



COUNTRY

OVERVIEW

& PACKING

GUIDELINES

Madagascar: Biodiversity and Natural Resource
Management
Spring 2020

SIT Study Abroad
School for International Training



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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

Madagascar is a world apart, evolving from a set of unique, isolated environmental circumstances that spawned incredibly rich flora and fauna. Free from the pressures of human populations for over a hundred million years, nature followed its own unique evolutionary path. Unfortunately, many species have gone extinct since the arrival of humans 4,000 years ago, or more. The island's fragile environment is increasingly threatened due to the tremendous human pressures exerted on its diverse ecosystems.

The ecological wealth in Madagascar is matched by its cultural richness and diversity. The Malagasy are a broad ranging, complex mix of peoples from various parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. There are several dozen ethnic groups, all speaking dialects of the same language, Malagasy, of Malayo-Polynesian ancestry. French is also spoken, although more so in urban than in rural areas. While English is becoming more popular with increasing contact with the outside world, it is still only spoken by a small percentage of Madagascar's population.

Madagascar ranks as one of the ten poorest countries in the world. Political instability and a rigid social hierarchy have hampered development in a country otherwise boasting abundant natural resources. In spite of the extreme poverty, Malagasy are very friendly, and visitors are often struck by their warm and welcoming nature.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Sun exposure is a concern in Madagascar due to its tropical climate. Students should bring an adequate supply of sunscreen and protective clothing such as hats and bandanas. Temperatures will vary considerably over the course of the semester. The weather is much hotter and more humid from November to April. Stark variations in temperature can also occur from daytime to nighttime, and across

regions. It can thus be quite hot during the day and very cool or even cold at night.

ANTANANARIVO: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
79/63	79/63	79/61	77/59	73/54
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	
75/52	79/55	81/59	79/61	

Madagascar lies approximately 250 miles off the East Coast of Africa, south of the equator. The weather is characterized by a hot, rainy season from November to April and a dry, cooler season from May to October. The amount of rainfall varies greatly by region, falling almost daily on the east coast but far less in the arid south, where rain often does not fall for months on end. While hot and humid near the coast, temperatures can drop to freezing in Tana (elevation of 4300 feet) and close to freezing in the extreme south during the coldest months of June and July. Please note that the Madagascar Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management program will span the extremes from very hot, humid and rainy weather to very cool or even cold climates, particularly in the Central Highlands.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Reverence for the ancestors is of utmost importance in Malagasy culture. Society is very family oriented and peaceful. Potential conflicts are usually settled by a council of male elders, who draw upon ancestral wisdom and enforce the time-honored system of taboos. Elders must be respected, even if one might disagree with them. While men are considered natural leaders, women are generally expected to be more passive in decision-making, especially in the more traditional rural areas. This might mean that acquiescence is more appropriate than speaking out,

honor and respect are essential to maintain in traditional society. Women are generally in charge of running household operations such as meal preparation, cleaning, shopping, and caring for and educating children at home.

Hospitality is also very important in Malagasy culture. A greeting usually consists of “bonjour” or “manao ahoana,” followed by a handshake and kisses on the cheeks one side after the other. A handshake is sufficient for farewells. A strong sense of community and sharing are central pillars. Thus, everyone is encouraged to participate in daily events and more formal ceremonies. Food and drinks should always be shared.

Rice is served two or three times daily, often piled as high as a plate can handle. In rural areas, food is eaten while sitting on a mat on the ground. There is a rigid hierarchy, where elders are often served first, and then others are invited to join in. Traditional beliefs generally remain very strong throughout Madagascar, even in more “westernized” contexts.

Do: Show respect for elders and places of burial at all times. Do not remain standing when elders are seated. Excuse yourself by bowing down lower and saying “azafady” when passing in front of people, especially elders. Greet people with a handshake and kisses on the cheeks.

Share any food or drinks that you bring into the household. Firmly secure any items that you aren’t willing to share, as the concept of personal ownership can be interpreted differently in Madagascar.

Don’t: Speak badly of family and friends behind their backs, step on a mat with food on it, or walk over the top of food. Eat without offering and/or sharing in the household. Refuse food or drink if you can help it. Use cups and other utensils reserved for the bathroom in the kitchen.

DIET

Special Diets: SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students

become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally (including with your host family) from the program experience. Please consider local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.



Meals are eaten three times a day: generally early in the morning, around noon, and in the evening. Meals are usually shared with family members, who consider it important to be together at mealtime.

Food is important to the Malagasy, and the staple of their diet is rice. Malagasy eat more rice per capita than any other nation in the world - nearly two pounds per person per day. It is generally served heaping on a plate or bowl with a small amount of meat, beans, or vegetables on the side. In Malagasy there are two words to describe food: *vary* (rice) and *laoka* (the sauce served with rice). You will be expected to follow the diet of your family; therefore, you will eat a lot of rice. Meat is important culturally and is eaten whenever financially possible. Lentils and beans are also frequent accompaniments. It is possible but often not easy to be a vegetarian in Madagascar. If you are vegetarian and it is at all possible for you to change your diet to eat even a little meat while you are on the program, your acceptance into Malagasy society will be made easier.

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided [Health Guidelines and Requirements](#) for your program.

It is very important that you read the Health Guidelines and Requirements document as early as possible and examine it with your medical provider. The guidelines include recommended immunizations; a suggested calendar for immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease.

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, accident and illness insurance, and general program tips, please read the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) document and [Student Handbook](#).

HOMESTAYS

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.**

On this program, you will be staying in two homestays. The first homestay will be with a family in the capital city of Antananarivo. Your stay with this family will begin soon after arrival and continue whenever we are in Tana. Host families will come from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. There are some families who live in a more “western” fashion than others. It is important to bear in mind that all families are Malagasy and are representative of their culture. Your particular experience will depend on you and your family. Host parents may be teachers, accountants, government employees, auto mechanics, chauffeurs, small business owners, restaurateurs, farmers, tailors, etc.

You will also have the opportunity to live with a Malagasy family in a rural village in the Andasibe village, near Moramanga city. Conditions in the rural area may be more basic than in Antananarivo this is

certain to be an unforgettable learning experience for you.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Other accommodations include camping, hotels, and small guesthouses. During the ISP/internship period, students generally choose to camp or rent basic lodgings in the village where they are staying. Some will arrange a homestay and others may live in a modest hotel or guesthouse accommodation. What is available will depend on the topic you develop for your ISP or internship while in country and where it will be conducted.

TRANSPORTATION

On long excursions, travel will mostly be by road. The travel in town and between towns will be mainly by school bus. During the village stay, you will either walk or take a local taxi-brousse to move around.

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.

PHONES AND E-MAIL

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working smart phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to either (a) bring an open, unlocked smart phone from the U.S. to the program that is able to accept a local SIM card, and is compatible with and usable at the program location, (b) work with the academic director within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally, or (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone. Students have often found that phones brought from the US which they

thought were unlocked, were not actually unlocked. During orientation, with assistance from SIT Study Abroad staff, students will learn how to use their cellphone, how to purchase and use an appropriate local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad requires that each student have a local number for communication with the homestay family and program staff.

While we recognize that alternative communication methods can be free or cheaper than cell service i.e. Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. those programs alone do not satisfy our need for regular communication with the local program staff and partners, nor do they meet our emergency communication needs. Therefore, local cellular capacity on each student's phone is required for the duration of the program. Students are required to maintain a minimum amount of phone credits (50,000Ar) at all times for emergency calls. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

Please let your friends and family know that communication to and from Madagascar can be difficult even with recent improvements in telecommunications technologies. Due to the location of the orientation site, you may not be able to call home or send email until at least a few days after your arrival. The Madagascar program staff will contact SIT Study Abroad in Vermont upon your arrival to confirm that everyone has arrived safely. Assure your friends and family that no news is good news, and that in the event of an emergency, SIT will contact your family immediately.

E-mail is available in most urban centers and is probably the best, and certainly the cheapest, way to keep in touch with family and friends in the U.S. While there are Internet cafés in cities throughout Madagascar you may not be able to e-mail during most excursions. Skype is possible, and is also becoming the preferred mode of communication with the outside world.

Most urban areas in the country have network coverage, and many rural areas are now covered as well, although the more isolated areas remain out of reach. Calling the U.S. is still expensive, but texting is

reasonable, and receiving calls and texts (from anywhere in the world) is free. There is no subscription fee or monthly charge - you simply purchase a phone and a local SIM card and buy minutes as you go. Please keep in mind time differences as you and family/friends at home make plans for communication.

The program will lend students USB Modem/Wifi emitters, and provide a reasonable amount of internet credit to allow communication with home. Students should keep in mind that the connection is not what they will be used to in the United States, and that they will need to purchase their own credit for personal and research use of the internet. Many students also choose to use their smartphones for internet connectivity. It is important to bear in mind that electricity is not a 24hour a day service in Madagascar, and so bringing a high capacity good quality powerbank for recharging phones is very strongly advised.

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 import 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.

For this program, **DHL services are recommended 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 a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package. To send a package to the program, please contact Michael.roberts@sit.edu for the address.

MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the program.

When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. During the ISP/internship period, students will receive a stipend for basic room and board only, based on the cost of living at the program base. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP or internship are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

The local currency is the Malagasy Ariary. Having a variety of options for obtaining cash in local currency allows you to be more flexible. Thus, we recommend that you bring the money that you will need with you in various forms. Credit cards are more widely accepted than previously, but they often cannot be relied on. U.S. issued ATM and debit cards (Visa) can be used to withdraw local currency in all major cities and towns. There is a small service charge for each transaction, just as there would be in the U.S. if you made a withdrawal from an ATM not affiliated with your bank. Cash is used for most daily transactions and the use of checks, traveler's checks, and credit/debit cards for direct purchases is very rare.

Although cash advances on VISA cards at the counter in the banks is possible, the process can be difficult and time-consuming. Do not plan to rely on cash advances. Select hotels, restaurants, and airlines will accept credit cards. Service charges are fairly high, however, often 2 - 6% or more. Debit cards for taking out cash have become the preferred mode over the past several years.

Cash (Dollars or Euros) is easier to exchange than traveler's checks, but cash is not insured against loss or theft. As well as using Debit Cards, bringing some travelers checks and/or US\$ Cash as an emergency backup is a good idea. For cash we recommend denominations of US\$20 and US\$50 (deliberately avoiding US\$100 bills), you should also ensure that the bills are unmarked and issued within the last few years.

It is possible to wire money to Madagascar through Western Union, but it is expensive. We recommend

that you carry with you enough money for the entire semester in the form of debit/credit cards and cash. You should ensure that within your luggage there is a means of securing your valuables (Bank Cards, passport, money etc) with a small lock. It is of the utmost importance that you are very careful with securing valuables.

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 (and/or scans) of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP/internship-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. 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 ranges from **US\$600 - \$1,500**. To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	\$250-\$500
Books, printing, supplies:	\$50
Up-front medical costs:	\$100-\$300
Potential ISP travel expenses:	\$100-\$500
Internet café/modem/cell use	\$100-150
Estimated total:	\$600-\$1,500

habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP or internship (some popular ISP/internship sites may require a return internal flight) or a specific personal expense.

Check current exchange rates:

<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>



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 section of the [Student Handbook](#).

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 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 and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP/internship. 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. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break. Students typically have four weeks to conduct

research, gather and analyze data, write, and prepare for the ISP presentation or complete an internship and paper. There is a lot to cover, and students find the ISP/internship period a very busy time. For this reason, please plan to use your time wisely.

Opportunity for independent travel during the program is limited and cannot be guaranteed due to

the rigorous schedule and disruption independent travel may cause to semester responsibilities. Requests to travel independently will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the academic director. Further details regarding the independent travel policy can be found in the [Student Handbook](#).

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. A backpack is useful, preferably one that is frameless or has an internal frame.

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.

Luggage allowances (on airlines) internally in Madagascar are generally very strictly adhered to. Economy class tickets allow one stowed bag of no more than 20Kg and one carry on of no more than 5Kg as well as a personal item (laptop/camera/purse). Overweight and extra bag charges are applied to luggage over this allowance, the cost will depend on both fluctuating exchange rates and relatively frequent changes to airline policies. As a guide: in recent months an extra 20Kg stowed bag has cost passengers US\$63 and overweight above a single bag's 20Kg allowance has cost US\$25 for the first 3Kgs overweight and US\$63 for any bags with total weights between 23Kg and 32Kg.

CLOTHING GUIDELINES

Clothing styles vary widely across milieu and social status. We encourage you to dress conservatively in order to respect cultural norms, while keeping an open mind for experimentation with local styles. The

clothes that you bring should all be washable and breathable and preferably be made of drip-dry cotton and cotton-blends. Clothing should be modest in order to respect local cultural norms.

Temperature variations can be quite drastic. Night temperatures tend to drop at higher elevations, such as in Tana, but also in coastal areas. Therefore you will need a fleece, sweater, light coat, or jacket and waterproof rainwear. You can buy new clothing of various kinds once you are in Madagascar, but you should bring most of what you'll need with you (especially underwear), since prices and choices are generally better in the U.S.

Your appearance and behavior will determine how local people perceive you. In general, the Malagasy are more formal in dress than you may be at college, and most Malagasy women wear skirts or dresses regularly. Modest and neat clothes that can serve many purposes and travel well are the safest bet. Bring mainly warm weather clothing, but include a fleece, and a windbreaker and/or rain jacket. Bear in mind that laundry is done frequently (by hand), so you won't need too many changes of clothing. Do not forget to bring a bathing suit, as you will have many opportunities to swim.

In choosing your clothing, consider that past students have been invited to weddings, spent their ISP period camping in very remote areas, met political ministers at their offices, hiked in national parks, attended outdoor concerts, met with ambassadors, and relaxed on the beach during their stay in Madagascar. While keeping all of this in mind when choosing your clothing for the semester, just be yourself. Bring clothing with which you will be comfortable.

EQUIPMENT

A lightweight sleeping bag and pad are essential, as you will spend time camping during excursions. Further, some students may choose to go to a rural area for their ISPs. Since students will be hiking and camping often, it is imperative that you have good footwear that you are comfortable walking on muddy/rocky trails in (already broken in). Chaco-type sandals are very practical in Madagascar and

most students wear them daily. Some students like to wear boots for hiking. Be sure to bring a good quality flashlight, preferably a headlamp (with a spare bulb if not an LED) and extra batteries, and a Swiss army style pocket knife (remember to check this in, as it will be taken if you try to carry it on the airplane). A really good raincoat (Gore-tex brand raincoat) is strongly recommended, particularly in spring semesters, as January to March is part of the rainy season in Madagascar and the rural homestay and several modules of the program will be done in the rainforest of Andasibe. **Tents are recommended**, having a tent of your own will be invaluable to you during your ISP if you plan to be “*en brousse*,” which most of our students choose to be. Although the program does have some tents for camping excursions and your occasional personal use, you should bring one if you can. A water carrier is also necessary, such as a wide-mouth water bottle or carrier (two liters or more capacity recommended). While bottled water is available locally, as are basic rudimentary filters and purification solutions, students undertaking ISPs in rural areas (most students on the program) have found it very useful indeed to bring a personal water filter.

A mosquito net is important in Madagascar. Nets are also available locally, and generally much less expensive than in the United States.

COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is essential 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 or other valuables for full coverage in the event of loss or theft. SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.

Many of our students who have brought Apple/Mac laptops have over the last few years found them to be problematic and suggested that we warn future students. They have experienced computers frequently breaking mid semester (seemingly due to humidity and dust), and repairs being very difficult to impossible in country. Whichever type of laptop you

choose to bring, do please bring a strong solid case capable of water and dustproofing your machine.

The SIT classroom is not equipped with computers. Students have also found it essential to have at least two USB memory stick for transferring documents and backing up work and digital photos (NB it is very important that backups should be kept on a separate USB stick from those used in print shops or internet café's).

Wi-Fi will be available at the program site through the USB modems loaned to students by the program, and it is becoming more widely available in major towns throughout the country.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/>. In Madagascar, 220 volts is the standard and electrical outlets are the same as in continental Europe. We strongly advise that you bring a surge protector style adapter adequate for charging your phone and laptop.

GIFTS

As you might imagine, it is best to be prepared with a gift to offer each of your two homestay families in gratitude for their hospitality and as a means to share a part of your culture with them around the time of your arrival at their home (known in Malagasy as a *voandalana*). We suggest bringing something that touches the whole family rather than just an individual gift. Gifts are very much a matter of personal choice, but previous students have found that the likes of books of photographs of where they come from, local landscapes and wildlife or of their college can be interesting. Others have preferred something more artisanal like a tea towel, embroidery or other local craft item or specialty product from their home town makes a conversation point. Students have also found bringing small gifts for the children in the family, such as frisbees or a ball or other games provides an excellent way to break the ice. Many students also choose to buy a token of their respect for their

homestay families at the end of the stay, finding something locally.

You may also wish to consider gifts for people outside your homestay family, in recent years students have found it appropriate to bring a few T-Shirts or baseball caps, key rings, pens, or similar things from their college, their part of country or community where they live in as personal gifts for Malagasy students, guides and other people who they connect with during the semester. Bringing something like a frisbee, hacky sack or another small toy can be especially helpful in the rural homestay (as well as the urban homestays) to 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. Think about the possibility of bringing pictures of your friends, family and postcards of local area to share and talk about as well. It is worth reiterating that the ideas above are suggestions, and gifts are very much a personal choice. You should know that you will have two homestay families who it is culturally important to share a gift of thanks with for their hospitality as well as 3-4 or more Malagasy friends, students and guides who you will be living and working with during the semester.

Gifts are very important in Malagasy culture. Although it's not possible to know to whom you're going to be giving gifts in advance of your arrival in country, it's better to bring more than less. The most important thing is that the gift comes from the U.S. or anywhere outside of Madagascar, so just about anything goes.

Your village stay families will almost invariably live in more modest and traditional homes. However, all of the above mentioned items are also likely to be appreciated by your host families for your village stays and field experiences.

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

While in our globalized world many manufactured goods are now available here in Madagascar, many of them are imported, meaning they are more

expensive. Technology items like computers, data storage, photographic accessories and the like are becoming more available and relatively less expensive here, but they are still cheaper and more readily available in the U.S.

Depending on your tastes and needs, you could consider bringing enough toiletries to last the semester from the US. However various local and imported toiletries are available here as well. Although there will certainly not be all the brands and types available at home. In terms of dental hygiene items (toothbrushes, floss, paste, mouthwash), it is a very good idea to bring those from the US. Female students should bring enough sanitary supplies/tampons to last the semester, as these items are expensive and of highly variable quality in Madagascar.

School supplies like pens and notebooks are available in Madagascar but are not necessarily of the same quality to which you might be accustomed in the US (and a write in the rain style notebook is a very good idea for your field journal).

In case you forget any clothing items, there are many flea markets with good prices for relatively decent clothing in country.

ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/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.

PACKING LIST

GENERAL

- Laptop Computer
- Camera
- 3 or 4 pairs of light outdoor pants (outdoor pants convertible into short is recommended)
- 2 sweaters and/or a fleece
- 10 days-worth of underwear (more if you do not want to hand wash on a daily basis)
- Waterproof Coat (Gore-tex brand coat is recommended)
- Lightweight all-terrain sneakers or durable hiking shoes (a good, well worn-in pair) and socks.
- Chaco / Teva-type sandals
- Bandana/scarf
- Hat



WOMEN

- 1 nice skirt/top or dress for formal occasions
- 3 or 4 Casual skirts or dresses or lightweight pants and tops for daily use (depending on what you are normally comfortable in)
- 5 or more t-shirts/tank tops
- 1 long-sleeved shirt and long pants for hiking or fieldwork in the forest
- 1 bathing suit (bikinis are OK, although a one-piece is recommended for modesty)
- 4 or 5 sports bras

MEN

- 5 or more t-shirts

- 1 pair of dress pants (khakis OK) and collared shirt for formal occasions
- 3 or 4 casual shirts and pants/shorts
- 1 bathing suit (shorts style)

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card (see the Safety, Security, and Health document for more information)
- Two photocopies of your passport (photo page and Madagascar visa page) stored separately from your actual passport

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Towel
- Water filter if you anticipate an ISP in a rural location
- Adequate supply of any medication used regularly
- Extra pair of glasses or contact lenses (Bring contact solution for the whole semester. It is possible but difficult to obtain it in Madagascar.)
- First aid kit that includes: pain reliever, bandages, antibiotic cream, thermometer, anti-diarrhea medicine, tweezers, moist towelettes, disinfectant, motion sickness medicine, laxatives, small sewing kit, calcium, multi-vitamins, insect repellent, and your full semester supply of malaria prophylaxis.
- Women: sanitary supplies/tampons
- Toothpaste and floss
- Mosquito repellent (< 30% DEET for your body, more for clothing)
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen (20+ for sensitive skin)

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Driver's license or another form of identification
- Money belt large enough to hold a passport and **(to be worn inside your clothes), with a means of waterproofing your passport.**
- Plane tickets
- Backpack with an internal frame
- Small daypack for hikes
- Drybags/Canoe bags – to be able to ensure that your laptop, passport, money and important paperwork can be kept dry in the rain.

- Small good quality flashlight (preferably a headlamp) spare batteries, and extra bulb if not an LED version.
- Swim goggles for those who enjoy swimming
- 2 Miniature combination locks or small key locks for luggage
- Lightweight sleeping bag. A sleeping pad is also highly recommended)
- Water carrier to accommodate 2+ liters of water

OPTIONAL

- **Strongly recommended!** 1-2-person tent (Bring if you have one; a tent is optional, but **highly** recommended, especially if you are considering doing an ISP in a rural area or conservation site.)
- Army knife with bottle opener (be sure not to try to carry this on the plane)
- Good notebook (we do fieldwork in the rainforest and so recommend bringing one Rite in the Rain style notebook to serve as your field journal) as well as pens and pencils
- Alarm clock (non-electric, portable, with spare batteries if needed) – or just use your cellphone
- Spare batteries for all battery-operated items
- Pictures from home to share with homestays