



SAFETY

SECURITY

& HEALTH

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## SAFETY AND SECURITY

SIT Study Abroad carefully balances student safety and security with experiential learning. SIT's experience with and knowledge of risk assessment, emergency preparedness, and crisis management allows us to adapt quickly to dynamic challenges. Because socioeconomic, political, environmental, and medical conditions vary widely across the more than 40 countries in which SIT operates, health, safety, and security measures are specifically tailored to each location and to current circumstances.

It can be challenging to consider venturing into an unfamiliar world with *different* risks. It is sometimes helpful to consider that there is risk in our home contexts as well. We simply come to accept the risks inherent to living in our world. Our staff are very conscious of the fact that normalized risk locally is unknown to our students. As such, they do work to inform students of risks that they may not perceive independently and prepare them for managing that exposure responsibly.

Students are thoroughly briefed on safety considerations during in-country orientation and are continuously updated throughout the semester if and when circumstances change. Moreover, your program staff and homestay families will help you navigate your new surroundings. They'll provide firsthand exposure to local norms, model culturally appropriate behavior, and give you precautionary advice about the local environment. The experiential design of the academic program will also contribute to your ability to analyze your own behavior in relation to the host culture, thereby helping you make sound decisions about your safety and security.

Students are expected to adhere to all safety and security parameters as instructed by in-country staff and to be well versed on all policies detailed in the [Student Handbook](#). As is the case anywhere, there is much you can do on the program to ensure your own safety by simply taking responsibility for your behavior and being vigilant in new situations. Being careful about food and beverages, dressing appropriately for the culture and climate, and maintaining your wits, sound judgment, and flexibility will go a long way toward maintaining physical and mental well-being.

## EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION

SIT Study Abroad is available 24 hours a day to respond to and manage student emergencies. Students will be provided with local emergency contact information during in-country orientation. If you call our headquarters outside of business hours, you will be greeted by an answering service and forwarded to an on-duty SIT Study Abroad staff member. To reach SIT Study Abroad, please call **(802) 258-3212** or **(888) 272-7881 (toll free)**.

In the event of an emergency, SIT Study Abroad may inform your designated emergency contact person of the situation. A student's home institution may also be notified in order to facilitate the best possible support for the student and his/her family.

Please also remember that your first line of communication in an emergency, should always be your in-country staff. They are the best resources to meet your immediate concerns. In some instances,

students are concerned about being a “squeaky wheel” and are reluctant to verbalize questions or

concerns. Please know that our staff – both in country and in Vermont- are available to students to assist in making student’s SIT semester abroad a safe and productive experience.

## CELL PHONE POLICY

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. 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 at all times for emergency calls. Full compliance with this policy is expected.

Please review your Country Overview document for program specific details (found with your pre-departure documents [here](#)).

International Honors Program participants are required to bring an open, unlocked smart phone from the U.S. to the program that is able to accept a local SIM cards in each country location and is

compatible with and usable at the various program locations.

In a time, where cell phone use and social media are prevalent, we strongly encourage students, families and friends, to be cognizant of “being in the moment”. Our reliance on modern gadgets and technology, can at times distract us from what is happening around us and reduce integral face to face, social interactions with homestay families, neighbors, staff, and other community members. Please consider balancing technology usage within your local context. Note that each program will have specific appropriate usage policies and parameters as well.

## PERSONAL PROPERTY

Students should be aware of their environment and their belongings throughout the program and take care to protect against theft whenever possible. SIT Study Abroad encourages students to purchase personal property insurance independently to cover any valuables such as computers and other electronic devices in the event of loss or theft. If you do experience theft or loss of items, please inform in-country program staff right away.

**Please note:** It’s a good idea to bring a thumb drive with you on the program. As a precaution, always be sure to back up information stored on laptops, memory drives, and digital music players. Past students have suggested making frequent backups of important documents, including assignments and ISP data. Store your backups in a separate physical location and/or online.

## U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT

Please make sure you review the U.S. State Department’s Consular Information Sheet for the country or countries you will be traveling to. This is available at:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>

Should there be developments that require program alterations, SIT Study Abroad personnel will communicate immediately with all participants regarding those proposed changes or program contingencies.



Before the program begins, SIT Study Abroad will register your participation in the program with the U.S. State Department website designed for that purpose. **However, if you are traveling independently before or after the program, we strongly recommend that you register your travel plans.** Please go to <https://step.state.gov/step/> and follow the steps to register with the relevant embassy.



## GENERAL PROGRAM TIPS

Remember that while you are a student in a cultural education program, you are also an ambassador for your home country, home institution, and SIT Study Abroad. We ask all students to abide by all policies and guidelines in order to help maintain those important relationships as well as their own safety and well-being. Failure to abide by established guidelines may result in disciplinary measures. The following are safety tips for your time on the program:

- Follow the advice of locals (in particular your host family and program staff)—e.g. if people in the area do not go jogging and tell you not to, listen to them and don't do it.
- Do not visibly display or flamboyantly use material possessions such as iPads, laptops, digital cameras, name-brand sunglasses, smart phones, etc. in communities where such items are economically out of reach for most of the population.

- Do not carry large amounts of cash in your pockets or daypacks. Bring a money belt that can be worn out of sight under your clothing.
- Dress conservatively; try not to draw attention to yourself by dress, speech, or behavior. Modest dress is encouraged for all program participants.
- Stay in groups, particularly at night.
- Be aware that the use of alcohol will impair your judgment and that this may cause you to misinterpret already unfamiliar cultural cues. It also makes you a more likely target for would-be criminals. Excessive consumption of alcohol is subject to disciplinary action.

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG POLICY

Alcohol and drug consumption carry serious safety and legal risks and may lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings. If you choose to drink, consider that there are behaviors which may be acceptable on college campuses in the United States (excessive drinking, staying out very late) that are unacceptable while studying abroad for both safety and cultural reasons. You will be living with a family that is deeply concerned about your well-being, and you must respect this concern and their generosity in opening their home to you.

Drug use, other than for medical reasons, is strictly prohibited and is grounds for dismissal from the program. Be advised that legal penalties for drug users in many countries are severe, and the authorities generally operate on a presumption of guilt. The program will be unable to assist students facing legal trouble resulting from drug use.

## HEALTH GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

Maintaining good health is critical to having a successful semester. To help you do that, we have provided specific Health Guidelines and Requirements for your program, which can be found with your pre-departure materials [here](#), by selecting your program and semester.

*It is very important that you read this document as early as possible and examine it with your medical*

*provider*. The guidelines include required and recommended immunizations as specified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, and World Learning; a suggested calendar for immunizations and other prophylaxes; and valuable information on how to avoid exposure to common carriers of disease. Please contact your admissions counselor with any questions.

## GENERAL HEALTH TIPS

Here are some important health-related tips based on past student experience:

**Bring a full semester's supply of important medications with you.** We realize that it may be difficult or expensive to fill a prescription for this period in advance. However, it is often impossible to send medications to program sites due to high import taxes, customs seizures, program travel, etc.

Some students have difficulty obtaining large amounts of medication from their insurance company and SIT can assist by providing a letter explaining this process.

- Using physician's letterhead stationery, have your doctor/physician write the names of your prescriptions and a description for each one. Make sure prescriptions include generic names. This note will be helpful in an emergency, and you should carry it with you while traveling, in case you are questioned by immigration authorities.
- Important medicines **should be carried on the plane with you**, not in checked luggage.
- If you are asthmatic, bring an ample supply of inhalers for the entire program, as these cannot be mailed to you from the United States.
- If you have any serious allergies, be sure to bring an extra epinephrine kit and an antihistamine.
- If you wear contact lenses, bring your own solutions. Bring a pair of glasses as a back-up; if you lose your contacts, you may have difficulty replacing them. In addition, some people find it difficult to wear contacts in a different environment.

Please take care of all necessary dental work and allow for ample recovery time prior to your program.

## EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Cultural adjustment, academic challenges, a full schedule of classes, travel, field-based activities, and the dynamics of your SIT group can present new challenges to maintaining a good attitude and healthy emotional state. It is important to consider coping strategies in advance. For some students, this may mean personal journaling, exercise, music, movies, leisure reading, or coffee at your favorite café. Thinking ahead and planning for the ups and downs of your time abroad will ensure that you have the tools that you need to take good care of yourself and maintain a positive outlook.

If you have used counseling services on a regular basis, SIT advises that you discuss this program with your mental health professional as early as possible prior to departure. In some cases, students have elected to maintain a phone or email relationship with a provider in the US, as local resources can be limited.

SIT works carefully to identify in-country mental health resources where possible. Additionally, we have counselors available to speak with students remotely. Please note that local mental health resources are likely to differ considerably in approach and availability from what you may be used to accessing at your home institution.

Read our [Wellness Tips](#) for further suggestions on creating a wellness plan to proactively shape your study abroad experience.

## ILLNESS, ACCIDENT, AND EVACUATION INSURANCE

All SIT Study Abroad students are automatically enrolled in SIT's accident and illness insurance as part of their program fee. Some features of the accident/illness plan include:

- Emergency reunion benefits for one immediate family member
- Medical movement or evacuation in the event of serious emergency
- Security evacuation

Students should note that routine physicals, dental work, and other customary medical care are not covered by this plan. This plan covers accidents and acute illness only during the duration (first to last day) of the program. For IHP students, coverage begins upon arrival at the first destination outside of the U.S. Please see our website for a full Description of Coverage and scroll down to Student Health Insurance: (<https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/student-insurance/>)

Students are expected to cover all medical costs and then submit receipt of payment for full reimbursement. It is strongly suggested that you bring a credit card or plan to have cash available to cover medical expenses. Please rely on in-country staff as initial points of contact when ill or injured. In severe medical emergencies, we will work with International SOS, our medical services partner to arrange for direct payment. Under SIT's insurance, any covered medical expenses that have been paid out of pocket will be reimbursed according to the terms of coverage after the submission of the appropriate claim form. When you pay for services rendered, make sure to request receipts that you can later submit with your claim.

## WHO CARD OR IMMUNIZATION RECORD


The International Certificate of Vaccination (also known as the WHO card) is a card used to record medical information such as immunizations and other medical history. Many countries require a WHO card or immunization record to enter the country. You may obtain a blank WHO card from a Travel Clinic or online at: [http://www.who.int/ihr/IVC200\\_06\\_26.pdf](http://www.who.int/ihr/IVC200_06_26.pdf). Please consult your physician and Health Guidelines and Requirements (found with your pre-departure documents [here](#)) to learn about recommended and required immunizations and country regulations regarding the WHO card.

Countries, or localities within countries, may change immunization requirements at any time, so it is important that you have this document available.

Without this proof of immunization history, you may be denied entry to certain countries/areas. We recommend keeping your WHO card or immunization record with your passport and other important documents, as well as making a photocopy that you keep separately.

INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF VACCINATION  
AS APPROVED BY  
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
CERTIFICAT INTERNATIONAL DE VACCINATION  
APPROUVE PAR  
L'ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ

TRAVELER'S NAME—NOM DU VOYAGEUR  
ADDRESS—ADRESSE (Number—Numéro) (Street—Rue)  
(City—Ville)  
(County—Département) (State—État)

 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
PHS-731 (REV. 11-91)