



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

# & PACKING GUIDELINES

Tanzania-Zanzibar: Coastal Ecology and Natural  
Resource Management

Fall 2023

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# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Zanzibar is an archipelago of islands off the coast of East Africa that, with mainland Tanganyika, formed the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964. For centuries, the islands were an important stop for trade routes between India, the Middle East, and Africa, and its people represent a variety of cultures. Although a part of Tanzania, Zanzibar elects its own president and has its own House of Representatives for matters internal to the islands. Often referred to as the “Spice Islands,” Zanzibar’s main industries include tourism, spices, agriculture, and fishing.

SIT’s Study Abroad Center is located in the city’s old quarter, Stone Town, a place of winding narrow streets, carved wooden doors, raised terraces, and beautiful mosques. Most of the people in Zanzibar follow the Islamic faith, and throughout the island visitors hear the daily call to prayers by the local muezzins. Religious and cultural behavior traditions on the island require conservative dress by residents and tourists. Swahili is spoken throughout Zanzibar and Islanders will appreciate your efforts to learn their language.



## CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Zanzibar experiences a warm tropical climate, with high temperatures and humidity year-round. The average temperature is about 80 degrees, but it can be as hot as 95. Because of the ocean breezes

during the daytime and the continental wind at night, the conditions are fairly comfortable. February is the warmest month while August is the coolest. There are two rainfall seasons, the heaviest from March to June and lesser rains from September to November.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

In Zanzibar, people are very friendly and it is important to acknowledge and greet people in general. It is polite to shake hands as well as to greet verbally. Most Zanzibari people do not show their emotions publicly, apart from geniality. When invited for a meal in a local person’s house, we recommend you eat with your right hand and always wash your hands before starting. It is polite to try all the different foods but do not feel that you have to finish all the food on your plate. When staying with a local person, it is polite to let them know if you are going out or returning late as they will feel responsible for you.

## 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 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.

You should be able to enjoy a healthy stay in Tanzania if you drink only filtered or bottled water and are observant about hand-washing and diet. It is probably wise to consider altering your eating habits slightly while you’re here. If you are a

vegetarian, you can continue to be one while you're in Tanzania. However, due to health concerns, eating salads and raw vegetables is not advisable. If you don't usually eat seafood, it is wise to get accustomed to eating fish before you come. Fish here is delicious and it will be offered to you routinely. Other common foods include rice and curry dishes, chicken, beans, lots of carbohydrates, and some fried food. Breakfast usually includes tea and mildly sweet bread and is traditionally eaten between 7:30 AM-10:00AM, lunch at around 2:00 PM, and dinner between 7:30-9:00 PM.

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 provide [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.

Based on evolving conditions of the pandemic including higher vaccination rates, increased protection with many individuals from previous

infections, lower rates of serious illness associated with positive cases, and the removal of vaccine mandates in most SIT locations, SIT no longer requires vaccination to participate on programs except for locations where host country governments require it.

However, we strongly encourage students to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 per [CDC Guidelines](#). SIT continues to closely monitor COVID-19 conditions in each program location and will advise students on any location-specific COVID-19 requirements and regulations prior to and during their program.

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](#).

## 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) **(most recommended)** work with the academic director 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 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.

Smart phones are available cheaply in Tanzania, and many students opt to purchase a phone when they arrive here. Students who have brought their own phones often find they are incompatible with service in Zanzibar. If you purchase a phone here, it takes about five minutes to establish service, and you do not need a credit card or local bank account in order to do so. You pay only for outgoing calls; receiving calls is free. At the end of the program, you should be able to sell your phone, provided you retain all relevant documents, access numbers, manuals, etc. that you receive when you purchase it. Under the right circumstances, cell phones also make excellent parting gifts to local friends.

## 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, experience has shown that DHL and FedEx are **not recommended**, as unexpected customs charges can be made to the student in Zanzibar. The most successful way to send a small package is by **airmail labeled 'small package' and sent with delivery confirmation services, which are available in country**.

If it is necessary for someone to send you a package, it should be sent to the following address:

Student Name  
World Learning Inc.  
PO Box 3040  
Zanzibar, Tanzania, East Africa

## 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.

Tanzanian shillings are the local currency in Tanzania and, upon arriving in Zanzibar; you should take time to familiarize yourself with the bills, coins, and rate of exchange. Whether to bring cash or ATM cards is a personal decision. Cash (particularly in US\$50 and US\$100 denominations) is easier to exchange and gets a better rate, but it cannot be replaced if lost or stolen. U.S. dollars that are dated before 2006 are NOT accepted and are very difficult to change, as there are a lot of forgeries. 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. 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**.

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>	\$250
<b>Books, printing, supplies:</b>	\$25
<b>Up-front medical costs:</b>	\$100
<b>COVID-19 Test(s)</b> (may be required for entry; subject to change and costs may vary)	\$100-150
<b>Potential ISP travel expenses:</b>	\$100
<b>Bottled Water (for emergencies)</b>	\$25

<b>Typical Internet café usage:</b>	\$50
<b>Estimated total:</b>	\$650-700

## 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.

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.

Given the current global health situation, SIT advises against independent travel. If a student

wishes to travel independently, they must submit a request that will be reviewed by the Academic Director and the Student Health, Safety & Wellbeing Regional Manager. SIT reserves the right to deny independent travel requests. Further details regarding the current independent travel protocols can be found here:

<https://studyabroad.sit.edu/health-safety-and-well-being/risk-management/covid-19-risk-management-protocols/>

# 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. Please note that many airlines are now imposing significant baggage restrictions, including charging for more than one checked bag and increasing the charge for overweight bags. Usually only one carry-on is permitted on the plane: we recommend a small daypack, which will also 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

It is difficult to overstate the importance of dressing appropriately in Zanzibar. Zanzibar is a conservative Muslim culture, and conservative dress is a must. The two biggest concerns which local people have voiced concerning foreigners is the use of alcohol and inappropriate dress. The Muslim population finds the shorts and tank tops often worn by tourists, concerning. The way you dress while you are in Tanzania will directly affect how you and your fellow students are perceived and treated. For all of these reasons, you will need to follow a dress code throughout the program. Further, local people appreciate a neat and clean appearance, and you will be much less likely to be hassled if you dress accordingly.

As you will be in tropical East Africa, the clothes that you bring should all be lightweight, washable and breathable. Your clothes will be hand washed and line-dried as a matter of routine. Despite the heat, students are not permitted to wear shorts in public.

Students are not permitted to wear tank tops, sleeveless shirts, crop-tops, halter-tops, or anything else more daring than a loose but fitted t-shirt.

Do not bring sloppy clothes or clothes with immodest pictures or writing on them. Female students will not be permitted to wear skirts and dresses that are transparent or reveal their knees or arm pits, and will not be permitted to wear tight-fitting pants at any time. All clothing should be modest: tops should cover shoulders and waists, skirts should fall past the knees, clothing should not fit too tight or be transparent, and plunging necklines are not acceptable. Try sitting cross-legged on the floor in skirts and dresses to make sure they're long enough; a skirt that barely covers the knees won't work. Mid-calf length or longer skirts tend to work best. Also, try standing outside in the sun and have someone else let you know if your skirt or dress is see-through (this can't always be determined by the wearer). Plan to buy any additional new or second hand clothing you may need once you are in Zanzibar.

## EQUIPMENT

You should bring small binoculars with you. A mask, snorkel, fins, and water shoes or water socks are all required equipment for the program. Have a dive shop employee help you make sure the mask and fins fit well. Take extra time to do this; the fit of the gear is its single most important attribute. Try it out in a local swimming pool. It is not necessary to bring a mosquito net; you will pay a small deposit and use a program-owned mosquito net. It is also not necessary to bring a tent unless you plan on traveling after the program. Sleeping bags are not needed as students find them to be too hot. Instead, bring a sewn-together sheet or a light 'sleeping sack.' Hiking boots are not necessary but you can bring running shoes if you like to exercise. A rain poncho or waterproof raincoat large enough to cover your backpack is recommended. Also, it is mandatory for you to bring a portable water filter or steriPEN, which can be used during excursions. The brand past students recommend is the 'system pack' which you can find at this link:



[http://www.steripen.com/steripen\\_products.html](http://www.steripen.com/steripen_products.html). It can be easily purchased at L.L. Bean. It is also very important to bring spare batteries. For more packing suggestions, see the detailed packing checklist below.

## COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is strongly 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.

SIT only has two computers, one printer, and wireless Internet for student use in the SIT office in Stone Town. Office hours are 9 AM to 4 PM, Monday through Friday.

It is **recommended** that you bring a laptop and a large capacity flash drive for backup and storage of photographs. You will be writing two research papers and having your own computer is very useful but not mandatory as there are internet cafes that have computers around town. If you choose to bring a computer realize that it may be exposed to high temperatures, high humidity, lots of sand, and a host of other elements that can damage it. Either bring a second-hand computer, a small cheap laptop, or back everything up on a hard drive before you leave. **Note:** Macs are impossible to get fixed in Zanzibar. If you bring your own laptop, it is also highly recommended to download both Dropbox (Dropbox.com) and Google Earth before coming to Zanzibar as the Internet is generally **slower** here. Both software programs will be used for assignments but Dropbox is also useful for backing up your own files).

Otherwise, word-processing and printing can be done at internet cafés. Some of your assignments can be hand-written, but the portfolio and ISP must be typed. Many students find access to computers during their Independent Study Projects through their advisors, local universities, or internet cafes. Expect to pay about US\$1/hour for computer use at an internet café. If you bring a laptop, the computer

will be your personal property and responsibility and it's recommended that you insure it.

Before you leave, it is up to you to research the necessary adaptors, plugs, and wattage variations. You will be responsible for making arrangements to store your laptop in a secure place while on excursion. Finally, some students have recommended bringing a digital recorder to use during interviews for the Independent Study Project.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters. <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/>

## WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Personal items such as contact solution and face wash are available, but they may be difficult to find and somewhat expensive. Tampons and sanitary napkins are easy to find but expensive. Plan to bring hand-washable clothes, which will make your hand washing much easier. If you wear glasses or contacts, bring an extra pair. Be sure to pack enough contact lenses and solution for the whole semester. Bring your prescription, just in case. Keep in mind that most things available to you in the U.S. are also available in Zanzibar; therefore, you do not need to pack a semester's supply of shampoo and soap.

## 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

- A frame backpack if you already own one - if not a large duffel bag works well
- 1 large (1 liter) water bottle
- A SteriPEN (UV water purification system), iodine tablets, or a ceramic hand pump (SteriPEN highly recommended, due to ease of use)
- A headlamp with plenty of extra batteries
- 2 large capacity flash drives
- Rain jacket + pack cover or a poncho that can cover your backpack
- Hat with a brim
- Sunglasses
- 1 small towel: pack-dry towels are great for the humid environment
- Small pair of binoculars for safari (really, bring them!)
- Pocket sewing kit
- Notebook and pens: consider write-in-the-rain notebooks or a few smaller notebooks for fieldwork
- Small backpack for day excursions
- Small Kiswahili dictionary
- **Snorkeling Equipment-make sure you test each piece in a swimming pool before you leave the US**
  - Mask/ Snorkel
  - Fins - the more compact pair (meaning shorter in length) you can find, the happier you will be
- Dive booties/ aqua socks- optional and not necessary if you bring waterproof sandals (with a back for fieldwork and wading through the ocean)
- 1 pair sport sandals (Texas/Chacos work well and are not available in Zanzibar)
- Running shoes/ day hikers if you plan on exercising (also highly useful for mangroves, forest walks – it is easy to stub your toe in coral rag forests)



## WOMEN

- 1 lightweight casual long dress – must cover shoulders and knees (You can have more made in Zanzibar very cheaply.)
- 3 long skirts (no sarongs) (Remember that you will be living in these skirts, in classes, on buses, hiking, jogging, etc. They should look nice and, most of all, be comfortable - full-skirt styles tend to be easier for sitting cross-legged on the floor)
- 1 lightweight slip - Gauzy, see-through type skirts and similar dresses will need to be worn with a slip. Past students have recommended a knee-length slip
- 2 conservative blouses or shirts that are lightweight but **not see-through**
- 1 lightweight, long sleeve safari style blouse recommended
- 4-5 lightweight, loose T-shirts or other short-sleeved shirts – must cover your shoulders but can have a v-neck (note: cotton tends to take a long time to dry in humid atmospheres and white t-shirts will quickly get dirty in Zanzibar)
- 1 week's supply of underwear (or more, if you do not like hand-washing frequently), cotton gusset/ quick-dry is recommended as cotton will be quickly destroyed by laundry
- 2 pairs of socks (more if you plan on exercising regularly)
- Normal and sports bras
- Lightweight pajamas or nightgown
- 1 pair loose, lightweight capris or pants
- 1-2 pairs athletic long shorts for wearing inside
- 1 tank top for wearing to sleep/inside

- If planning on exercising: lightweight sweatpants that cover your knees
- 1-2 one-piece bathing suits (conservative, like a competitive swimmer)

## MEN

- 2-3 pairs pants (at least one pair of nicer khaki type pants)
- 1 pair athletic below the knee shorts
- 2 button down shirts
- 3-4 t-shirts
- Tank top for indoor use
- 1 belt
- 1 week's supply of (cotton gusset/easy dry) underwear (or more depending on how often you want to do laundry)
- 1-2 pairs of socks (more if you plan on exercising regularly)
- Lightweight pajamas
- 1-2 pair swimming trunks
- Lightweight jacket or fleece
- Rain poncho or raincoat (waterproof) large enough to cover your backpack
- Bandana

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- Yellow WHO Card/International Certificate of Vaccination where applicable (see [Safety, Security, and Health](#) for more information)
- Two photocopies of your passport, stored separately from your actual passport
- ATM card (make sure your card can be used in Zanzibar – let the bank know you will be out of the country)
- Cash – it is recommended to bring \$300 cash – the rest is easily accessible from the bank and NOTE that \$100 will be used for a deposit at the beginning of the semester
- Letter from your doctor explaining your medications
- Photocopy of visa
- COVID-19 Vaccination card encouraged (print and digital)

## HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Sunscreen (high SPF) – available but expensive in Zanzibar
- Aloe/after sun cream

- Plastic, digital, oral thermometer
- Small supply of medical needs – Sudafed, Emergen-C, multivitamin, Benadryl, anti-itch cream, Neosporin, band-aids Advil/Ibuprofen
- Lip balm with sun block
- Insect repellent – the mosquitoes are bad, consider bringing a mild solution for daily use and DEET for extra buggy times
- Supply of protein bars (adjust quantity based on dietary needs, **bring a lot** if you like to snack)
- Contact lens solution (available but expensive)
- 1 extra pair glasses/lenses (if you wear glasses or contact lenses)
- 10 Gatorade or oral rehydration packets
- Motion sickness medication if you are prone to motion sickness
- Antibacterial hand sanitizer – small bottle
- Toothpaste, soap and shampoo (bring small amounts as these can be easily purchased in Zanzibar)
- Small supply of laundry detergent (easily purchasable in Zanzibar)
- **Bring all medications you normally take on a regular basis and make sure your supply will last for the whole program. Malaria is endemic in Zanzibar! Bring enough anti-malaria medication (Doxycycline, Malarone, or other prescribed medication) for the entire semester.**

To prevent the contraction and spread of COVID-19 you should come prepared with an appropriate number of face masks. Some individual venues may still require masks for entry. The CDC recommends a close-fitting and protective mask that is comfortable for daily use.

## OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Duct tape (small amount- you can wrap this around your water bottle for storage)
- Carabiner (very useful for water bottle)
- Duffle for leaving things in storage
- 1 pair flip-flops for daily use
- Camera – waterproof cameras are great
- Waterproof bag for camera and electronics (Ziplocs work very well)
- Supply of Ziploc bags (very handy)
- Plastic bags for laundry, etc.
- Sewn together sleeping sheet
- Mesh dive bag or dry bag

- Clothing line for indoor use (especially for undergarments – not to be hung up outside!)
- A few DVDs for leisure time (or upload movies to your computer before you arrive)
- If you have a definite interest for your ISP, bring any scientific supplies that could be useful, e.g. thermometer
- Small laptop (see 'computers' section above)

***Special Note: Make sure you pack some essentials (all medications, a change of clothes, anything you can't live without) in your carry on. You will have a multi-leg journey through multiple countries; the chance of losing your luggage is plausible.***