Program Orientation Information
During the first few days of the program at the launch site there will be orientation sessions covering program policy, staff and student roles and responsibilities, health and safety guidelines, academic policies, culture shock, and community building.

There will also be an orientation session in the first day or two of each country covering country specific details.

Classroom Space
In all of the countries you visit, you will generally have a “main” classroom location where you will attend faculty lectures and welcome guest lecturers. However, the city will also become your classroom as you go on site visits, explore neighborhoods, conduct research, and travel to other sites within the region.

Diet
Participating in the local food culture is a central aspect of daily life in many countries. You should be willing to try the local cuisine and share in your host family’s mealtimes. Special or restricted diets may not 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 will miss out on an important part of your host culture.

Be clear with your family about what your dietary needs. It is always a good idea to be very honest with your host family as to what you like and dislike, as this will inform the remaining weeks of your semester. SIT homestay parents are generally used to our students negotiating around quantities of food.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform our office prior to the start of your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context. In some locations, we cannot guarantee zero exposure to certain foods or a given allergen.

Nepal: The staple of the Nepali diet that is served for most meals is dhal bhaat, a meal centered around rice and lentils with sides of curried vegetables, pickle, and sometimes meat. It is quite easy to maintain a vegetarian diet in Nepal, though it is more difficult to be vegan or to maintain a kosher diet. In urban areas, most people eat three
meals a day and mealtimes are similar to those in the west, but in rural areas, there are usually only two main meals, at mid-morning and late evening, supplemented by snacks.

Jordan: As in most cultures, food and rituals surrounding shared meals is quite central in Jordan. Families generally eat a good breakfast (this often includes fresh-baked bread, hummus, cheese, olives, and zeit wa za’tar (olive oil and thyme), a heavy late lunch around 3 pm (variably this includes cooked lamb, chicken, rice, and a variety of vegetables), and a lighter dinner late at night (similar to breakfast, sometimes containing leftovers from lunch). Like all Arabs, Jordanians think of food sharing as a bonding experience, and so the guests are always pressed over and over to eat more, a situation that makes many students uncomfortable (tip: eat at a slower pace than you usually do, and when full say alhamdu-li-lah, and thank your host every time he/she presses you to eat more).

Vegetarian or vegan diets are rarely followed in Jordan, but people are becoming increasingly aware of the choice, especially in the cities. Luckily, the fact that Levantine food is rich in vegetable-only dishes (such as fuul, hummus, tabbouleh, and falafel) makes it easier for Jordanian families and restaurants to accommodate vegetarian or vegan diets. Kosher meats are not available in Jordan, though other foods that fit into Jewish dietary requirements are easily found. If you have inflexible dietary requirements, please let your admissions counselor know as soon as possible so that we might try to find a homestay that can accommodate your needs. If this is not possible, you can discuss other program options that might better meet your needs with your admissions counselor.

Chile: The local diet in Chile is based on rice, beans, sauces, pasta, soups, fish, bread, meat, vegetables, and fruit. Like in many Latin American countries, the largest meal is usually eaten in the middle of the day. Although vegetarians are rare in Chile, previous students have not had a problem when advance notice is given. For those students who keep to a Kosher diet, placement with Jewish homestay families may be possible.

Local Customs
Nepal:
1 - "Namaste" is a common act done by putting the palms together in a prayer like gesture to greet anyone in Nepal. Do not take it seriously if any Nepalese hesitates to shake hands because it really hasn’t been very long since western traditions crept into the Nepalese way of life.

2 - Use your right hand to eat and deal with food. Nepalese use their left-hand to wash themselves after defecating. Also remember that most Nepalese use their fingers to eat and using spoons and forks is not common, especially when you are having "Daal Bhat" the staple Nepalese diet. Therefore nothing should be accepted, and especially not offered with the left hand. It is best to give or receive something with both hands.

3 - Once your lips have touched a food item or its container, it is considered Jutho (polluted) for others. Don’t eat off someone else’s plate or offer anyone food you have taken a bite out of.

4 - Major Hindu temples are usually off-limits to foreigners. Don’t enter them or take pictures unless given permission to. Do not take leather articles inside the temple precinct as they are prohibited. Also there will be small circular or rectangular stones or metal mandala on the ground in front of most shrines. Do not step on them.

5 - Men should not walk around bare-chested. Shorts are acceptable, but long pants are better. Women are recommended to wear long skirts. Exposure of women’s legs can bring unwanted attention, so avoid wearing shorts and short skirts.

6 - Public display of affection between men and women is frowned upon. Kissing, cuddling, or hugging in public is absolutely discouraged.

7 - Time in Nepal moves very slowly. Everything is approximate. Nothing happens on time. Be patient. Anger and impatience will rarely make things better, if not worse. Also, double and triple confirm important arrangements.

8 - When entering a house or dwelling, shoes should always be removed. Nepalis often squat
when eating. Do not stand near a person who is eating, as your feet would be right next to their food. If you need to converse, it is better to sit or squat next to them.

9 - Bargaining is very common in Nepal. You will often need to bargain while shopping or riding in cabs in Nepal.

**Jordan:**

**Greetings:** In Jordan, shaking hands is the common greeting between men, and women. However, men should wait for an Arab woman to offer her hand and women should similarly wait for an Arab man to offer his hand. Many women prefer to avoid touching a man they do not know well. Many men avoid touching a woman at all if she is not related to them, and in that case they may gesture by holding their hand toward their chests. People stand up when greeting each other. People usually say *Alhamdulillah* to respond to "how are you?" *Alhamdulillah* means “Thank God” even if they are not well. It's a religious concept, which reveals the idea of thanking God.

**Living with Family:** In many households people take off their shoes when entering, so wear slip on shoes or sandals in case.

**Eating food:** If you are invited for a meal, everybody may eat from a common plate; take the food immediately opposite to you only. Somebody will continue offering you food, eat what you can. It is very important to accept Arabic coffee when it is offered to the guest by Jordanians, as it is a cultural symbol of hospitality and should be accepted as an act of goodwill.

**General Safety & Security Tips:** Always remember to plan your evening outing in a group or with at least one of your friends. Girls are advised not to be alone during evenings and nights. Always notify the Fellow of any travel plan outside of Amman either with family, with friends, or on your own. Avoid swimming in ponds and deep seas. Jumping in water from high cliffs is strictly prohibited.

**Chile:** Chileans are mostly welcoming and warm. For a foreigner it will be easy to establish a personal rapport with them by showing interest and being friendly. Despite that, it is necessary to take into consideration some local cultural customs that might differ from your own. For example, because of their importance in Chilean society, family, studies, and work are potentially the first topics of conversation. There are distinct boundaries between the private and the public, which is often expressed in a different sense of personal space, affectionate kissing and hugging in social events, and a lack of political correctness to refer to people with distinct physical characteristics or behavior. All North Americans and Europeans, for instance, are called “gringos” but this should not be understood as an insult. Here there are some tips:

1- Please remember that although Chile is a conservative country, the cultural and social climate is changing as we speak.

2- Unless it is work, study, or a business meeting, don’t arrive on time. Dinners and parties often start very late at night.

3- Always say hello when you arrive and goodbye when you leave at home and at university.

4- Greet everyone individually with a kiss or handshake. This is not mandatory for large or noisy parties or social events.

5- Announce your intentions to leave 15 minutes before you actually leave.

6- Never belch noisily or yawn without covering your mouth.

7- If you are close to a person or family, you might be invited to watch television in their bedroom. This invitation can be perfectly innocent and should not necessarily be misconstrued as sexual.

8- Like other Latin Americans, Chilean males are often persistent in their romantic advances.

9- Chile is still a very homophobic country but as new liberal values develop, there is an increasing tolerance towards homosexuality. It’s very
common to find many alternative and safe spaces like cafés and discos for gay, lesbians and bisexuals to meet.

**Transportation:**
Across locations, students will often use public transportation. Specifics on public transportation will be discussed during the orientation upon your arrival in a country.

**Nepal:** In Kathmandu, you will mostly travel by foot or public transportation (local mini-buses). Taxis are widely available and reasonably priced. Students should expect traffic congestion during commuting times and pollution related to the traffic in Kathmandu. Most students prefer to walk given the chaotic nature of the streets in Kathmandu, which are narrow and frequently unpaved. Outside of the larger cities, there are many locations in Nepal that are only accessible on foot. To get to excursion locations, students will usually travel by chartered bus along with short flights and on foot. You should be prepared to walk a lot. Sometimes this is walking in areas of high altitude, and while you do not need to be an Olympic athlete, you should be in good physical shape and what are considered hills in Nepal are mountains most anywhere else.

**Jordan:** Most people in Jordan travel by private car, so the fact that you, as SIT students, will be unable to drive will make life slightly more difficult in this car culture (but it will certainly be safer for you, as Jordan is well-known for its aggressive drivers). Taxis are available throughout the city for reasonable rates, and most SIT students love taking taxis because of the exuberant nature of Amman’s taxi drivers and their garrulousness that is good for practicing Arabic. During excursions, the program will take buses within Jordan.

**Chile:** You will use a variety of transportation during the semester including: taxis, buses, vans, and trains. When in the program base, buses, trains and taxis will be your most common form of public transportation.

**Homestays and Other Accommodations**
As many IHP and SIT Study Abroad alumni will tell you, the homestay experience can be one of the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of the program. You will learn firsthand the joys and responsibilities of being a guest, a family member, and a friend. You will also have the opportunity to share your culture and to learn from another’s culture. 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 place, and SIT Study Abroad values the diversity of homestay families. For example, 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. They may be quite familiar with your hometown or with international students, or your homestay family may not know much about where you come from. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” (i.e., the physical nature of the house) 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 possibly new priorities and expectations.

Country coordinators in each location will arrange homestay placements. These placements are made first based on health concerns, including any allergies or dietary needs, to the extent possible. **Please note: You will not receive information about your homestay family before you arrive in each country.**

Not all of your lodging will be in homestays. You may also stay in hostels, hotels, rural villages, and other types of lodging. The key is to be flexible. Many students appreciate bringing a ‘sleep sack’ (a sleeping bag liner or a sheet folded in half and sewn down the side).

**Money**
In addition to tuition, SIT Study abroad program fees cover room and three meals a day throughout the program. When meals are not provided by the
program or homestay family, students will be provided a stipend. SIT will provide transportation for program-related excursions and activities that are part of the normal program itinerary, but students are responsible for the cost of daily transportation to and from class. Course materials are made available digitally and there will be some photocopies of course materials available to check out. Printing additional papers copies of course readers are the students’ responsibility. Please plan accordingly.

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. This is very important; if you don’t inform these companies that you will be away, when they see charges from another country, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. Make sure that your PIN is only four digits — longer PINs don’t always work in other countries. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Ask your bank if they have any partner banks in the countries you are traveling to. Fees are often lower through these partner banks. 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. If they will expire while you are overseas, please contact your bank and/or credit card companies for early renewal. It is also very important that you make photocopies of the front and back of all your debit/credit cards and leave them with someone you trust just in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen. Also scan and e-mail yourself a copy.

Having some U.S. cash for cases where ATMs are not available or not working is a good idea. Consider bringing $100-$300 to keep as a reserve for this purpose.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for personal spending, local travel, and medical costs. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and these costs are averages.

A suggested total amount of money to budget is around **US$ 1700**. 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, including costs for any specific personal expense.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal spending including budgeting for vacations (from past student suggestions):</th>
<th>$300-$500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visa registration:</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local transportation:</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, printing, supplies</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-front medical costs</td>
<td>$400</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1700-$1900</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Using travelers’ checks is a safe way to carry money, since these can be replaced in case of theft or loss. Traveler’s checks may be hard to change and not give good exchange rates, but are still the safest way to bring your money. Cash is usually easier and faster to change and gets better exchange rates, but there is no insurance in case of loss or other problems. ATMs are widely available in all of the cities we’ll visit. A money belt large enough to hold your passport and traveler’s checks is useful.

**Nepal:** The local currency in Nepal is the Nepali Rupee. Nepal is generally inexpensive, although inflation rates are rising steadily. ATMs are readily available in Kathmandu and in most large towns throughout the country and can be relied upon to withdraw significant amounts of rupees (up to 10,000 rupees at a time). Although possible, it is difficult and expensive to transfer or wire funds to Nepal. We recommend using American Express traveler’s checks, as they are the only type of check that can be easily replaced if lost or stolen. It is best to bring traveler’s checks in varied denominations ($20, $50, and $100 notes) as well.
as sufficient cash. It is also possible to get cash advances, in rupees, against a MasterCard or Visa, but only in limited amounts. Keep in mind that debit/ATM cards will usually not work for purchases the same as a credit card would, so we recommend both. Please consider what balance of cash, traveler’s checks and credit/debit cards you will need.

**Jordan:** The currency in Jordan is the Jordanian dinar (1JD=1.41USD). Each dinar has 100 piasters (Arabic: girsh, plural: groosh). The dinar comes in notes of 5, 10, 20, and 50 JD. The easiest way to get money in Jordan is with a bank debit card. ATM machines are widely available. This method also has the advantage of giving you the wholesale exchange rate, which is slightly better than the retail rate that you’ll get at currency exchange shops. Credit cards are used often in Amman, so a Visa, MasterCard, or American Express credit card can be used to make purchases around town, but mostly at the malls and major retailers. Traveler’s checks can be used, however, it can be a hassle since not everyone will accept them. Most currency exchange shops will also deduct a commission. However, you may want to bring a small amount for emergencies. You should bring approximately $100 in cash for immediate use. Though theft is generally not a problem here, you should still be careful with your money. Be sure to bring a lock for your luggage or a small lockbox for your cash and valuables.

**Chile:** The local currency in Chile is the Chilean Peso. The exchange rate between the Chilean Peso and the US Dollar varies on a daily basis. You are also advised to take a small amount of money in US cash (approximately $150) since it is not always possible to reach an ATM.

**Communication**

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the program abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication. We have a few suggestions regarding communication during the program, based upon our experience.

It’s important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the program. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call, thereby avoiding frustration and making connections more meaningful. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion. While you are encouraged to share with those close to you and use them for support whenever necessary, it is also important to remember that you are on the program for just a few months, and that you get out of the program what you put into it.

Do not set family or friends up with expected communication during arrivals and departures to/from new locations. **It is not always possible for students to gain internet or phone access immediately upon arrival in a new country; SIT will post safe arrival updates on its facebook page at [http://www.facebook.com/SITStudyAbroad](http://www.facebook.com/SITStudyAbroad).**

When you arrive in a new country, you will have many immediate obligations, including getting to your accommodations, eating a full meal, recovering from jet lag, meeting your new host family, attending required scheduled sessions, evening engagements, and getting oriented.

**Phones and Email**

All students are required to have a working cell phone while on SIT Study Abroad programs. This policy is part of our commitment to student safety and will facilitate communication in case of an emergency. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they are reachable by phone at all times. This means keeping the phone charged and stocked with airtime/minutes as well as notifying staff of, and replacing, lost or stolen phones. Please note that students who do not comply with the cell phone policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Students can buy a phone in the US or upon arrival in the first non-US country. If you wish to obtain a cell phone prior to departure some options can be...
found here. Please bear in mind that a basic cell phone with simple call and text messaging is the best option for all programs. Expensive or flashy phones (including iPhones) are not recommended as these may attract unwanted attention in some economically depressed areas.

Look for an unlocked quad-band phone so it will work in multiple countries. Buying SIM chips as you travel from country to country is much cheaper than buying an international SIM chip. (Please note that it can be difficult for non-nationals to purchase SIM cards in certain countries.) You should research costs of making international calls and you may want to consider setting up a Skype account as well. You and/or your family member will be able to load credit to your Skype account, which can be used to call international cell phones. (Check out: http://www.skype.com/en/offers/skype-credit/)

Please do not use a host family’s phone for overseas calls. Even with a phone card, the host family may be charged a service fee just to dial out. Host phones should be reserved for the family’s use.

**Nepal:**
Landline calls from Nepal are very expensive ($3/minute) and difficult to connect. Internet phones are available at many places in Kathmandu and are very inexpensive. Cell phones for use by students can be obtained from local suppliers without a contract and periodically loaded with credit. These phones can send/receive international calls and texts (calls to the US run Rs. 8/minute).

There are many Internet cafes in Kathmandu from which you will be able to access your home e-mail account, but connections are slow. Most homestays do not have internet access as it is rather expensive for locals to set up home internet.

**Jordan:** Recently, mobile phones have become an essential feature of social and cultural life in Jordan and rates are relatively inexpensive. The initial cost ranges from 40-80 JD (approximately US$60-115), depending on the quality of the handset, and there is no need to sign a long-term service agreement. You can use your phone as much or little as you like, adding minutes to your account by purchasing “scratch cards” from any mobile phone store in the country — and there seem to be thousands! It doesn’t cost you anything to receive calls, even from overseas, which makes a mobile phone the most convenient way for loved ones to stay in touch with you during your stay.

**Chile:** It is useful to have a cell phone and/or phone calling card if you will be making international calls. Although most of your Santiago families will have phones, you will not be allowed to make direct long distance calls from those phones. You should plan on making your long distance calls collect, with a calling card, or from a long distance phone center. Students have reported problems using Sprint cards but there have been few problems to date using AT&T cards. Pay-as-you go cell phones are strongly recommended and can be purchased in Chile for about $50. Email and Internet access is also available through Internet cafes.

**Mail**
Mail delivery can be unpredictable and erratic. Mail can take from ten days to three weeks or sometimes even longer to reach its destination. SIT does not forward student mail, and cannot be responsible for lost mail. Please account for 2-3 weeks shipping time when deciding which address to use.

An updated address list will be provided to you prior to the start of the program.

Sending and receiving packages is another matter, however. 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 (due to customs delays) that the recipient is nearly out of the country by the time the items are received. For these reasons, unless it is an emergency, parents and loved ones should refrain from sending packages. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. Please inform parents, grandparents, significant others, and anyone else who might think of sending you packages, of the above. If it is necessary for someone to send you a package, please have them contact your admissions counselor.

**Climate**

**Kathmandu: Average High/Low Temperatures (°F)**

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<th>Season</th>
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**Amman: Average High/Low Temperatures (°F)**

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**Santiago: Average High/Low Temperatures (°F)**

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**Visitors and Free Time**

Parents or friends may wish to visit students while they are abroad. This can be a wonderful experience; however, **SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term**, due to the rigorous nature of the programs 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.

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT Study Abroad homestay families can accommodate only their assigned student(s) and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students’ guests.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes, guest lectures and field-based learning activities. 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.

On average, students have two free days a week during the program. For safety reasons, during free time you should always travel with at least one other person and provide destination and contact details to the local coordinator. Keep your hosts advised of your schedule and inform them if you will be coming home late or missing a meal.

**Alumni Mentor**

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor or ask an alumni mentor: [http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student](http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student). Alumni can be a useful resource for answering your questions and providing recommendations specific to your itinerary.