



COUNTRY
OVERVIEW

& PACKING
GUIDELINES

Tanzania: Wildlife Conservation and Political Ecology
Spring 2020

SIT Study Abroad
School for International Training



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COUNTRY OVERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

Tanzania is in East Africa on the Indian Ocean. Its area is twice the size of California and it contains three of Africa's best-known lakes—Victoria in the north, Tanganyika in the west, and Nyasa (or Lake Malawi) in the south. Shortly after achieving independence from Britain in the early 1960s, Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form the nation of Tanzania in 1964. Julius Nyerere, who became the Prime Minister, introduced Tanzania to African socialism or *Ujamaa*, which emphasized justice and equality. Currently the President is John Magufuli.

Tanzania is a beautiful and diverse country that includes the Serengeti Plains, the snows of Kilimanjaro, and the islands of Zanzibar. Within the greater Serengeti ecological unit (at 25,000 sq. km) is Oldupai Gorge, the site of the famous discoveries by the Leakeys of pre-Homo sapien fossils. The Serengeti system also contains the immense Ngorongoro Crater, a 20-mile-wide volcanic crater, home to a large and diverse population of wildlife and the highest density of predators in the world. In addition to the diversity of wildlife, there is also diversity among the people with more than 120 ethnic groups, mostly of Bantu origin, each with its own language. Kiswahili, which is primarily a mix of Bantu languages and Arabic, is the official language, used for communication and for official matters. From an economic perspective, Tanzania is one of the “poorest” countries in the world, by GDP per capita based on PPP (Purchasing Parity Power). The economy depends heavily on agriculture, which accounts for almost half of GDP, provides 85% of exports, and employs 80% of the work force.



CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Arusha lies just south of the equator, but due to inland altitudes and offshore coastal winds, the weather is temperate with warm, sunny days and cool nights. The main rainy season is during April and May with another less intense one in October and November. In Arusha, about 5,000 feet above sea level, and in other high altitude locations, it can get quite chilly at night. In most other parts of Tanzania, expect hot, dry weather.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Tanzania is a country of 120 ethnic groups and as this program stresses the importance of “place,” any generalizations must be viewed in this light. The main correlations to customs that you will encounter here in Tanzania are: age, sex, and religion. With age, the older generations have a level of respect that is reflected even in the greetings (“shikamoo” vs. “hujambo” or “mambo” for younger people). It is expected that you greet elders with respect and courtesy. Your gender will influence your experience in Tanzania. Most cultures here have a quasi-clear delineation of cultural spaces for men and women (e.g. in some churches men sit on one side and women on the other). It’s rare to find a male in the kitchen - equally unlikely would be to see a lone woman in a bar. Tanzania has many religions but the main two are Christian and Muslim, both of which are generally very tolerant of each other. The norms for each are very different but both influence certain aspects of the program, (e.g. in Christian rural and all Muslim areas female students are expected to wear skirts (or local kangas) and shirts that do not expose the shoulders) and men are expected to wear long pants, not shorts – this is relaxed somewhat in towns. There is not really a “list of do’s and don’ts” as each place we visit is unique, from agro-pastoralist Maasai to heavily Christianized peri-urban areas, to strictly Muslim rural areas (Mazumbai) to the westernized night clubs of Arusha. So come ready to learn, laugh at yourself and enjoy this incredible, culturally-diverse country.

DIET

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.

The main staple in Tanzania is ugali, a type of stiff porridge that is eaten together with a sauce at most meals. There are a wide variety of vegetables available, so following a vegetarian diet is not too difficult when traveling with the group or in your homestay. Veganism is more difficult, although people do try to accommodate this as much as possible. In general, one should remember that it is the responsibility of the student to adapt to the culture they are in and to be prepared to remain flexible in many ways, including eating habits.



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. Some families are wealthier than others. Just as in the US, each family is different and you might be disappointed if you expect to stay with your idea of a typical Tanzanian family. Additionally, please bear in mind that, in many countries, the idea of what constitutes a “home” and a “family” 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.**

The Tanzania: Wildlife Conservation & Political Ecology Program has a homestay of three weeks in duration in a peri-urban area near Arusha. The homestay is the focal point of the work you do for your midterm portfolio that entails interviews, participant observations and activities, free weekends with the family, and more.

OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

When you are not on safari or in your homestay, you will be given a daily per diem and expected to find your own room and board although program staff in-country will provide you with suggestions, and need to approve your accommodation before you commit to it. This also applies to the Independent Study Project period. There are many “Guest Houses” available in Arusha and other urban areas of Tanzania. We will provide you with suggestions once you are in-country.

TRANSPORTATION

On safari, we will be using “safari” cars – Land Rovers with cut out roofs. In town, the common transport is the “Dala Dala,” a 16-seater minivan. The saying is that “There is always room for one more in a Dala Dala!” Taxis are also available, and should always be used at night. Students are not allowed to use “pikki-pikkis” or local motor bike taxis and are not covered by health insurance should they violate this and be involved in an accident.

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 coordinator and office manager within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone, or (d) bring a smart phone with an international plan. 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. This needs to be accessible at all times.

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 at all times for emergency calls, and to ensure that their phones are fully charged, and on. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

While there is wifi available in the program office, this is not always reliable and if is often overloaded if too many people are using it at the same time. There are many times in the program such as on excursion when you will have little or no wifi – you will get used to it! However, you can buy a modem in Tanzania and can then access wifi in most areas through your laptop. Please warn your friends and family of this, so that they do not expect instant feedback and photos from you!

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.

For this program, **DHL or FedEx 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.

Posted letters and packages should be sent to the following address:

Student Name
School for International Training/
Box 6007
Arusha, Tanzania

Please make sure that the sender includes your local Tanzanian phone number, and that of the office manager, Mercy, 0752 839 566.

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 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 are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

In Tanzania, you will use the shilling. There are currently about 2200 shillings to the dollar. There are several ATM machines in town – be sure to have your pin number. You will only be able to draw out shillings from

Personal spending (from past student suggestions):	\$500
Up-front medical costs:	\$100
Potential ISP travel expenses:	\$100
Typical Internet café usage:	minimal

Estimated total: \$700, or up to \$1500 if you plan expensive travel to your ISP site or to travel after the program

these machines. All of your documents and money can be stored in the SIT office in your student lockers that will be issued upon arrival in Arusha.

A Visa or MasterCard credit card is very useful for emergencies, medical or otherwise. Visa is the most widely accepted in East Africa. Debit cards with the Visa or Cirrus logos work in Arusha, but you should not count on having access to these while on excursions. Not many stores accept credit cards, so you will find you need to pay with cash far more than you do in the US. Traveler's checks are no longer accepted.

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans **before** you leave the US. 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.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for textbooks, ISP-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\$700 to \$1500**. 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 travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Check current exchange rates:
<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Please budget approximately.



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. 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 break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

On the Tanzania: Wildlife Conservation & Political Ecology Program there are several areas that are off-limits: for example, leaving the country, parts of western Tanzania, Zanzibar, and the mining areas near Kilimanjaro Airport.



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.

The luggage you bring should be “carry-able” i.e. more duffels and soft frame backpacks and not luggage with wheels. Precision Air, the airline that travels between Arusha and Nairobi on some of your connecting flights via Nairobi and Dar, may limit the baggage amount to forty-four pounds per passenger. Precision Air is a smaller airline and its luggage requirements sometimes differ from the larger airlines. International flights that originate in the U.S., for example, often allow two fifty-pound bags and a carry-on bag. For the Tanzania program, you are required to bring a certain amount of equipment.

Please make sure to check your luggage allowance on all your flights before you leave the US, and to check excess luggage rates with your airline.

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

Women in many areas of East Africa dress with modesty, wearing skirts well below the knee with slips, blouses or t-shirts with sleeves and relatively high necklines, and sandals, sneakers, or flats. Women do not wear pants or shorts in many parts of the country, although people tend to excuse foreigners, at least in urban areas! Female students often buy traditional wrap-around skirts called *kangas* to wear in town and in the villages. All clothing should be modest: tops should

cover shoulders and waists (no tank tops, crop tops, exposed stomachs, sleeveless shirts, or bikinis), skirts should cover knees and shorts should be to the knee, clothing should not be too tight or see-through, and plunging necklines are not acceptable.

For men, casual dress can include jeans, sneakers, and t-shirts, as long as they are clean and free of holes. More formal occasions call for neat, dress slacks, button-up shirts (long or short sleeve), and leather dress shoes or dress sandals. Although some Tanzanians consider shorts to be appropriate for schoolboys and playing sports, but not for casual wear by adult males, students have found that shorts are fine for casual wear. However, we expect you to wear longs in more traditional areas. Shirts with sleeves, whether short or long, are required.

For men and women, the clothes you bring should all be washable and breathable, preferably drip-dry cotton and cotton-blends. Do not bring sloppy clothes or clothes with immodest pictures or writing on them. Night temperatures tend to drop at higher elevations, at which the program will spend some time, and Ngorongoro can be very cold, therefore you will need a light coat (or fleece) or jacket, and waterproof rainwear.

Remember that we are guests in Tanzania and it is our responsibility to modify our dress and behavior instead of imposing our norms and habits upon Tanzanians.



EQUIPMENT

You will need a tent (make sure your seams are sealed and that it is water proof). We spend over

four weeks on safari, and if your ISP requires it, you will be using your tent for another 3-4 weeks. If you do not bring a tent you won't be able to join us for safaris. Also, bring a sleeping mat that will not puncture, and a sleeping bag, as you will be sleeping in places with lots of thorns. Past students have found it best to bring a backpack (internal frame—if you have it) or duffel bag (more useful than a suitcase). In addition, bring a flashlight/headlamp (strong beam, small, lightweight), binoculars (7/8/10 X 32/40/42 are good pairs to consider for field studies), medium-sized daypack, and two water bottles and calculator. If you plan to stay outside urban areas, you may bring a water purifier (hand-held water purifiers are recommended and very useful during the ISP), or iodine tablets to purify water. However, the program provides bottled water in the office, on excursions and in your homestays.

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, smart phone, 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.

To assist with the security of your computer, the program office has a safe storage place. Before you arrive in Tanzania, it is up to you to research the necessary adaptors, plugs, and wattage variations. If you do not have a computer, you may have public access to them, but not at all times during the semester. Many students find access to computers during their Independent Study Projects via their advisors, local universities, or Internet cafes, but there is only one SIT computer for your use and ONLY during normal business hours. There are Internet Cafes in Arusha that have Word and Excel and are available for a small fee of around \$1/hr.

Cameras are not required, but most students bring along cameras. These can be stored in the SIT office in a locked student locker. Other electronics, iPods, etc., are welcome on the program, but not on safari. Students can bring a digital recorder/music player for interviews, language classes, entertainment, or otherwise.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters.
<http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/>

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, a Frisbee, or a soccer ball. 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.

The following is a list of recommended gifts from former students:

- Gifts from your home state
- Candy
- Pot holders (oven mitts)
- Crayons, colored pencils, bubbles
- Soccer ball, tennis balls, jump rope
- Playing cards
- Soap
- Basic first aid supplies
- Baseball caps
- Headphones
- Nail polish
- Notebooks

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Students who wear glasses or contacts may want to come prepared with an extra pair of glasses or contact

lenses. If you are using contact lenses you should also bring a pair of glasses. Also, bring solution for the entire semester. The roads can be very dusty and you may sometimes have to ride in the back of an open truck. Shampoo, soap, and laundry detergent are readily available in Tanzania. However, we suggest a small supply to get you started. Products like tampons or sanitary napkins are available in Tanzania but you should bring a supply as they are expensive and may not be the type you prefer. Many students find that purchasing clothes in-country is an easy and affordable option. Duct tape is extremely hard to find so it is useful to bring some with you.

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

- underwear (one-week supply or more if you don't want to hand wash often)
- 2-3 pairs of socks for hiking
- 2 sweaters, fleeces or light jacket, and waterproof rainwear for higher altitudes
- footwear: sandals such as Teva/Chaco sandals have traditionally been very popular with students, but make sure you also have a pair of walking shoes and/or sneakers or a lightweight, broken-in pair of hiking boots. It is preferable that you waterproof your boots before leaving. A pair of nice sandals is also useful.
- baseball cap, or some kind of hat with a brim, will be helpful in the tropical sun
- sunglasses
- 2-3 bandanas if you wear them
- One pair of nicer shoes



WOMEN

- 1 dress – lightweight, casual, and “dressy”
- 2-3 cotton shirts and 2-3 t-shirts
- 2 or more skirts (past the knee or longer)
- 2 lightweight pants (loose-fitting, wide-leg is preferable, jeans are acceptable)
- light-weight pajamas or nightgown
- bathing suit
- 2 or more pairs of shorts and 2 tank tops (shorts must be knee length and will only be worn in the National Parks)
- 1 “workout” outfit (1-2 sports bras, t-shirts, and conservative shorts)

MEN

- 2-3 “nicer” shirts: button-down shirts with collars. You will be required to dress “nicely” for lectures, official meetings, visiting offices, etc., and 2-3 t-shirts
- light-weight pajamas
- bathing suit
- one or two pairs of long, comfortable shorts for safari or sports
- 2 pairs of lightweight pants, jeans acceptable
- Closed shoes are great for dusty areas in the dry season

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport and two copies of your 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

HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- anti-malarial medication
- regularly-used medication
- band-aids
- pain relievers/fever reducers (aspirin/ibuprofen)
- drug for traveler's diarrhea (such as Imodium)
- anti-nausea medication
- alcohol swabs to sterilize
- thermometer (non-digital is more accurate)
- topical anti-bacterial and anti-biotic cream
- 1-2 bottles of full protection, sweat-proof sunscreen
- lip sunblock
- 1-2 bottles of insect repellent (with 33% DEET is best, but if you can't find it, be sure to not buy a product with a high percentage of DEET)
- antibacterial gel to cleanse hands
- bar of soap and small packet of washing powder for washing clothes by hand

**Pack as much as you can in Ziploc bags. They will come in handy when you are on the road.

OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- army knife with bottle opener
- batteries for your camera
- tent (single person) (not **too** small so that it can accommodate your backpack in the parks)
- sleeping bag
- sleeping pad
- daypack
- flashlight and batteries
- two water bottles
- bath towel
- photos of home/friends/family to share with homestays
- pens and small notebook
- homestay gift