



COUNTRY

OVERVIEW

& PACKING

GUIDELINES

Panama: Tropical Ecology, Marine Ecosystems, and  
Biodiversity Conservation

Fall 2020

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# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Panama celebrated 100 years of independence in 2003 and in 2019 commemorated 500 years of the Spanish conquest. However, it looks back on a human history that, according to archaeological evidence, stretches back at least 11,000 years. Colonized by the Spanish in the 16th century, Panama broke with Spain in 1821 and joined a union of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, named the Republic of Gran Colombia. When the latter dissolved in 1830, Panama remained part of Gran Colombia.

Panama seceded from Colombia in 1903 and signed a treaty with the US allowing for the construction of a trans-isthmian canal and US control over the area (the future Panama Canal Zone). The Panama Canal was designed by the US Army Corps of Engineers and built by an army of laborers, many of whom came from all over the world (from India, China, the Caribbean, and elsewhere), between 1904 and 1914. Control over the Canal was a source of conflict between Panama and the United States during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, until the 1977 Canal Treaty stipulating that the US control of the Canal, as well as US military bases, would be phased out and officially be transferred to Panamanian control on December 31, 1999.



Today Panama is a cultural melting pot with immigrants from many parts of the world, including prominent Afro-descendent, Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Greek, and Spanish communities, as well as a diverse indigenous population. There is a wide

income gap and tremendous inequality, both in urban and rural areas. An ambitious plan to expand the Canal was approved in 2006 and has since doubled the Canal's capacity. Due to the Canal expansion, and other international business presence in the country, economic development is rapidly increasing for those able to get a piece of the pie. These development forces often clash with the expanding recognition of Panama's astounding biodiversity, which is increasingly drawing tourists as well as prospectors intent on exploiting the wealth of natural resources.

## CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

The climate in Panama is tropical and tempered by cooling Caribbean trade winds. The average temperature of 92°F varies little throughout the year. The dry season (which coincides with the spring semester) generally lasts from mid-December to mid-May. The wet season coincides with the summer and fall. In the tropics it is not unusual to have rain in the dry season, just in shorter spurts. The amount of rainfall, however, also varies widely from north to south of the country, with the amount of rain increasing as one moves north.

Bordered by Costa Rica to the west and Colombia to the east, Panama is approximately a 4-hour flight from Houston or Miami. The Isthmus of Panama is bisected by the Cordillera Central that runs the length of the country dividing it into the Pacific and the Caribbean regions. The provinces of Coclé, Herrera, Los Santos, and Veraguas are referred to as "central provinces,". There are about 480 rivers in Panama that drain into the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, and about 1500 islands off both coasts. There is also Barro Colorado Island in the Panama Canal that is famous for the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute housed there.

## 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.

Panamanian food reflects its geography and climate, with an abundance of seafood and tropical fruits. There is also a lot of meat, as well as a lot of fried food. As in other Central American countries, rice and beans is a staple dish. You will also find *tortillas*, which are somewhat thicker than elsewhere in Central America and are usually fried.

*Empanadas*, chicken or beef *tamales*, eggs, and plantains are other staples. The national dish of Panama is called *sancocho* and is a somewhat spicy chicken-and-vegetable stew that can vary greatly according to region. Other dishes include *hojaldras* (fried flour dough), *arroz con pollo* (rice with chicken), *patacones* (fried flattened green plantains), and *chichas* (fruit juices). You may also encounter dishes such as lobster, sea turtle and turtle's eggs, iguana, and shark, which are all endangered in and around Panama due to overfishing and loss of habitat (so please avoid them!). Food purchased on the street may be of questionable sanitation, so it is wise to avoid it.

Vegetarians will be able to maintain a healthy diet, though depending on flexibility about meat products (broth, etc.) they may have to maintain a high level of vigilance in order to ensure true meatlessness. Also, "vegetarian" in Latin America is often taken to mean avoidance of *red* meat, so you may be served chicken and fish unless you specify. Stricter dietary practices such as veganism or keeping kosher will be extremely difficult to maintain healthfully in Panama. If you choose a meatless diet, please bring supplements with you.

Note: if you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform our office prior to the start of

your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context.

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

Panama is a relatively safe country with the same basic big-city petty crime concerns as any country in the world, including the US. You will be expected to take care and responsibility for yourself and the group, and refrain from engaging in behavior that is unsafe and/or culturally inappropriate.

Especially while in Panama City, you should be aware of your surroundings and belongings, and take care not to "flash" expensive items such as electronics, cell phones, or jewelry. Keep in mind that the belongings you bring for a semester are often more than an entire rural family might own, so using them in an obvious way makes an economic and cultural statement, even if this is not your intention.

Before departure, make two photocopies of all important documents and credit cards; leave one copy at home (and tell someone where it is!) and bring one along with you, carried separately from the originals. Bring a money belt or some other safe means to carry your valuables. For this program, you will also need to bring your passport on excursions, as there are often immigration checkpoints en route.

Excellent healthcare facilities and pharmacies are available in Panama City, and there are also private clinics in many smaller cities and towns. The program staff has information available about healthcare resources for almost any need, including dental, vision, and psychological care. There will be a few times during excursion periods when the group does not have immediate access to care, particularly specialized care. Please be as prepared for this as possible. Preparation might mean bringing an extra pair of glasses/contact lenses or reviewing your coping strategies for an issue affecting your mental health. You should bring enough of any prescription medication to last you through the semester and any post-program travel. It is a good idea to bring a small first-aid kit and copies of any prescriptions.

There is no risk of malaria in Panama City and the scheduled destinations of the program. If you plan to travel elsewhere after the program ends, consult your doctor as to specific precautions for the area concerned. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that Chloroquine protects against malaria in areas west of the Canal Zone and Atovaquone-Proguanil (Malarone), Doxycycline, or Mefloquine (listed alphabetically) are protective in areas east of the Panama Canal (Darien, San Blas, and eastern portions of Colon and Panama provinces). The selection should be discussed with your physician.

## 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 4-5 homestays. The period of greatest length will be in Panama City, where you will live in mostly middle-class homes with electricity and running water in an area known as El Dorado. Dynamics here are more structured and families are strict about hygiene and organization., it is the student’s responsibility to launder their clothes and keep their room organized.



You will also stay in several rural communities. Many of the families are subsistence farmers and fishermen. Living conditions are modest, with latrines, wooden bunk beds, and only basic furniture. Some communities do not have electricity or running water. Despite the little that they own, the homestay families are generous and gracious hosts.



## OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

Other accommodations during the program will mostly include small independent hotels. During the ISP period you might stay with a host family or other independent accommodation that best serves the purposes of your project.

## TRANSPORTATION

The group will use a rented school bus for group travel within Panama City, and for longer excursions you will use the public bus system as well as private buses, air travel, and/or marine transport. During the ISP period you may take a bus, a boat, or a plane, in addition to walking a fair amount.

## 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. Keep in mind that you will be without Wi-Fi access much of the time while you are in Panama and you should let your friends and family know this. 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

Students are required to have a working cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose students are required to bring a smart phone from the U.S and either a) confirm they have an open phone thus enabling you to insert a local SIM card into your U.S. phone upon arrival or b) bring along a dual SIM card smartphone. Your local SIT Study Abroad staff will assist you during orientation to purchase an appropriate local SIM card and required minimum minutes for calls and texting. SIT Study Abroad requires that each student has a local number for communication with the homestay family, program staff, etc.

With an open smartphone students can purchase a \$3 SIM card with a local number. Data and phone minutes can be purchased as "pay-as-you-go." No local phone plan is necessary. Smartphones enable students to use Uber easily in the city and communicate with one another and the U.S. via WhatsApp.

In Panama, phone communications are fairly reliable in the capital, and you should be able to communicate with your loved ones using your local sim card, except when the group is in very remote areas.

Email access is available consistently in the capital at local cafés but is not available while the group is on excursion. Not all Panama City homestay families have wifi in their homes. .

## 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 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. Keep in mind that you will frequently be traveling and will not be able to receive packages throughout most of the program.

There is no regular mail delivery in Panama. If a package must be sent, please have it sent via DHL (most reliable service) and consult the local program staff for instructions on how to do so.

## 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.

Panama uses the US dollar as its official currency, so you will not need to convert money. You will notice that some locally-minted Panamanian coins circulate alongside US coins, but all banknotes will be US dollar bills. The term *balboa* is often used interchangeably with the word *dolar* to refer to the currency.

Most students access funds from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in country. Credit cards (VISA and MasterCard) will work in certain locations in the capital and the interior of the country, and they can be very useful in emergencies, medical and otherwise. ATMs are accessible throughout urban Panama; however, will not be accessible at program and independent field sites. You are urged to **not** bring travelers' checks,

as they are often very difficult and time-consuming to exchange and are accepted in very few places.

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 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\$850 to \$1,550**. 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:

<b>Personal spending (from past student suggestions):</b>	\$300-\$400
<b>Books, printing, supplies:</b>	\$50
<b>Up-front medical costs:</b>	\$200
<b>Typical Internet Café usage:</b>	\$1/hour
<b>Cell phone costs</b>	\$100
<b>Internet portable modem and service (optional)</b>	\$120
<b>Potential ISP travel expenses:</b>	\$100-\$250
<b>Gifts for family/friends in the US</b>	\$50-\$200
<b>Estimated total:</b>	<b>\$850-\$1,550</b>

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

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](#).

## 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](#).



# 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. **Due to the nature of this program, please do not bring a traditional suitcase.** An internal frame backpack is strongly recommended. We also recommend a small daypack, which will be useful for short excursions when on the program.

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

Please be aware that dress and appearance in Panama is given far more importance than in the US. The way you dress and your general appearance can greatly enhance your acceptance into society, demonstrate respect toward your host culture, and manifest your desire to observe Panamanian customs to the best of your abilities. At the same time, poor grooming and dress can offend people, send a message of disregard, cause you to feel out of place, and/or put you at a disadvantage in certain situations. Therefore, it is important that you bring and use appropriate clothing to avoid such circumstances. You will be asked to change your clothing if you choose not to dress appropriately. You need to bring another type of shoe (formal) aside from Tevas or Chacos.

During the beginning of the semester, you will spend about two weeks at the university attending lectures and meeting professionals. During this period you will need to dress appropriately. This includes at a minimum nice jeans or pants, a nice shirt, and nice sandals (no shorts, no t-shirts, nothing revealing, no flip-flops, no Tevas, no tank tops, no faded or ripped jeans). Slacks or nice jeans and nice shoes are fine for women.

During the rest of the semester, most of the time is spent in the field. For the field, water-repellent clothing with quick-dry type fabric is preferable. A good pair of water-resistant, lightweight hiking boots is important. Remember, the sun in the tropics is very strong; Panama is quite close to the equator. Therefore, protective headwear and sunblock are crucial. Finally, **you will have to carry all of your belongings.** Please keep in mind that the group will hike and travel in buses, dugout canoes, planes, and other interesting modes of transportation. Also, please be prepared for rain and walking through mud in the fall, and drier weather with high temperatures in the spring.

## EQUIPMENT

You may wish to bring equipment that will assist you in your fieldwork, such as binoculars, a digital voice recorder for interviews, special books, or any field equipment in your particular area of interest (these are also mentioned below on the packing list). In many cases specialty equipment and supplies are unavailable in Panama.

You will need to bring an individual mosquito net, mask and snorkel, as well as water booties.

It is mandatory to bring a self-filtering water bottle with sufficient replacement materials for four months as well as a fork, knife, and plate set to reduce our footprint. See packing list below for further information. Students should not spend a lot of money on this, but this is a way to decrease our footprint.

## COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is required that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss. 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.

The program does not provide computers or internet service for students.

Bring packets of silica gel to help with the humidity for your electronics. If you can't find where to buy them, you can usually find them in shoe boxes, luggage, etc.

Be sure to back-up your hard drive before traveling.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/>. Electricity in Panama is 110V (same as in the US). If you plan to bring electrical equipment, bring 3-prong to 2-prong plug adapters, widely available in the US at hardware stores.

## 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, 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

Most basic supplies you find in the United States are available in Panama City, though they may be a little more expensive. School supplies such as notebooks, pens, etc., are easily obtainable. If you are particularly loyal to a brand, particularly of personal care items, you should bring enough with you to last the semester. Definitely plan on purchasing outdoor gear (such as the self-filtering water bottle and replacement filters) in the US before you come; such items are hard to get in Panama.

## ALUMNI CONTACTS

If you have further questions, please contact your admissions counselor and/or ask an alumni contact: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admissions-aid/application-process/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

- 1 dressy outfit, suitable for an important meeting (business casual)
- 3–4 “in the field” outfits (quick-drying pants and shirts) that are water-resistant materials; pants that zip off into shorts are convenient
- 2-3 pairs athletic shorts
- Pajamas or nightgown
- 1 pair lightweight *waterproof* hiking boots
- 1 pair durable, field rubber boots for working in the mud (not rain boots) such as [Tingley brand rubber boots](#)
- 3-4 pairs tall socks (soccer type)
- Underwear and socks (2 week supply)
- 1 pair of [water booties](#) (required) ; significant time will be spent in wet environments
- Sandals (such as Teva or Chacos)
- 1 pair nice shoes
- 1 lightweight fleece
- Waterproof raincoat or rain poncho
- 2 swimsuits
- Long sleeve sunshield/SPF shirt (surfers’ style) for extended sun exposure during marine classes (**required**)
- Swim long pants (Use of swimming pants are required during the marine modules. The requirement is aimed at reducing student use of sunblock and consequent contamination of the coral reefs.)

## WOMEN

- 2 pairs casual pants or jeans (linen or lightweight fabric)
- 5 shirts (for classroom setting such as short-sleeved blouses)
- 1-2 pairs of nice shorts (knee length)
- 1–2 dresses/skirts (maxi skirts or to the knee)
- Bras (complete 2 week supply, sports bras are recommended)

## MEN

- 2 pair pants (khaki-type) or nice jeans
- 5 short-sleeved shirts (for classroom setting such as polo shirts)
- 1-2 pairs of nice shorts

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Immunization Record or Yellow WHO Card (see [Safety, Security, and Health](#) for more information)
- 2 color photocopies of your passport, stored separately from your actual passport
- Paper airline ticket or copy of electronic itinerary
- Student ID

## HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Self-filtering water bottle and replacement filters or batteries sufficient for to your preferred water intake. ***This is mandatory. Order these items early to make sure you have it before your departure and ensure you have sufficient replacement materials.*** We have had good experiences with the Lifestraw brand (<http://lifestraw.com/>). You can also use a Camelbak all clear water bottle. ***We cannot permit your participation on excursions if you do not have a self-filtering water bottle on-hand.***
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 30) and aloe vera for sunburns (Please do not bring aerosol sunblock. It is confiscated by the local airline company.)
- 1 towel (thin, quick-drying)
- Sunglasses
- Hat/cap (this is crucial)
- Insect repellent (Please do not bring aerosol repellent. It is confiscated by the local airline company.)
- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly, including contraceptives
- Any vitamins you are taking
- Small first aid kit with band-aids, hydrogen peroxide, moist towelettes, and over the counter drugs for minor pain, diarrhea, anti-itching/bug bites (important), and motion sickness, as approved by your doctor
- Extra eye glasses or contacts
- Waterless anti-bacterial hand gel

## OTHER REQUIRED ITEMS

- An open, unlocked smart phone (see Phones section for more details)
- Compact mosquito net
- Plate, fork, and knife set such as <https://www.campmor.com/c/sea-to-summit-delta-bowl-83987--1> &



<https://www.campmor.com/c/gsi-outdoors-stainless-3-piece-ring-cutlery-set-82088>.

- Mask and snorkel for marine modules
- Backpack rain cover (fall semester only)
- Biodegradable multi-purpose soap
- Bed sheet set (for twin bed). You will NOT need a sleeping bag.
- Mid-size day pack
- Travel alarm clock
- Headlamp
- Homestay family gifts (4-5 small)
- Spanish/English dictionary (the Langenscheidt dictionary is usually very good)
- Zip-top storage bags, various sizes
- Flash drive (essential to submit homework when wifi is not available)

## OPTIONAL

- Computer sleeve (helpful in keeping humidity away from laptops)
- Silica gel packets – we highly recommend purchasing inexpensive silica gel packets to use when storing and carrying your computer in your backpack. You and your computer will often be in very humid conditions. Storing your computer with silica gel packets will help keep it dry and avoid problems due to moisture and humidity common in the tropics.
- Surge protector for laptop
- 3-prong to 2-prong electrical adapter
- Solar charger (such as Waka Waka Power)
- Binoculars
- Camera (waterproof recommended)
- Field equipment for your particular area of interest

