villages, men and women are expected to greet elders and chiefs with a special reverence, sometimes bowing or clapping softly. Gender roles in Fiji are distinct in rural areas, with men generally seen as the primary public figures, while women traditionally oversee domestic responsibilities. Women visiting or living in Fiji should be aware that modest attire is expected, particularly in villages, where wearing long skirts or sulus (similar to sarongs) is the norm. In both Samoa and Fiji, maintaining eye contact may be seen as disrespectful, especially when addressing elders or people of authority. In both places, eating or drinking while walking or standing and standing when others are seated is disrespectful. And one is to say Tulou (pronounced as Too-low in Samoa) or Tilou (pronounced as Tee-low in Fiji) when walking in front of others. It is important to observe these cultural nuances in interactions.

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.

In Samoan culture, meals are often communal, with food served for sharing, emphasizing family and community bonds. Traditional staples include taros, yams, breadfruit, and fish, often prepared in an underground oven called an umu. Dinner is typically served in the evening, and it is common for meals to be accompanied by coconut cream and local vegetables, with rice increasingly becoming a staple in modern diets. In Fiji, mealtime customs also revolve around communal eating, and traditional foods include cassava, dalo (taro), and fish, often cooked in a lovo (an earth oven). Fijian meals typically feature rice, accompanied by curries influenced by Indian cuisine, reflecting the country's diverse population. Breakfast often consists of fruits and local bread, while



lunch and dinner are heartier meals that bring families together. Both cultures value hospitality, with guests often offered food as a sign of welcome and respect.

In Samoa, navigating vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and kosher diets can be quite challenging due to the traditional culinary landscape and limited availability of specialized food options. The local diet heavily features meat and seafood, with staples such as taro, breadfruit, and cassava often prepared alongside fish and pork, making it difficult for vegetarians and vegans to find satisfying meal choices. Additionally, while fresh fruits and vegetables are abundant, cross-contamination in communal cooking settings can hinder those on gluten-free diets from ensuring their meals are safe. Kosher options are even rarer, as there is minimal awareness of kosher dietary laws among local food providers, and certified kosher products are seldom found. As a result, individuals adhering to these dietary preferences often face significant obstacles, leading to reliance on self-catering or the need to bring their own food supplies, which complicates their dining experiences in Samoa.

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 $1,850 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 three homestays.

Urban homestay in the Apia area is for nine weeks. Successful urban homestays rely on cooperation, cultural sensitivity, and active participation to create a harmonious living environment. Rooms sharing is the norm in Samoa and is also practiced on this program. Wifi is not available in all homestays. Nor is air conditioning although most families have electric fans. Showers and bathrooms are all inside the dwelling.

Rural homestay in the village is for five nights. Students will live in the homes of Samoan families in the rural area. This is a unique chance to learn about family life and experience Samoan customs and traditions in a rural setting.

Urban homestay in Suva, Fiji is for five days. Like the urban homestay in Apia Samoa, you will have an opportunity to live with indigenous families in the city of Suva and learn about life in Fiji through the generosity of your hosts.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

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

The Savaii excursion for five nights is where you will experience accommodation in open Samoan fales on the beach. You will also stay in hotels and motels. In Fiji, you will stay in hotels and in dormitories in the capital of Suva.

TRANSPORTATION

Getting around is easy in Samoa. Buses are not only a mode of transport but also a great venue for cultural learning. One can learn much about Samoans' sense of personal space on the colorful buses, which run only during daylight hours. Taxis are more expensive, and more precaution

needs to be taken in terms of agreeing upon equitable fares and going places at night alone. During orientation, you will be informed of taxi and bus services that you can use. You will catch the bus daily to and from the National University of Samoa to your homestay. Since September 2009 Samoans drive on the left side of the road, so extra care should be taken when crossing the street.

You will travel by ferry between the islands of Samoa. The plane to Fiji is a large jet plane. At other times, you will travel in vans, trucks or private vehicles.

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.

Time differences are a consideration when making or receiving an international call. Samoa is 17, 18 or 19 hours ahead of EST or one day ahead and five, six, or seven hours behind on the clock. Time differences are complicated by Daylight Savings time in both the US and Samoa. US Daylight Savings time runs from March to November and Samoa is on Daylight saving time from September to April.

The SIT program center provides internet access during posted hours. Internet access is available. SIT will provide you will data for your mobile phone, but even then, speed and reliability are challenges in a developing country. Wireless on campus will be set up. During orientation,

you are given an ID card and your internet access on campus is also set up. The time spent on frequent communication takes one away from the present moment and learning experiences in Samoa. It is also very important to be able to receive calls and texts in country from staff, advisors, and friends you will make. You may wish to let your family and friends know there are times you will not be available. The semester is a time to step away from your usual routine and to *live your life in the present moment*. Many former students agree that stepping outside the digital age and choosing not to share your experiences on a daily basis with the world beyond Samoa is the most rewarding way to go. Keep phone calls to a minimum or for special occasions.

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
P.O. Box 9268
Apia,
SAMOA

Be sure that all mail comes to Independent Samoa, not American Samoa. Samoa does not have a zip code and is still listed by the US Postal System as Western Samoa

There are no street addresses in Samoa. Packages are not delivered, so please include the AD's name, Dr. Fetaomi Tapu-Qiliho and a local phone number on the parcel.

Packages can be sent using **DHL, FedEx or UPS** courier services.

Student Name
[You can use the Postal address or your own Samoa address if using a Courier company]

MONEY

The tala (usually marked as WST$) is the currency for Samoa. Fijian dollars are used in Fiji. Students may exchange U.S. currency or withdraw local currency from an ATM machine inside the international airport upon arrival and at banks, money transfers and ATMs in Apia.

ATMs in Samoa accept American credit and debit cards but most are located in the Apia area. The nearest ATM to campus is in the town of Apia which is 10 minutes away by bus. U.S. cash and/or traveler's checks may be exchanged at banks or some hotels, but they cannot be used in shops. Samoan banks have a charge of approximately US$7.00 for debit/credit card withdrawals.

A lock for luggage or backpacks is advisable and it is wise to keep money in a locked bag. Some beach fales or hostels have security boxes you can use. Opening bank accounts for a short time is not feasible.

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$2700 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):	500 USD
Meals Not Provided	1850 USD
Books, printing, supplies:	50 USD

Up-front medical costs (doctor visit WST$25-50):	500 USD
Potential ISP travel expenses: (Bus $1-5, ferry to Savaii $10)	100 USD
Estimated total:	2700-3000 USD

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

Contrary to the romanticized version of the Pacific Islander, Samoans are fairly conservative by Western standards; therefore, it will be important to dress both appropriately and comfortably. For female students, dresses or skirts with hems at knee-length or below are appropriate and wearing a bra is mandatory. In the village, shoulders should be covered. On certain excursions tank tops and mid-thigh shorts can be worn. Longer shorts are common and jeans or lightweight pants are appropriate for evenings, but cool nights are rare. Remember, bring sensible clothing - anything too revealing is likely to attract unwanted attention. **Short shorts or sports shorts are not appropriate.** The key is to observe what people wear and when, and dress accordingly.

Students often wear lavalava and t-shirt tops. Lavalava (a two-yard piece of material wrapped around the hips) are worn by both men and women both at NUS and in the village. They come in a variety of colors and designs and may be purchased in Apia for about US$5-$10. You will be given two ie lavalava during orientation.

Dress is important in Samoa, especially professionally, so bring a couple of outfits or dresses suitable for formal occasions, professional visits, or ISP interviews. Dress in the clubs in Apia is quite modern but former students recommend “sensible” going out clothes for the nightlife. Because of the high humidity, light cotton fabrics are best. In Samoa, the more colorful the fabric, the better.

Men usually wear knee length shorts or a *lavalava* and a short-sleeved shirt, T-shirt or tank top. Collared t-shirts or button-down shirts are appropriate for church or professional visits. Some men purchase plain-colored pocket *lavalava* for formal situations and most feel very at home in *lavalava* for casual wear. Long pants may be worn occasionally but are not a necessity.

On Sunday, most Samoans wear white. For women a light cotton dress or light-colored skirt will do. In the village, families often dress you up for church as well as daily activities. A white or light plain color short-sleeve shirt are suitable for men. If appropriate clothing can’t be found or is expensive, it can be purchased in Samoa from the local thrift store which the students usually find an enticing place to expand their wardrobes.

Comfortable open shoes are best for Samoa. Slip-on loafers, Reefs, Tevas, Chacos, or rubber flip-flops are popular with most students and suitable for protection from the reef. Sneakers or sports shoes are needed for Fiji hikes which can be muddy and slippery, as well as the lava and rainforest hikes in Samoa. An extra pair of flip-flops comes in handy for personal use or can be given as a gift. If you plan on running or exercising, bring a pair of jogging shoes. Leather molds quickly, so leave it at home.

EQUIPMENT

It is always good to have an umbrella on hand, preferably the fold-up, compact kind. A raincoat or jacket is quite useful but sometimes hot. Evenings in Fiji can sometimes be cool, so bring a light sweater or jacket. A water bottle is essential.

Bottled water can be purchased at most shops in the Apia area. There is a water dispenser at the office. Small portable filters have been useful especially for the rural homestays, but iodine tablets are rarely used by students.

All necessary bedding and a mattress and pillow will be provided. You may want to bring a mosquito net if you have one but they can also be purchased fairly cheaply in Apia. Many students do not find them necessary and they are usually provided in the village and beach fales. Hand soap is not provided in most places so small size hand sanitizer is useful but it is also easily available.

If you plan on snorkeling, gear may be rented at some places in Samoa but may be poor quality. You might want to bring your own.

Students also recommend coming with some device to record interviews during ISPs. Some students use their computers or phones, but you may want to bring a small tape recorder which are very expensive here.

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/. The electrical current in Samoa is 230v, AC 50 Hz. Please remember this if you are planning to bring any appliances with you. Adapters and converters for chargers are available in Samoa.

Students in recent semesters have strongly recommended that everyone bring a laptop. PCs are more adaptable than Macs and tablets perhaps even better. You need to be aware, however, of possible damage caused by humidity, the instability of the electrical current, and the possibility of theft. Several computers die each semester but the advantages of having a computer seem to outweigh the disadvantages, especially during ISP. All assignments must be typed during the semester and students find doing their work journal for ISP on their computers works well. The readings for the seminars that are available on the SIT Lib Guide should also be downloaded to

your computer BEFORE you come to the program. Laptops are also useful for downloading photos, so remember to bring a camera docking cord and memory stick.

Computer labs are available on campus, but connections are slow and not always reliable. Both computers and hours are limited. Limited wireless connections are available on campus. There are several Internet cafes in Apia and the cost is about US$4.00 per hour. WiFi connections are available in numerous places. Costs vary from about $6 US for one hour to $3 US for 10 hours. SIT will provide data on your mobile phones for your academic needs. You can hotspot from your phones to your laptops when required.

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.

An assortment of small gifts such as playing cards, postcards, note cards, calendars, coloring books, play dough, crayons, paddle balls, balloons, gum, earrings, children's books, barrettes, magic markers, small cars/toys, etc. come in handy. T-shirts in varied sizes including XXL are also popular gifts. Gifts that are useful are appreciated and many of these can now be purchased in Apia.

NOTE: If you are worried about weight, you can purchase kitchen ware, shampoo and soap and other items that make good gifts in Apia.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Most necessities can be found in Samoa, but choice may be limited. This experience is an opportunity for you to live with less, so consider what you need and what you can do without. Most toiletries, including soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, and razor blades and are available in Apia, You do not need a 3-month supply of everything; however, tampons are sometimes difficult to find. Most of the books on the reading list are available here too.

Most students use their phones or digital camera for photos. Film, digital and disposable cameras and other electronic equipment including small tape recorders is expensive.

This is an ***excellent time to minimize*** so pack as conservatively as you can. Review the packing list carefully. You do not need everything on the list. Students find the thrift stores fun and very handy for extra T-shirts, blouses, and dresses.

Laundry is your own responsibility whether in homestay or other accommodations. Clothing can get ruined in the wash or from wear so don't bring lifetime favorites. Laundromats are also available in the Apia area at a cost is about US$3 per wash and US$3-4 per dry. Laundry soap or powder is readily available.

Most types of batteries are available in Samoa, though camera batteries are limited. If you prefer a particular brand or better quality bring some along. Flash drives and other school supplies are available at SSAB or BSL but other memory cards are difficult to find.

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

- Keep in mind that Samoa is both hot and humid and you WILL sweat through all the clothes you bring. Generally speaking, bring older clothes and clothes comfortable in hot weather (breathable, light fabrics). You will also likely wear an ie lavalava (sarong) half the time so plainer tops may be ideal.

- Should have clothes for school/ every day (casual and comparable to home), clothes comfortable for hiking and outdoor activities (but use water shoes, NOT hiking boots), clothes for night activities (nothing too fancy, just nicer)

- When in doubt, use an ie lavalava.

- You will buy souvenirs and receive gifts from your homestay families so leave space in your luggage

- Also a good idea to have a bigger backpack or duffle for the Savai'i visit and village stay, something that can carry about 3-5 days' worth of stuff.

- Ladies, regarding shorts, do not go out of your way to buy longer shorts that you will never wear again. In most places you can wear your normal shorts – provided they're not shorter than mid-thigh length. In places where you can't (village stay), you will be wearing an ie lava lava over the shorts.

    - Sleep wear
    - Underwear (two-week supply)
    - 2 Swimsuits (Females to bring a 1 piece also)
    - 1 light jacket
    - 1 rain jacket
    - 1 Comfortable nicer shoe for church and interviews
    - A pair of water shoes that you can also hike in (chacos, tevas, keens)
    - Sneakers
    - Rubber flip flops (can be purchased locally for cheap)
    - 4-5 socks
    - Used t-shirts for everyday wear at school (do not buy new clothes for the trip)

WOMEN

- 2 nicer outfits or knee length cotton dresses for church and interviews
- 2 outfits for night-time activities (nothing too fancy)

- 6 comfortable tops with sleeves or t-shirts for heat
- 5 nicer tops (at least one should have sleeves)
- 3 light pants
- 3 casual shorts (nothing above mid-thigh)
- 3 work out shorts or tights
- 1 workout legging

MEN

- 6 pairs of casual shorts/athletic shorts
- 4 short sleeved cotton shirts or collared polo shirts for interviews and church
- 1 lightweight dress pants
- 6 t-shirts

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

- Extra eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Contact lens cleaning solution, if used
- Wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap (for sun protection)
- Any medication you use regularly including birth control
- A list of any medications you are currently taking with the generic name of each (if there is one)
- Small first aid kit with band-aids; Neosporin; moist towelettes/alcohol pads; and over the counter drugs for minor pain, anti-itching, and motion sickness, as approved by your doctor.
- Earplugs to block out people and barking dogs at night (or lots of patience)
- Multi-vitamins
- Anti-diarrheal medicine and laxatives
- Q-tips
- Stridex/Clearasil facewipes (refreshing for hot, dusty, and humid environment)
- Alcohol gel hand sanitizer

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Water bottle
- Sunglasses/sunscreen/hat for sun protection
- Aloe vera gel
- Luggage locks for your bags while in country

- Insect repellent with DEET of 20/30% for use on skin and 100% DEET or Permethrin for use on clothing Some available here
- Travel alarm clock and/or watch
- Flashlight and batteries
- Two lightweight towels (at least one beach size) and washcloth (Available in Apia)
- Notebooks and paper, journal and pens (these can also be purchased at the SSAB stationery store in Apia)
- Homestay gifts: merchandise from your school (caps are great because they fit most heads, or other things where you don't have to guess sizes), things that are unique to your home city/ state (pre-packaged snacks or touristy things), small games for the kids
- Students are encouraged to bring a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector

OPTIONAL

- Travel guide (particularly if you plan to do post-program travel)
- Small camera and film/batteries (please insure valuable cameras)
- Pocket knife (pack in checked luggage!)
- Laptop computer (please insure it)
- Small waterproof bag
- Waterproof phone case

