



INDEPENDENT

TRAVEL

POLICY

Portugal: Sustainability and Environmental Justice
Fall 2021



SIT SCHOOL FOR
INTERNATIONAL
TRAINING
STUDY ABROAD

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL POLICY

During fall 2021, SIT continues to strongly recommend against independent travel due to the pandemic. SIT defines “independent travel” as travel that is independently organized by a student(s) and is unrelated to program activities; and involves an overnight stay.

In certain circumstances students may petition to travel independently if they meet the following conditions: a) students are vaccinated; b) key COVID-19 metrics being monitored by SIT are favorable in the region being visited; c) there are no movement restrictions imposed by the host country government that would impede independent travel and d) the conditions of the revised Independent Travel policy <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/covid-19-risk-management-protocols/> are upheld.

If students choose to travel independently, they do so against SIT’s strong recommendation discouraging independent travel and so must follow established independent travel protocols. SIT’s Risk Assessment Committee reserve the right to deny travel if they deem the location or means as unsafe for students in the current pandemic context or the student is in poor academic standing. If for any reason a student got approval for travel, and then developed symptoms or could not travel for any reason, SIT is not responsible for any lost payments or accrued fees due to cancellations of flights, hotel reservations, etc.

Due to the restricted nature of the Schengen Tourist Visa, you should not make plans to travel internationally in the Schengen Zone prior to the program start date or after the program as you will not have enough days to complete the program. US citizens are only permitted to remain in the Schengen zone (a group of European countries, including Iceland, with a mutual immigration agreement; Schengen countries are listed here: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/schengen-fact-sheet.html>)

The following Independent Travel Policy will be communicated to students on an ongoing basis throughout the application process and semester, with reminders during orientation and throughout the period of time students are on the program.

Studying on an SIT program is an intensive and immersive experience. Students should expect most weekends to be busy with for instance, homework for their classes and planned academic excursions. Further, students are encouraged to connect with the local arts scene and regularly receive tickets to theater and dance performances, film festivals, art exhibitions and other events that often occur on the weekends. Should students choose to travel on the designated weekends, the travel plans cannot interfere with classes.

When traveling outside of Portugal, students need to get permission from the academic director in the process described below who will work with the SIT Student Health, Safety, and Wellbeing office for each request. If permission is given, the student then needs to give the travel plan to the program assistant and sign off the program.

As part of their independent travel, students are **only** allowed to travel within the area of mainland Europe (students are not allowed to travel to Iceland), and when applying for permission to do so, they need to give the reason for and state the aim of their travel. During orientation the Academic Director will inform students which weekends are free for travel. **DO NOT** make any travel reservations or purchases before the start of the program.

Other than that, during the semester, students are not allowed to travel within other countries in Europe, or outside of Europe.

While travelling, students continue to be responsible for meeting and abiding by the program's Conditions of Participation and are responsible for their own actions and safety. **Disciplinary sanctions for violation of the Independent Travel Policy may include a warning, probation, or dismissal from the program.**

Students should note: travel outside mainland Europe is **not** permitted unless a student meets one of the Extenuating Circumstances described below and has discussed this with and been approved by the academic director.

Extenuating Circumstances

A student may meet criteria for travelling outside of the country if they will be traveling as the result of:

- 1) An educational opportunity (scholarship, conference, etc.) that has a significant impact on a student's academic career and is approved by the student's sending institution.
- 2) A personal family matter (family death, marriage, medical emergency, etc.).

In both of these circumstances, the student is responsible for giving the academic director notice prior to travel. In the first case, students are still responsible for seeking prior approval at least **four weeks** before intended travel. A student traveling under extenuating circumstances must continue to abide by SIT Study Abroad policies and must submit the requirements specified below.

If a student plans any independent travel **within country** that includes an overnight stay, they should, in advance of travel:

- 1) Provide travel plans and itinerary to the academic director.
- 2) Provide lodging, contact information for travel, and names and contacts of travel companions.

If a student plans independent travel **that crosses an international border within Europeⁱ** they must:

- 1) Seek permission from the academic director at least **four weeks** prior to intended travel. The time of travel and destination are set in consultation with the academic director and requires their approval, as some locations are unmanageable due to distance and logistical requirements for traveling in two-day period. Students who are not in good standing academically, for example, may be denied this approval.
- 2) Provide travel plans and itinerary to the academic director.
- 3) Sign the Temporary Leave form which relieves SIT/World Learning of any liability.
- 4) Provide lodging, contact information for travel, and names and contacts of travel companions.
- 5) Understand that they may be subject to a passport check upon return to the program.
- 6) Some areas may be deemed off-limits by the academic director due to safety and security concerns or because they are unmanageable due to distance and logistical requirements for traveling in a two to three-day period.

ⁱ Your academic director may modify this definition of international travel to conform to the specifics of the program site. For example, a student on one of our Switzerland programs might need to travel to neighboring regions in France as part of their activities with the homestay family.

The period of enrollment for students begins on the program arrival date in country and concludes the day of the scheduled program departure for return to the US. SIT Study Abroad and its employees assume no liability for individuals outside of this time frame.