Packing Guidelines

South Africa: Social and Political Transformation
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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. South Africa’s internal flights limit baggage to only one bag of 30 kilograms per person plus a carry-on. The second bag costs 15 Rand (about $1.60) per pound. With careful planning, you should be able to bring the necessary clothing and supplies and stay within the 30kg limit. If you plan to bring more than 35 kilograms you will need to budget for extra baggage fees.

Suitcases with wheels help, but you will still be required to lift your bags into vehicles by yourself so pack lightly. Some students have recommended backpacks in place of suitcases.

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
South Africans tend to dress very similarly to Americans, though there is some variation among different ethnic groups. Neat, somewhat conservative, comfortable clothes will help you to avoid the typical untidy American tourist stereotype. Many South Africans have a stereotype of Americans as “slobs” in relation to dress, so do what you can to dispel this myth. As such, do not bring sloppy clothes or clothes with immodest pictures or writing on them. Revealing clothing and very informal clothing are not acceptable in most situations. In general, tops should cover shoulders and waists, skirts should cover knees, clothing should not be too tight or see-through, and plunging necklines are not acceptable.

Please note that tank tops and shorts will only be acceptable in certain limited settings. For your rural visit, you will need to bring one or more long (mid-calf length) skirts or sarongs. Be aware that some places are dusty and likely to stain light colors, and that fine fabrics may not be durable enough. The clothes that you bring should be washable and breathable and preferably made
of drip-dry cotton and cotton-blends. Students will be required to conform to dress expectations of the program, and we reserve the right to institute a specific dress code should that become necessary.

Equipment
You will NOT need to bring items such as a sleeping bag, mosquito net, or water purifier, unless you desire to do so and/or to travel areas and situations where these would be necessary post-program.

Computers and Other Electronics
It is strongly recommended that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. Personal property and baggage insurance is included in the program fee for all study abroad program participants through SIT Study Abroad. Read the details on SIT’s personal property and baggage insurance in the full Description of Coverage on this site: http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/medical-review-process/

There are five computers at the SIT program center that students may use for conducting research and typing assignments. However, as most assignments will need to be completed after school hours, a laptop is needed. Students in previous semesters have noted that having your own laptop provides you with a great deal of flexibility when completing assignments and working on the ISP. Our wireless internet connection at the SIT program center makes conducting research from your own laptop fairly easy (at least in the South African context). You may need to make use of internet cafés during the semester – after hours and during the ISP – so please bring additional funds depending on how frequently you expect to use email at Internet cafés. If you are unable to bring a laptop with you, students have been able to rent them for all or part of the semester for approximately US$140 per month. Digital recorders are useful especially for conducting interviews during the ISP period.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage, and electrical adapters: http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/. Do not bring any 110-volt electrical appliances without a step-down transformer from 220 to 110 volts. The standard voltage in South Africa is 220/230volts AC. Many electronic goods these days can handle both 220 and 110 (and other) voltage; refer to your owner’s manual for your devices to investigate what will likely be needed. Please note that power surges are common here and you are advised to plug your items into outlets with surge protection only (these can be purchased locally at student expense).
Cameras are great but please note that you will likely not be able to upload images to Facebook or any web-based image service on the program’s Internet connection. iPods are great for use on bus rides, though there may be some contexts where we cannot allow this for reasons of security or cultural sensitivity. A USB flash drive is essential for getting copies of some lecturers’ PowerPoint presentations, and great for storing the pictures you cannot download to web-based storage. Again, we suggest insuring your belongings and keeping them locked in your locker at the SIT office when not in use.

A digital recorder might come in handy when conducting interviews for your ISP or during language classes. Digital recorders are expensive in South Africa so you must consider buying one before your trip.

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 do not need a gift for each member. 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 in which you live. 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.

What You Can and Cannot Obtain in Country
If you do not already have these items, they can be obtained in South Africa. Generally, prices for most items are reasonable. Toiletries and personal care items can also all be purchased in South Africa at similar prices to the U.S. However, if you require any form of medication, bring a sufficient supply to last the duration of the program, as prescription drugs may not be mailed into South Africa. Remember to bring a spare pair of glasses or contact lenses if you wear them.

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni mentor: http://studyabroad.sit.edu/pn/admitted-students/contact-a-former-student/.

Don’t Miss the Packing List on the Next Page!
These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director. The clothing you bring may be adapted to your own style, within cultural norms of acceptable dress.

Remember to place all valuable items and prescriptions in your carry-on luggage while traveling and all sharp items in your checked luggage.
Suggested Packing List

Clothing

- General
  - 1 warm outfit if not included in clothing below
  - Underwear – one week’s supply
  - 4-5 pairs socks
  - Lightweight pajamas or nightgown
  - 1 pair comfortable shoes or sneakers
  - 1 pair sandals (not flip-flops)
  - 1 pair flip-flops (for in-home wear)
  - 1 pair formal shoes
  - 1 sweater or light coat
  - Bathing suit (one-pieces are generally more acceptable for women)
  - Rain poncho or fold-up umbrella
  - Sun hat or bandanna

- Women
  - 3 pairs longer shorts and/or skirts
  - 1-2 long skirt or sarongs for rural stay
  - 3-5 blouses or shirts
  - 1-2 pairs lightweight pants or jeans
  - 1 nice outfit (dress or skirt/blouse)
  - 3-4 casual but not sloppy t-shirts
  - 1 “workout” outfit (1-2 sports bras, t-shirts, conservative shorts)

- Men
  - 2 pairs shorts
  - 1 pair lightweight slacks
  - 1 pair jeans or other casual pants
  - 1 dress shirt
  - 3-5 t-shirts or casual sports shirts
  - 1 light sport coat and tie

Travel Documents

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card where applicable (see Safety, Security, and Health for more information)
- Two photocopies of your passport, stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa (if applicable)

Health/Toiletries

- Prescription medications used regularly
- Over-the-counter medications as approved by your doctor (note that these are also available locally):
  - Pain reliever/fever reducer
  - Cold medication/decongestant
  - Laxative
  - Anti-diarrheal medication
  - Motion sickness medication
- Good quality thermometer (for taking your temperature)
- Small first aid kit
- Adhesive bandages/antiseptic/antibacterial cream
- Malaria prophylaxis (Please review the program Health Guidelines and Requirements and the Safety, Security, and Health document for your program for details). Note that you will be in a low risk malaria zone for approximately ten nights and in a medium to high risk area for approximately four nights.

Other Important Items

- Medium-sized suitcase and a small daypack (essential for excursions)
- An extra pair of glasses or contact lenses (and saline solution), if worn
- Flashlight
- Homestay gifts
- Photographs of your family, house, home town

Optional

- Sunglasses
- Beach towel
- Alarm clock (non-electric, portable, with spare batteries)
- A notebook and pens
- A voice/tape/digital recorder if you plan to use one during ISP or language classes
- Hand sanitizer
- Sunscreen

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