



**S F S** THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

## Student Field Preparation Guide

Summer 2017

The School for Field Studies (SFS)

**PLEASE READ THIS MATERIAL CAREFULLY BEFORE LEAVING  
FOR THE PROGRAM. BRING IT WITH YOU TO THE FIELD AS IT  
CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.**

100 Cummings Center, Suite 534-G, Beverly, MA 01915

P 800.989.4418 F 978.922.3835

[www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org)

© 2017 The School for Field Studies



# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b> .....                         | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....                              | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Preparing for Departure</b> .....                   | <b>5</b>  |
| Preparation Checklist.....                             | 5         |
| <b>Travel Arrangements</b> .....                       | <b>7</b>  |
| Advantage Travel and Group Flights .....               | 7         |
| Making Your Travel Arrangements.....                   | 7         |
| Passport and Visa.....                                 | 8         |
| Arrival at the Airport in TCI.....                     | 8         |
| <b>About SFS Turks &amp; Caicos</b> .....              | <b>9</b>  |
| History of the Region .....                            | 9         |
| Online Resources for TCI Current Events.....           | 9         |
| Weather and Climate.....                               | 9         |
| Geography and Ecology .....                            | 9         |
| South Caicos and Cockburn Harbour .....                | 10        |
| Program Overview .....                                 | 10        |
| Facilities .....                                       | 11        |
| Water Use and Sanitation.....                          | 11        |
| Research Equipment.....                                | 12        |
| Center SCUBA Equipment.....                            | 12        |
| Library and Computers .....                            | 12        |
| Food .....   | 13        |
| Special Dietary Requirements .....                     | 13        |
| Special Religious Requirements.....                    | 13        |
| Cleaning .....   | 13        |
| A Typical Weekday at the Center .....                  | 14        |
| A Typical Week at the Center .....                     | 14        |
| Students and the Local Community.....                  | 14        |
| Communications.....                                    | 15        |
| <b>What to Bring</b> .....                             | <b>16</b> |
| Electrical Appliances .....                            | 17        |
| Required Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items.....  | 17        |
| Required Equipment for Snorkeling and SCUBA .....      | 19        |
| Required Equipment for SCUBA Only .....                | 20        |
| Optional Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items ..... | 20        |
| Optional SCUBA and Snorkel Equipment.....              | 21        |
| <b>Finances</b> .....                                  | <b>21</b> |
| Estimated Costs .....                                  | 22        |
| <b>Tips for Living and Studying Abroad</b> .....       | <b>22</b> |
| Introduction .....                                     | 22        |
| Country Information .....                              | 22        |
| Personal Safety .....                                  | 22        |
| Situational Awareness .....                            | 22        |
| Local Laws and Cultural Norms.....                     | 23        |
| Food Safety .....                                      | 23        |
| Protection from Insects .....                          | 23        |
| <b>Policies</b> .....                                  | <b>24</b> |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| SFS-Wide Policies.....   | 24        |
| Campus-Specific Policies.....  | 26        |
| Disciplinary Procedures .....  | 27        |
| <b>Insurance.....</b>  | <b>28</b> |
| Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance.....                         | 28        |
| Health Insurance.....  | 28        |
| Divers Alert Network (DAN) Insurance – <i>REQUIRED</i> for SCUBA Diving..... | 28        |
| Personal Property Insurance .....  | 29        |
| Travel Insurance .....   | 29        |
| <b>Health and Safety .....</b>   | <b>29</b> |
| Introduction.....  | 29        |
| 24-Hour Emergency Hotline .....  | 29        |
| Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications.....                           | 29        |
| Dietary Requirements.....  | 30        |
| Accommodating Students with Disabilities.....                                | 30        |
| Physical Conditioning.....   | 30        |
| Existing Medical Conditions.....   | 30        |
| Medical Care in the Turks and Caicos.....                                    | 31        |
| Disease in the Turks and Caicos.....   | 31        |
| CDC-Recommended Vaccinations for Travelers to the Turks and Caicos .....     | 31        |
| Non-Vaccine Preventable Disease in the Turks and Caicos.....                 | 32        |
| Other Hazards in the Turks and Caicos.....                                   | 33        |
| <b>Cultural Adjustment.....</b>  | <b>34</b> |
| Defining Cultural Adjustment .....   | 34        |
| Signs of Culture Shock .....   | 34        |
| Cycling through Cultural Adjustment: The “W” Curve .....                     | 35        |
| What Does It Mean To Be From Another Place?.....                             | 35        |
| A Note to Women And Diverse Students .....                                   | 36        |
| Coping With Cultural Adjustment.....   | 36        |

# Introduction

This Student Field Preparation Guide is an important tool which includes things you need to know to prepare for your international education experience! Use it from the time you are accepted to the program, to when you are getting ready to leave, to while you are in the field and even after you return home.

We begin with a reminder list and timeline of the vital tasks you need to accomplish, including what you need to send to SFS and when. There is information about plane tickets, travel documents and insurance, and some helpful safety tips. You will also find information about the particular country and Center where you will be studying. Along with some background on these places, we have included a packing list and some suggestions concerning finances to help guide you in planning what to bring with you. There is also information about what life is like at your Center on a day-to-day basis and what to expect as far as group living dynamics and policies and general living conditions. Finally, we have included some resources on safety and traveling abroad. **Please be sure to read through the entire guide** and don't hesitate to contact your Admissions Counselor with any questions.

## **Terms and Regulations Contract**

Note that as a condition for participation in an SFS program, you are required to document that you have read, understood and accepted all academic, safety, administrative and operational policies, rules and requirements by reading and signing the SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.

# Preparing for Departure

## Preparation Checklist

Please see the Accepted Students page ([www.fieldstudies.org/admissions/accepted](http://www.fieldstudies.org/admissions/accepted)) and the Medical Approval Process ([www.fieldstudies.org/safety/medical](http://www.fieldstudies.org/safety/medical)) page of the SFS website to find instructions, links to the infosnap login page, and PDF versions of these forms. All required forms should be sent to SFS (or completed online through your SFS infosnap account when possible):

The School for Field Studies  
100 Cummings Center, Suite 534-G  
Beverly, MA 01915  
Email: [admissions@fieldstudies.org](mailto:admissions@fieldstudies.org) / [safety@fieldstudies.org](mailto:safety@fieldstudies.org)  
Fax: 978.922.3835 (general) / 978.232.1254 (safety)

**Read this Guide carefully in its entirety, including sections on Program Overview, SFS Policies, and Traveling and Living Abroad.**

**To be submitted within 10 business days of acceptance:**

- **Nonrefundable Program Commitment Deposit of \$250.** Students are not considered enrolled and financial aid applications will not be reviewed until this deposit payment is received. This deadline and these conditions apply to all students, even if your home school is responsible for making the deposit payment to SFS on your behalf.

**To be submitted by the deadline that applies to your session:**

**SFS Summer 1 & Combined:** April 15<sup>th</sup>  
**SFS Summer 2:** May 15<sup>th</sup>

- **SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **FERPA Notice and Consent.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **Passport number and expiration date** (passport must be valid for at least six months after the last day of the program). This must be entered electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **SFS SCUBA/Snorkel Form.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **SFS Medical Forms:**
  - **SFS Online Medical Review Form.** Self-disclosure form that you complete online. Through your My SFS account.
  - **SFS Physical Examination & Authorization Form.** To be completed by a physician and submitted to the SFS Safety Department via fax, scan and email, or regular mail.
  - **PADI Medical Statement.** To be completed by a physician and submitted to the SFS Safety Department via fax, scan and email, or regular mail. If you are getting SCUBA certified while on program, list your certifying organization as “The School for Field Studies” [Instructor] at the “Center for Marine Studies” [Facility] in South Caicos [City], Turks and Caicos [State/Province]. For the Divers Medical Questionnaire, please write out “Yes” or “No” for all questions, or else the form will be considered incomplete.

- **Psychotropic Medication Form** and/or **Counseling Questionnaire**, if applicable, to be completed by your prescribing physician and/or counselor, therapist, psychiatrist, or psychologist and submitted to the SFS Safety Department via fax, scan and email, or regular mail.

**Please note: No student may enter the field until Final Medical Approval is granted by SFS personnel.** This includes receipt and review of the SFS Online Medical Review Form and Physical Exam and Authorization Form. The Counseling Questionnaire, Psychotropic Medication Form, and supplemental documentation from a medical specialist may also be necessary. Inaccurate or incomplete information on any of the SFS medical forms may be grounds for rescinding an offer of admission, recalling a student from the program, or restricting student participation in certain activities. In addition, students are responsible for informing SFS of any changes to their health status that occur after submission of SFS medical forms.

- **Final tuition payment.** Due based on the timeline below. Invoices will be sent 30 days prior to the deadline listed below.

**SFS Summer I or Combined:** April 1<sup>st</sup>

**SFS Summer II:** April 30<sup>th</sup>

### Other Preparation To-Do's

- Obtain passport/Check to make sure your passport is valid until at least 6 months after the end of the program.
- If you plan to apply for SFS Financial Aid, please submit your application at least 30 days prior to departure.
- Contact SFS alumni on campus or as provided by SFS to learn more about what to expect.
- Obtain visa for entry into country if necessary. See Passport and Visa section of this Field Guide for more information.
- Make sure your bank/credit card companies know you will be using your cards abroad. In order to receive medical attention, a credit card with a limit of at least \$1,000 is required.
- If you are a permanent resident of the U.S. or an international student returning to school in the U.S after the program, please be sure to have the necessary documentation for re-entry into the United States.
- Obtain required clothing and equipment (see packing list later in this document).
- Make travel arrangements that meet the schedule outlined by SFS. If you do not book using Advantage Travel, you must submit your itinerary to your Admissions Counselor and have it approved prior to purchase.
- Prepare with your doctor and a Travel Specialist to cover all your travel plans in the countries where you plan to go. Be sure to review:
  - Your immunization history and requirements for every region in which you plan to travel (some information in the Insurance, Health and Safety section of this Guide)
  - Your fitness level
  - Medications and prescriptions in sufficient quantities and in their original containers. Check with your insurance company on how to fill prescriptions for several months in advance as you may not be able to find the medicine you need in-country.
  - Any changes in treatment programs
  - Discuss and understand what the risks are for each place where you'll be going.
- Make sure you have health insurance (**required**). You will have to fill this in on your SFS Medical Review Form. Check with your provider to make certain that your policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the places where you're going. The evacuation and repatriation insurance that you receive from SFS is **not** medical or dental insurance.
- Purchase Divers Alert Network insurance (**required**) if you plan to dive during the program.
- Configure your laptop to access your home school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field (see *Library and Computers* section for further details).
- Make arrangements to have student housing/registration/summer employment taken care of before departure.
- Leave Center Address (can be found later in this document) for friends and family to contact you.

- Make two clear copies of your plane ticket and your passport. Take one copy of each with you and leave one copy with a friend or family member.
- **Read this Guide carefully in its entirety, including the sections later in this document on life at your particular Center, traveling and living abroad, safety in the country where you'll be going, and SFS policies.**

### Optional

- Obtain personal property insurance (e.g. for your laptop computer) if you so desire; SFS does not provide this.
- Purchase travel /course cancellation insurance if you wish. You may want to check with your home university if you are unable to locate a provider on your own. This is different from evacuation and repatriation insurance, which is provided by SFS.

## Travel Arrangements

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements and for paying your travel to and from the program. You have a few choices: you may wish to book your ticket over the Internet, through your local travel agent, or by working with Advantage Travel Agency, which is the SFS travel agency of choice.

### Advantage Travel and Group Flights

---

SFS and Advantage Travel do not arrange a group flight for this program because it is not the most cost-effective or convenient option for student travel. We hope that students will be able to explore other options that better suit their needs without the restrictions of group travel. Even without a group flight, there are many benefits to booking with Advantage, including:

- Your itinerary is guaranteed to meet the group pickup/drop off program schedule.
- Advantage Travel has some influence with airlines to make ticket adjustments in the event of last-minute program date changes or cancellation, lost tickets, or other unforeseen circumstances.
- This travel agent is familiar with SFS programs.
- This will be one-stop shopping for your travel plans, both to and from the program and for other trips if you plan to travel during pre/post-program.
- It will be fun to begin your travels with your fellow SFS students!

### Making Your Travel Arrangements

---

Be sure to arrive at the pickup location on time! If you do not book using Advantage, all travel plans must be reviewed and approved by your SFS Admissions Counselor prior to purchase. SFS will designate a group meeting time at the airport on the island of Providenciales (Provo), as well as the program departure time. SFS staff members will meet the group at the airport at the meeting time and help facilitate transportation to the Center.

You will book your flight from the U.S. to the international airport in Providenciales, Turks & Caicos (PLS). SFS will make your reservation for your round-trip travel between Provo and South Caicos (fondly referred to as "South") either through the local airline ([www.intercaribbean.com](http://www.intercaribbean.com)) or Caribbean Cruisin' ferry system ([www.caribbean-cruisin.com/south-caicos-ferry](http://www.caribbean-cruisin.com/south-caicos-ferry)).

Regardless of whether the ticket is purchased through Advantage Travel or another agent, SFS is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power or communications.

If you opt to travel before or after your program, be sure to check with immigration officials regarding your visa status. It's a great idea to arrange all your travel before you leave as it will be hard to exchange tickets during the program.

**NOTE:** If you are participating in both summer sessions in the Turks & Caicos, you will be **responsible for yourself** during the time between sessions. You will be dropped off at the international airport in Providenciales at the end of Session 1 and are expected to meet the group back at the airport for the beginning of Session 2. You will receive specific instructions about the meeting times from your Admissions Counselor.

Be sure to join a frequent flyer program! Also, check with your agent about multiple stops or stopovers; long trips are an excellent opportunity to see other countries or regions for a small fee or at no extra cost, but this usually needs to be arranged at the time of ticket purchase.

**CARBON OFFSET:** In an effort to make your summer with The School for Field Studies more sustainable, we ask you to consider a carbon neutral flights to and from TCI.

## Passport and Visa

---

**You must have a passport to enter all of the countries where our programs take place. Make certain that your passport is valid until six months after the program ends.**

When you arrive at the Turks and Caicos Islands (on Providenciales), you will need to go through immigration and will need to present your passport in order to be issued a 30 day visa. **For students attending both Summer 1 and Summer 2, you need to request at least a 65 day visa.** If you are considering extending your time on TCI, know that visitors are allowed to spend up to 90 days here. **If questioned about the purpose of your visit, explain that you are a student here to study at the School for Field Studies on South Caicos.** Students who are not citizens of the U.S., U.K., or Canada are responsible for investigating whether or not they must make arrangements for their visa prior to arrival.

## Arrival at the Airport in TCI

---

After you collect your bags, you will go through customs and will need to present your completed Customs Declaration Form. Since you should not be leaving anything behind on the island, you will have nothing to declare (unless you bring in tobacco — SFS prohibits alcohol on site). It is not unusual for bags to get delayed in transit; they usually show up in one to four days. If your bags are delayed in travel, you should complete a lost baggage form at the airline desk after clearing customs. Ask the individual at the airline desk to route your bags to The School for Field Studies on South Caicos. After you clear your luggage through customs, the Student Affairs Manager will meet you outside the main doors of the Providenciales International Airport and you will all travel together to the Center on South Caicos.

It is important for you to check with the airline you are using to travel from the US to Providenciales, but the standard baggage allowance is two checked bags, one carry-on bag, and a personal item. Some US airlines charge for any/all checked luggage, so you should look into that and budget accordingly.

As mentioned previously, students will travel between Provo and South via the local airline (InterCaribbean) or via ferry (Caribbean Cruisin'). The method of transport used in a particular semester is dependent on local conditions and the size of the group. When traveling between Provo and South via plane you may have one checked bag (not to exceed 50lbs) and one personal item that can fit on you lap or under the seat in front of you (max dimensions 12 x9 x16 inches). Any additional bags will be considered checked luggage for the flight to South. The airline will charge \$25.00 per additional checked bag.

If your checked bag weighs over 50lbs, the airline will charge \$0.50 for each pound above the weight limit. The max bag weight that InterCaribbean will accept is 70lbs. Baggage overage fees can **only be paid for in cash.** Please also note that any extra or overweight baggage may not be allowed on the aircraft due to weight restrictions and will follow you to South on the next flight that has available space. For this reason you are encouraged to pack your belongings in advance so you can determine how heavy your bags will be and whether or not you will need to adjust your packing. The best advice is to pack conservatively and to not exceed the 70lb limit. When traveling to or from South via ferry we request you adhere to the same baggage requirements due to the limited capacity of the vessel.



# About SFS Turks & Caicos

## History of the Region

---

The TCI have a diverse history filled with indigenous populations, salt traders, and cotton and sisal plantations. The TCI have been under the British flag for most of the last 400 years. In 1972, the TCI became a British Dependent Territory; though the Parliament and Ministers are elected locally, the British government appoints a Governor, who holds ultimate authority.

The population of the TCI (approximately 31,500) is divided across many islands. Non-belongers represent about 60% of the population. Grand Turk is the seat of government and the second most popular tourist destination. Providenciales (or Provo) is the most developed for tourism, which began in earnest in the mid-1980s. The TCI welcome more than 250,000 visitors each quarter, and hotel construction continues at a rapid pace. The other islands, including South Caicos, host little tourism at the present time and are home to small-scale business and subsistence fishing. However, several resorts are under construction on South Caicos and significant changes are expected to accompany their opening.

## Online Resources for TCI Current Events

---

[www.suntci.com](http://www.suntci.com)

[www.caribbeannewsnow.com/tci.php](http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/tci.php)

[www.tcinewsnow.com](http://www.tcinewsnow.com)

## Weather and Climate

---

The climate in the TCI is hot and dry. The dry season on South lasts from February until September, and the wet season lasts from October to January, with an average annual rainfall of 17 inches (42.5 cm) or less. Temperatures vary little throughout the year from the mean of 80° F, but the evening temperatures in December, January and February can get dip into the low 60s. Due to the arid conditions, fresh water is in critically short supply, and special attention must be paid to water use.

Part of living and working in the Caribbean is facing the potential threat of hurricanes. Hurricane season runs from June 1st to November 30th, but August, September and October are traditionally the most active months. SFS has access to shelter and safety in the event that a severe storm passes near South.

## Geography and Ecology

---

The TCI are a limestone archipelago lying at the southeastern tip of the Bahamian archipelago, approximately 575 miles (925 km) southeast of Miami and 100 miles (170 km) north of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and 888 miles (1,430 km) northwest of Puerto Rico. The total land area of the island complex is about 166 square miles (430 km<sup>2</sup>).

The islands are ancient coral seamounts that have been periodically exposed and covered by changes in sea level. South Caicos lies at the southeastern edge of the Caicos Bank and is approximately 12 square miles (32 km<sup>2</sup>, maximum elevation = 157 feet; 48 m).

The vegetation on South is a scrubby “coppice” plant community, dominated by plants that are well-adapted to the xeric conditions. Most shrubs are less than 6 feet (2 m) in height, cacti are abundant, trees are uncommon, and palm trees are relegated to a few ornamental plantings in Cockburn Harbour. The soil of South is generally poor and unable to support agriculture; however, it is likely that the original plant and soil covers of the island were much richer and that human activity has changed the ecosystem greatly.

The marine environment of South Caicos is almost pristine and ideal for learning and research. The offshore areas support a variety of marine habitats, including vast sea grass beds, coral reefs, mangroves, and sand flats. Coral reef habitats include patch reefs, barrier reefs, fringing reefs, and deep reefs. Underwater visibility often exceeds 100 ft. (30

m). Due in part to upwelling of nutrients from the deep ocean, the bank has supported extensive commercial conch and lobster fisheries in the past.



### South Caicos and Cockburn Harbour

South Caicos is not a resort island – there are no swaying palm trees and very few amenities. It is a small, arid island with many cacti and salt bushes. Virtually the entire South population resides in Cockburn (pronounced "Coburn") Harbour on the southwestern shore. The population is approximately 800-1,200, varying as individuals (primarily younger males) emigrate for employment and return for the lobster fishing season.

The number of cars and trucks on the island is growing, but many people still get around by foot. Cats, dogs, donkeys, and horses roam freely. Many local residents carry their household water daily from a municipal supply. Telephone service is adequate, but expensive. Basketball and soccer are the most popular local sports, although cricket is coming back to the islands.

There are a number of small stores that carry groceries and household items (although none would be considered a souvenir shop), small family restaurants, and 14 churches. South has one bank that is open one morning per week. Everything is imported, and most items are subject to a 30% duty. Prices therefore average nearly 200% of mainland U.S. rates. Many things that might be easily accessible elsewhere are not available locally on South and therefore can only be imported with two weeks' notice.

One of the most important aspects of Cockburn Harbour, from a resource management standpoint, is that it is the center of a thriving lobster and conch fishery in the TCI. In fact, the TCI are one of the largest exporters of conch in the world. Cockburn Harbour has three conch and lobster processing plants that export seafood in large quantities.

### Program Overview

Since the opening of the Center for Marine Resource Studies, SFS has worked closely with the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA) on a variety of conch and lobster-related fisheries projects of local importance. At present, South Caicos is awaiting the advent of large-scale tourist developments, which are already underway. There is also a plan to dredge the harbor for a deep-water port in East Caicos, as well as a deep-water port proposal for South Caicos. SFS is involved in the natural resource inventories that are an essential step in formulating resource management plans for several important resource-dependent sites.

Recently, the Center has been involved in marine parks planning and the review of environmental impact assessment documents. Both projects have partnered SFS with the TCI Government.

The TCI are at a critical point in their development, when decisions regarding fisheries development and management, tourism development, and national park design and management will play a pivotal role in the success of national development schemes.

SFS uses SCUBA diving and snorkeling as a tool for research and education. SFS programs are NOT designed for people whose primary interest is sport diving. Faculty will often have students snorkel instead of SCUBA dive because this allows for increased time spent in the water and ease of communication. South Caicos offers outstanding diving, but the focus of our logistical resources is on the academic and research program. Please reconsider attending this program if your primary interest is recreational SCUBA diving. There are other less expensive ways to go SCUBA diving. The use of SCUBA and the sites chosen for dives are wholly based on the research needs of SFS-CMRS. Summer students can expect to dive an average of 5-7 times during the program. **Water activities are entirely dependent on the weather; therefore, please be flexible and prepared for scheduled activities to change in the event of bad weather.**

With the above information in mind, SCUBA is part of the learning experience. Diving involves groups of 4-7 students and a Dive Master who go out in small boats to sites generally within a mile of the Center. SFS follows conservative diving table use.

If you are not SCUBA certified for this program, you will experience no restrictions in terms of course content. Most of the fieldwork is accomplished in waters less than 20 feet (7m) deep, well within snorkeling range. Ask your Admissions Counselor about the SCUBA diving opportunities and potential certification options that are offered during your summer session.

Students who plan to dive during the program may obtain their certification prior to arrival from a recognized organization such as PADI, NAUI, CMAS, or SSI, or enroll in the PADI Open Water course offered at the SFS field station during **summer 1 only**. Specific information and details about the SFS Open Water course will be sent several months before the program begins. The PADI Advanced Open Water course is also offered during **summer 2 only**, and will be further explained once you arrive if you are attending that session. Students who plan to dive must also purchase Divers Alert Network insurance prior to arriving at the Center. Please see the **Insurance, Health, and Safety** section of this Field Preparation Guide for more information. Students who are certified before arriving in the field will perform a SCUBA and rescue skills checkout with an SFS Dive Master before diving with the program. Additionally, a written exam on dive policy may be given at the discretion of the Diving Safety Officer.

Prior to diving at SFS-CMRS, you must perform a SCUBA and rescue skills checkout with an SFS Dive Master. Additionally, a written exam on dive policy may be given at the discretion of the Diving Safety Officer.

## Facilities

---

The Center is located in Cockburn Harbour in a modest former hotel previously known as the "Admirals' Arms Inn." The Center and student rooms sit on top of a 20 foot cliff facing the sea and provide a spectacular view of the sunset and starlit skies. Each room sleeps four to six students in bunk beds and has a freshwater shower and sink and saltwater toilet. Fifteen hotel-style rooms arranged in three wings extend from the main building, which houses dining room, kitchen, classroom and library facilities. You will be sharing close quarters with about 50 other people (students and staff).

The Center overlooks the Cockburn Harbour entrance, and is structured in the shape of a large U, with the open side facing the sea to the south and west. Architecture is Caribbean style, using shade and trade wind ventilation to keep things comfortable in the heat. The Center has a combined library and computer room for writing final reports and data analysis.

There is a dive locker and snorkel shed on the property that houses the compressor and stores SFS' SCUBA tanks and your personal equipment. The Center has a small fleet of five boats, most of which are kept alongside a pier at the east end of the property.

## Water Use and Sanitation

---

South Caicos is not a lush, green island, although the ocean views and underwater scenery are spectacular. Fresh water is a precious commodity on South Caicos since the island receives little rainfall. The SFS Center uses captured rainwater

for its fresh water supply and does not use water as one might in the United States. The average Turks and Caicos Islander uses 7 gallons of water per day; the average American uses 90-150 gallons per day. The Center must maintain its rate of consumption at local levels. You will be oriented on habits that conserve the very limited water supply. You will be able to rinse your dive/snorkel gear sufficiently in fresh water, but we must limit the use of fresh water where we can. You will be able to take a fresh cold-water shower once a week. Bathing in the ocean is common (with biodegradable soap only), and there is a salt water outdoor shower for students to use at the Center. You will find that hand washing your laundry with seawater will suffice. No laundry facilities are available at the Center. Each student room has a sink with running fresh water (for brushing teeth, etc.) and a shower (for use once per week).

The Center drinking water is runoff collected from the rooftops and a concrete catchment area. This water is stored in a cistern. It is pumped through a sediment filter (5 micron filter) and then chlorinated to 1-3 pm. As a final step, the drinking water tap in the kitchen, which is the only recommended drinking water, is passed through another filter and an ultraviolet sterilizer. Drinking water in town is not recommended unless it is bottled.

## Research Equipment

---

The Center's commitment to non-destructive field research has not led to the accumulation of an extensive collection of laboratory equipment. Sampling equipment is therefore limited to transect tapes, calipers, etc. Consequently, the Center does not have a laboratory as such. The field sites are the laboratory. The Center has one research-grade binocular and one high-power microscope. Other equipment includes a pan balance (sensitivity to 0.01g), plankton net, some glassware, and a chemical test kit.

## Center SCUBA Equipment

---

The center owns an electrically driven Bauer Mariner Vertical MII E3 charging 8.4 scfm<sup>1</sup> with a Bauer Junior II as support. The center operates all compressed gas equipment at a maximum pressure of 3000 PSI. Only trained/certified members of staff operate the compressor.

The center owns 100 80-cubic foot aluminum 6061 alloy cylinders. All cylinders are visually inspected annually and undergo a hydro pressure test every five years as required by US DOT standards. The center provides weights for divers so they do not need to bring any. Students are responsible for all other snorkel and dive equipment.

## Library and Computers

---

Though SFS does its best to update its library accordingly, you should plan to rely on the databases and online library available to you through your home institution during your SFS program. SFS does not provide additional access to any e-library resources from our Centers. Before arriving in-country for your SFS program, you should make arrangements with your home school to have remote access to your library's online journals, as you will use this very often during your program. **Make sure you know your remote library log-in and password, understand your home school's policy on accessing library materials remotely, and configure your laptop to access your school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field.**

At a minimum, there will be five networked student computers available, running Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office software. Access controls on all student computers will prevent additional software installations and settings changes.

**Students are required to bring their own laptop computers with them for use during the program. Students are not allowed to use computers during lecture time; however, personal computers prove to be useful outside of the classroom. Please see the "Required Items for the Classroom" section of the packing list later in the guide for more details.**

SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance.

## Food

---

Almost all food is imported to the Center, much of it by an island freighter which only visits South every two weeks. Our two local cooks prepare three meals a day Monday through Saturday (program days), and on Sundays (non-program days) the staff and students will cook together to make brunch and dinner.

SFS works to ensure that balanced meals are prepared, but unlike large college dormitory kitchens, usually only a single entree, with a vegetarian alternative, is prepared for each meal. Be prepared to eat canned fruits and vegetables, as fresh produce arrives on the boat every two weeks, but usually only lasts a week. If you have any good recipes that serve 40+ people, please bring them. Despite the location of the Center, fresh seafood is not readily available.

Please inform SFS if you have any special medical or dietary restrictions. If you have dietary restrictions, you will need to be flexible and not expect much variety in your diet. It may be difficult to accommodate exclusive dietary requirements. If your requirements are extreme, please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss. You may want to consider taking vitamins, or bringing personal supplies of preferred foods, if you have dietary restrictions or preferences. There are 2 refrigerators onsite for student use. Since you spend so much time in the water during this program, you will be very active each day and you may want to eat more frequently than you normally do. Bringing snacks from home, or extra spending money to purchase snacks locally if you are not picky, is a very good idea.

## Special Dietary Requirements

---

In many cases, dietary requirements can be accommodated; however the meals may not be to your standards at home. We do our best to provide well-rounded meals for all participants while observing dietary restrictions. Being flexible with food preferences is necessary as we are cooking for a group rather than providing individualized meals.

**Student Dietary Needs** are defined as documented by a medical professional (such as food allergies) or required because of religious observance. These dietary needs must be listed on the student's online medical review and the student must notify their Admissions Counselor of this need prior to arrival at the Center. It may be difficult to accommodate exclusive dietary requirements; please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss any of your questions regarding your diet.

**Student Dietary Preferences**, such as a vegan or vegetarian diet may be accommodated, but the variety of food may be limited due to the location of the program, travel schedules, etc. Due to the group nature of the SFS experience, the cooks are unable to prepare individual meals. Although past vegan students have found our meals to be both delicious and sufficient, please be prepared to bear any additional costs associated with veganism or any special dietary requirements.

## Special Religious Requirements

---

If you have questions regarding a religious holiday which falls during program time, please contact your Admissions Counselor immediately upon acceptance. We will try to accommodate students' religious observances. However, schedules often involve complex coordination with many parties and reservations are often made months in advance. Any missed program time will necessarily need to be made up.

## Cleaning

---

Please be ready to contribute and pull your weight as part of a team. Students and staff aid in unloading and stocking of food shipments. Student and staff teams assist with the clean-up at every meal. In addition to kitchen duties, you may also serve on a student committee concerned with greening the site, planning social events, or helping to organize academic activities. Every week students and staff participate in a site clean-up, which helps to keep the site in good shape. Students will rotate responsibilities of cleaning rooms, site maintenance, monitoring recycling/composting, and organizing the common spaces. All of these responsibilities are integral parts to positive communal living.

## A Typical Weekday at the Center

---

SFS programming operates 6 days per week. An example schedule of daily activities on Monday through Friday is spelled out below. The Saturday schedule varies as it is a mixture of diving/snorkeling activities, site clean-up, and community engagement. Sundays are typically free/rest days.

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 0700 | Breakfast   |
| 0750 | Morning Meeting   |
| 0800 | Lecture (classroom or field)  |
| 0900 | Lecture (classroom or field)  |
| 1000 | Break   |
| 1020 | Lecture (classroom or field)  |
| 1120 | Lecture (classroom or field)  |
| 1230 | Lunch   |
| 1400 | Field Work  |
| 1830 | Dinner  |
| 1930 | Evening activities vary, but may include lecture/dive/snorkel/study/free time |

## A Typical Week at the Center

---

The weekly schedule on South will vary over the course of the session. In summer session 1 (Tropical Marine Ecosystems: Monitoring and Management course), the session begins with a few days of orientation and organization, and then moves on to about 12 to 15 lectures a week, plus 3 to 5 other meetings (organizational, project presentations, guest lectures). In summer session 2 (Applied Marine Research Techniques course), after completing orientation, students will have two weeks of field and classroom-based lectures and then finish the session with two weeks of field work and associated data entry. Lectures are typically given in the morning, and afternoons are filled with field work, research, or reading time. Most of these activities take place in the water, but some are terrestrial/town-based. Academic, community engagement, and other program activities are scheduled 6 days per week, Monday through Saturday. Sundays are typically non-program days on which students can relax, explore South Caicos, and catch up on assignments.

Throughout the entire program there will be morning meetings that everyone is required to attend. Students will host Community Engagement Days at the Center each week with a few other potential community service opportunities throughout the program. Making meaningful connections with and contributions to the community are an important part of the program, so all students are expected to participate wholeheartedly! There are also weekly site clean-ups during which everyone helps keep our Center looking great inside and out.

**In order to lock the gates at night for the protection and security of people and property at SFS-CMRS, there is a student curfew weeknights and Sunday of 11:00 PM and midnight on Saturdays. The curfew aides us in maintaining a positive relationship with the entire South Caicos community, and is strictly enforced. If you feel that you may have trouble adhering to a curfew policy, please speak with an Admissions Counselor as this may not be the best program for you.**

## Students and the Local Community

---

SFS is involved with the community in many ways throughout the year. Every Saturday afternoon, the Center hosts children from the community who want to participate in swim lessons led by SFS students (many TCI youth are not comfortable in the ocean), as well as sports, games, arts and crafts. We offer English and computer lessons based on individual's needs. Other engagement with the local community is primary student-driven. Students who take the initiative to involve themselves in local sports, church communities, etc. enjoy these rewarding experiences.

Please remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies from culture to culture and be sensitive to this when you are away from the Center or interacting with community members. The staff will brief you on this in more detail during Orientation.

## Communications

---

### Mail

Letters to the TCI from the US normally take 3-6 weeks to arrive, so receiving letters from home at the Center may be unrealistic for students attending only one summer session (4 weeks). We ask that you please tell your friends and family to **avoid sending packages to the Center, unless using FedEx**. USPS Package service is very slow, and a considerable nuisance for the recipient. You will be liable for all applicable customs duty when you receive a package. The sender will have filled out a declaration of value; duty (what you will have to pay in cash to pick up the package) is likely to be 50% of this amount plus shipping. Invoices or sales slips should be enclosed in the package as proof of value. All packages will be opened and examined by customs officers. Given the above, please plan to pack and carry with you everything you will need for the duration of the program.

If you truly need a package sent to you, SFS encourages that the package to be sent using FedEx as this carrier typically takes the least amount of time. Be aware that not only will there be charges for tax and duty, but there will be an additional carrier charge to cover the cost of the package being sent from the Providenciales FedEx office to South Caicos.

Letters sent from the Center to the US usually take one to three weeks to arrive, although it can take much longer. You can buy stamps locally at \$1 per stamp.

#### **Regular mail should be sent to the following address:**

Student name  
The School for Field Studies  
P.O. Box 007, South Caicos  
Turks & Caicos Islands  
British West Indies

#### **Express mail can be sent (FedEx is recommended) to the following address:**

Student Name  
The School for Field Studies  
c/o Heidi Hertler  
1 West Street  
South Caicos  
Turks & Caicos Islands  
British West Indies

### Telephone

The Center has a student telephone (through a local cell phone provider) to which you will have access for incoming calls. You will not be able to make outgoing calls on this line (even with phone cards). The number for family and friends to call is (649) 332-3364. Some students have had success arranging an international calling plan on their home network, and have been able to use their home cell phone to contact family and friends. Alternatively, you can buy a local SIM card to use with your personal cell phone, but keep in mind that your phone must not be linked to a network in order to use it with a local SIM card. Another option that past students recommend is buying a local cell phone (\$100) with pre-paid minutes through Digicel or Lime (the local carriers) as the best way to keep in touch by phone. However, keep in mind that it is much cheaper for family and friends to call the TCI student phone, than it is for students to call the USA from the TCI. **Internet programs such as Skype and FaceTime are discouraged as your main contact tool, as our resources are limited (see next section).** Recently, students have had success using the wireless internet on their smart phones so that they can text using iMessage, Whats App, or other texting apps, so that would be a good option, too!

## Internet

Internet access and email are available for students at the Center to support **research and educational work**. Students may also use email to keep in touch with friends and family. In order to maintain the stability of the network, the following actions are prohibited:

- Downloading any non-research related files
- Downloading large files, especially audio/video files (including iTunes and streaming videos from YouTube, Megavideo, Netflix, etc.)
- Downloading any software application
- Gaining unauthorized access to remote Internet systems or abusing Internet systems or Internet users.
- Taking actions that compromise the security of the center network.
- Representing The School for Field Studies in any manner.
- Distributing SFS-owned knowledge or propagating falsified information about SFS.
- Spamming, hacking, virus distribution, etc.
- Illegally copying or redistributing copyrighted material.
- Viewing pornographic or illegal content.

In the event of any violation of this policy SFS reserves the right to suspend or terminate any or all Internet access. These rules can be adapted and changed at any time. We must emphasize the fact that the Internet is a resource and not a luxury; therefore **personal use for social media such as Facebook should be kept to a minimum**.

The internet is un-reliable at the center, due to its remote island location. The networked computers in the computer room are most reliable when it comes to consistently connecting to the internet. Students have found the network accessed by their personal computers is less reliable, very slow and frequently freezes up, partially due to the high volume of students attempting to use this network at once.

Therefore, SFS encourages students to “unplug” a bit during their time abroad and certainly not expect to use the internet in the same way they are used to at home. Living in the TCI is a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of the surrounding marine and natural environment, and interact with locals and friends from the program. While students are encouraged to stay in touch with family and friends at home, **it is important to limit the amount time spend surfing the internet or uploading/downloading anything**, as it slows the internet use needed for academic and communication purposes and takes away from the SFS student experience.

## News from the Field Blog

Be sure to let your friends and family know to check SFS News from the Field ([www.fieldstudies.org/blog](http://www.fieldstudies.org/blog)) often! Updates will include photos, posts from the faculty on what students have been doing most recently, as well as entries from students with their thoughts about their experience. It's a great way for your loved ones to follow your exciting adventures!

# What to Bring

SFS' suggested packing list contains all the items that are essential for this program. It was compiled based on feedback from past students and current staff; other than the required items, **most items are only suggestions. You do not need to bring everything listed in the optional sections. You should pack based on your own lifestyle and preferences.** You must have the required clothing and equipment when you arrive on South, as it will be difficult to acquire items locally at a reasonable cost.

We suggest that you pack your passport, underwear, a shirt, a pair of shorts, minimal toiletries, a swimsuit, sandals, medications, mask, and snorkel in your carry-on bag just in case your bags are delayed. Dive gear is best packed in a



sturdy duffel bag. Special “dive bags” are expensive and merely label the contents as valuable to others. Make sure your equipment is in excellent condition and ready to use upon arrival.

## Electrical Appliances

---

All electrical outlets at the Center are the same voltage (110) as those in the United States. No adapters or converters are necessary, but we strongly recommend that you bring a **surge protector**.

## Required Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items

---

You will have little storage space in your room; therefore, you should keep extra items to a minimum- **pack as efficiently and lightly as possible**. Loose, cool, cotton clothes are most comfortable. Women have found that casual sundresses and sarongs are good additions to their attire. **Bear in mind that clothing gets heavily used, dirty, damp, and can only be washed in saltwater. Clothing items that resist dirt and dry quickly are good for this reason. You should not expect to bring any clothing home in good condition.** Local standards of dress are more conservative, especially for women, than what we are accustomed to in the States. Modesty while experiencing another culture is always wise and culturally sensitive, however around the field station itself you do not need to be as modest as you do when you interact with the wider community. Shirts and shorts or dresses must be worn in the classroom and at meal times – simply wearing a bathing suit is not appropriate during these types of activities.

**Note: this packing list does not suggest amounts, so pack according to your own needs and how frequently you plan on hand washing your laundry. You will not need to wear a new outfit every day – you can wear the same things over and over!**

## Required Clothing

- Shorts. Shorts that stay clean, protect your upper legs, and dry quickly are best (such as board shorts or athletic/running shorts). Women should show modesty by not wearing super short shorts in town.
- Sarongs/sundresses
- T-shirts and tank tops. While it is hot here and you will most often choose to wear tank tops, there are times - walking in town at night, visiting with locals for research purposes, hosting guests at the Center- when sleeves are more appropriate. Shoulders must be covered when working in the kitchen in accordance with health code regulations.
- Casual long pants (for protection from insects)
- Long-sleeved, lightweight shirts for sun and insect protection in the field
- Rash guard (preferably long-sleeved) – essential for water activities. Long sleeve SFS logo rash guards are available for purchase at the Center for \$45.
- Bathing suits, including a one-piece suit for women to be worn while interacting with community members (or plan to wear a rash guard with a two piece).
- Pajamas or other suitable, lightweight sleeping attire
- Socks
- Sneakers – for running and exploring the trails around South Caicos
- Flip-flops, Tevas, or sandals – at least one sturdy pair that can withstand the rocks and sharp thorns around the island.
- Sunglasses. Salt (from the ocean/air) can corrode sunglasses, so it’s best to bring several inexpensive plastic pairs.
- Hat with visor or brim for sun protection

## Required Personal Items, Gear, and Toiletries

- 2 Nalgene, canteens, or plastic quart/liter bottles (32 oz. CMRS logo water bottles are available for purchase at the field station for \$15.00)
- Anti-itch cream (Benadryl Gel and Calamine lotion work well)

- Insect Repellent. An effective repellent that contains 10%-35% DEET is recommended. Students might also consider a natural repellent – those containing lemon eucalyptus oil work best. DEET-based bug spray can be purchased locally.
- Marine-safe (mineral-based) waterproof sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 25. Marine-safe sunscreens should only contain titanium oxide or zinc oxide as their active ingredients. Please do not bring sunscreens that contain oxybenzone, as this chemical is very damaging to coral and other marine life. Brands like Caribbean Solutions, Stream2Sea, Badger, Raw Elements, and Coral Safe are all good options and can be found online and at health food stores. Please note that the brand “Reef Safe” is not actually marine-safe, as it contains oxybenzone. The Center’s store sells bottles of SPF 25 Caribbean Solutions (6 oz. - \$10).
- General toiletries: students often end up paying extra baggage charges by over-packing in this area. There is a decent selection of pharmacy and toiletry items available locally, including at our own Center!
- **Biodegradable** soap, shampoo, and conditioner are required for washing in seawater and freshwater showers and for handwashing your laundry. Health food and camping stores carry many types of biodegradable products, but Suave and Garnier also make some biodegradable products that are widely available – check the label or call the company to be sure that are purchasing the ‘biodegradable formula’. You can purchase Dr.Bronner’s Castille soap, which works for all types of washing (including laundry), at the Center to save you space and weight in your luggage. We regularly stock Peppermint, Tea Tree, Lavender, and Citrus formulas (8 oz. - \$10). We also offer a limited supply of biodegradable shampoo and conditioner from Caribbean Solutions (8 oz - \$10).
- Prescription medications (packed in your carry-on!) to last the entire length of the program. All prescriptions must be cleared through the Dive Safety Office before diving, as some medications contraindicate diving activities.
- Personal first aid kit: You know what medications and supplies you need on a regular basis. **Please note that the Center has a first aid station with basic supplies only (band aids, tape, antiseptic). We do not have oral medicine for distribution.** It will be significantly less expensive (and you will find greater selection) if you bring these things from home. You should bring over-the-counter oral medications like Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen, cold medicine, allergy medication, Pepto Bismol and other medicines for digestive issues, etc. You should also have Band-Aids, antiseptic cream, little scissors, lip balm, and any items for personal needs (like Dramamine for motion sickness). Many students also bring ear drops or earplugs to prevent swimmer’s ear.
- Feminine Hygiene products: women should bring enough tampons or sanitary napkins to last the duration of the program (bring more than you think you’ll need). We encourage you to find the most environmentally friendly, biodegradable options, and look into alternatives such as the Diva Cup: [www.divacup.com](http://www.divacup.com).
- Extra prescription glasses and/or contacts. If you wear contacts be sure to bring enough solution to last the duration of the program, as they are not available to purchase locally.
- Backpack (a good sized day pack will suffice)
- Alarm clock (if you don’t have an alarm feature on your phone)
- Headlamp or small, lightweight flashlight and batteries (bring extras). Batteries are expensive; therefore rechargeable batteries are recommended. The Center can recharge AA, C, and D batteries.

### **Required Items for the Room**

- Small personal fan - particularly important for the warmer fall semester. Clip-on fans can be rented at the Center for \$5 with a \$15 deposit.
- Bath towel (quick dry towels are best!), face cloth, and beach towel.
- Bed sheets – twin size, fitted and flat – and pillowcases. A pillow will be provided.
- Lightweight sleeping bag or other lightweight blanket for overnight beach camping trips and/or if you tend to get cold while sleeping.
- Surge protector for personal electronics (camera, fan, etc.)

### **Required Items for the Classroom**

- **Laptop computer.** As a general recommendation, you should bring a PC (preferably) or Mac compatible laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2003 or later software, or office software that can export

Microsoft Office compatible documents. Mac computers are less resilient and often fail in the hot, humid weather on South Caicos, so bring a PC computer with you if possible. **There are no computer repair services available on South Caicos.**

**Note:** *Keep in mind that all readings for classes will be done on the computer, as the Center does not have the resources to print out many copies of large documents. If you have an **Amazon Kindle** or similar e-reader, students have found them helpful because of their convenience/portability.*

- Laptop carrying case (to help protect your laptop from the sand and salt air) and a security cable or lock to protect your laptop if you'd like. SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance.
- Notebook(s) for class notes and research data
- A flash drive (memory stick) with at least 4 GB (gigabytes) or more capacity – **you'll use this to submit all of your assignments**
- Pencils, pens, highlighters, and markers
- Any other school supplies you'll need for the program. Don't count on buying any of these items locally. Even if they are available, they will be expensive.

## Required Equipment for Snorkeling and SCUBA

---

**Note: There is NO rental of SCUBA equipment on South Caicos. SCUBA tanks, weight belts and weights are provided at the Center. DO NOT bring weights to the program with you!**

- Mask: Check for a good fit and solid strap construction and bring an extra strap. If you need corrective lenses, you'll find it easier to get a supply of disposable contacts for the program rather than investing in a mask with prescription lenses. You will be required to remove your mask underwater during review skills and training, so disposable contacts are the best option. **If you are unable to wear contacts, you should purchase a prescription mask because you will need to be able to see underwater!**
- Fins: There are two options, 1) fins with straps, sized to fit over dive booties (strongly preferred as you can use the booties in many other situations) – bring extra straps and clips OR 2) full foot fins.
- Hard-soled diving booties or similar wading/diving shoe. These are essential – make sure the booties fit in your fins!
- Snorkel: Make sure you have a full-sized adult snorkel. Smaller models will restrict air flow.
- Underwater slate (4x6 or comparable size) and regular pencils (bring at least 2 spare pencils, as well). These can be purchased cheaply on eBay.
- Mr. Clean Magic Eraser – the best way to clean your underwater slate!
- A mesh dive bag: Please ensure that this bag is large enough to hold your snorkel gear (mask, fins, booties, and snorkel).
- Waterproof watch: Make sure it can withstand the pressures of diving if you are a SCUBA diver. Students should bring extra watch batteries or even a "back-up" watch as there is nowhere to buy or repair watches on South Caicos.
- 'Save A Dive' Kit – when purchasing your equipment, ask the shop to put one of these together for you. This should include fin straps, mask straps, spare computer batteries, mouth pieces and bulbs for your flashlight.
- Dive light: It is likely that you will have the opportunity to go on at least one optional night snorkel during your time at the Center (weather permitting). We hold no responsibility if night snorkels are not possible during a session. **If night snorkeling is offered, you will be unable to participate unless you bring a primary underwater flashlight.** A standard dive light with adjustable strength is best – different circumstances and visibility conditions will call for different amounts of light. LED lights are suggested as they burn longer and can double as a flashlight on land. Bring rechargeable batteries and a charger – they better for the environment.

## Required Equipment for SCUBA Only

---

You **MUST** bring a **SERVICE** receipt for your SCUBA equipment (BC, Regulators) completed within the last 12 months. If your equipment is new (less than 12 months of age) then you **MUST** bring the sales receipt. Students arriving without this documentation will **NOT** be allowed to dive with the gear.

- Dive Computer (with at least 75% battery power): There will be no opportunities to repair a dive computer that fails, so bring a backup battery and O-ring that you can change yourself as there are no facilities on South Caicos where this can be done should there be a problem. Because of the lack of repair facilities, **even students with a dive computer should bring PADI dive tables from your dive certification organization.**
  - A dive computer that provides depth, time, and no-decompression limits is mandatory. Some of these computers can be purchased with sensors that also provide information about tank pressure, which is acceptable.
  - If your dive computer does not have these sensors, you will need a **submersible pressure gauge (SPG)**: The SPG displays tank pressure and is required equipment unless the information is displayed by the dive computer and sensor combination.
- Buoyancy Compensator (“BC”): Try on the BC before purchasing it to ensure a good fit! You should stand sideways in front of a mirror and make sure that there is no gap between your shoulder blades and the BC. You may even want to consider connecting the BC to a tank before trying it on.
- Primary (second stage) and secondary (second stage = octopus). Your first stage should have a yoke connection or you should bring a din to yoke adapter.
- Alternate air source retainer: Retains second stage regulator close to the body. Helps prevent damage to the reef and to your equipment and is important for safety.
- Console retainer: Retains the console close to the body. Helps prevent damage to the reef and to your equipment and is important for safety.

## Optional Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items

---

This list has been compiled based on suggestions and feedback from previous students – you might not need to bring **all** of these items, so it is important to keep in mind what you might *personally* need as you read through this list!

- Lightweight rain or spray jacket
- Leggings to wear during field exercises (for men and women) – these should be non-cotton as they are worn in the water to help protect against jellyfish stings.
- Digital camera and plenty of memory cards, or a traditional camera with plenty of film! Some students have found it helpful to document the scope and specific nature of their work, particularly the Directed Research. Underwater cameras are also useful.
- Dry bag (waterproof bag to protect small personal items – e.g. camera, medications)
- Sporting equipment: we have plenty of gear at the Center, but you can bring items to donate if you’d like. There is a volleyball court, soccer field and cricket ground. The local school also has a tennis court, but limited rackets. New or used tennis rackets, Frisbees, basketballs, soccer balls, beach volleyballs, and footballs will get plenty of use.
- Backpack
- Small personal reading lamp
- Index cards for flash cards
- Paperback books (a couple to read and exchange) – there is a small reading library at the Center
- Personal MP3 player, headphones, and speakers
- Spare pair of sunglasses
- External hard drive to back up laptop
- Bandanas
- Emergen-C/Airborne, and electrolyte power for water
- Hair detangler for those with medium length to long hair

- Banners, posters, and flags from your home school – students come from colleges and universities all over the country, so it is fun to have each represented at the Center. They must be made to hang outdoors and withstand wind/rain, so no paper please!
- Any snack food that you like to eat frequently and may not be available locally such as granola bars, trail mix, crackers, peanut butter, chocolate, candy, etc. – ***strongly encouraged!!***
- Collapsible fishing pole, if you are interested in fishing, though most locals use a line for fishing rather than a pole.

**Note:** Spear guns and lobster loopers are illegal in the TCI and will be confiscated by the TCI government; do **NOT** bring them! Fishing licenses are also required in the TCI. They can be purchased locally and students must adhere to local laws. Do not fish illegally or in MPAs!

## Optional SCUBA and Snorkel Equipment

This list has been compiled based on suggestions and feedback from previous students – you might not need to bring **all** of these items, so it is important to keep in mind what you might *personally* need as you read through this list!

- Wetsuit: Students who are susceptible to cold may consider bring a 1-3mm “shorty” wetsuit to wear during the program depending on sensitivity.
- Compass: Either wrist mount, BC mount, or preferably on your console mounted with a retractable clip.
- Waterproof box: (such as a “Pelican case”) to hold spare parts, glasses while diving, etc. This could be the “Save a Dive Kit” for keeping spare equipment parts.
- **Snorkeling vest – only for students who are weak swimmers, but STRONGLY encouraged in such cases.**

## Optional Supplies for the South Caicos Community

Schools here have limited equipment for hands-on science, art, and physical education. If you would like to bring items as donations, you certainly may and the SAM will help you distribute in an interactive, fun, respectful way. You will learn of other ways to give back to the community once you are at the Center. Board games and sporting equipment that is given to CMRS will be used by community members during engagement activities on Saturdays, by older residents at the Wellness Center, and by elementary school students during Physical Education classes. Anything you bring and donate to the field station will be used by the larger South Caicos community.

# Finances

Shopping on South Caicos is limited, and cash (US dollars) is the preferred medium of exchange as credit cards are not accepted at local stores (exception being the Cox Hotel). Many service stores in Provo and Grand Turk will accept cards. In September of 2012, an ATM machine was installed on South, so you will be able to occasionally withdraw more cash if necessary. However, it charges standard withdrawal fees, so it is still best to bring most of the cash you plan on spending with you to start. There are times, unfortunately, that the ATM does not have money or is malfunctioning. The bank on South is only open for 3 hours once a week. It is difficult to cash traveler's checks (e.g., American Express, Visa, Citibank, etc.) on South (with a \$1 bank fee per traveler's check cashed). Personal checks are not accepted, even by the bank, and the Center does not maintain sufficient funds to act as a bank. Cash should be carried in small denominations (preferably no bigger than \$20 bills- 5s and 10s are best for use in town) and you should plan to rely mostly on cash that you bring with you to last throughout the duration of the program. Debit or credit cards will be useful for emergencies and while in transit to/from the program. We have a small safe on site where student valuables (passports, cash) can be secured.

## Estimated Costs

---

| <i>Expenditure</i>   | <i>Cost</i>                               |
|--|---|
| Spending money (depending on how often you plan to eat at local restaurants, purchase food and drinks in town, etc.) | \$250                                     |
| Money if you plan to purchase a local cell phone or SIM card   | \$100 + minutes                           |
| Room/research equipment deposits<br><b>Note:</b> Deposits will be returned on the day of departure.                  | \$60                                      |
| Break between sessions (for <b>summer combined students</b> only)  | \$500-\$700                               |
| AOW course (optional, for OW certified divers only, offered during session 2)  | \$150 (cash or credit card)               |
| <b>TOTAL ESTIMATE</b>  | \$410-\$1260<br>depending on your session |

## Tips for Living and Studying Abroad

### Introduction

---

Upon arrival to your SFS campus, all students participate in an orientation that provides information specific to the Center and country, including local community and culture, daily Center operations, and relevant risks and hazards. Prior to arrival on program, SFS recommends that students take time to understand the risks associated with travel in a foreign country as well as ways to increase their own personal safety. The following is a useful guide that provides information on best practices when traveling abroad.

### Country Information

---

Visit government websites to learn country-specific information about your destination:

- Bureau of Consular Affairs: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)
- Overseas Security Advisory Council: [www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov)
- CIA World Fact Book: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html)

### Personal Safety

---

Understand the potential health and safety hazards you could encounter while traveling. Consider that most incidents resulting in injury or death of students while participating in study abroad involve:

- Transportation and traffic accidents
- Use and abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Sexual harassment and assault
- Crime or theft
- Mental health issues
- Region-specific illnesses

### Situational Awareness

---

Be aware that travelers, especially those who have just arrived abroad, are often a likely target for petty theft or crime. Take steps to protect yourself by being aware of your surroundings.

- Travel in pairs or groups.
- Avoid traveling alone or being out past local curfew.
- In the event of confrontation, remain calm and focus on de-escalation and removing yourself from the situation.

- Keep belongings close to your body.
- Consider leaving valuables or “flashy” jewelry at home or on campus.
- If carrying valuables, make sure they are not visible or easily accessible in outer pockets of backpacks or purses.
- Be wary of undue attention or affection.
- Be cautious about accepting food or drink from strangers. Where alcohol is served, keep an eye on your drink at all times and do not accept drinks that you did not see being opened in front of you.
- Understand that the idea of consent varies between different countries and cultures. The current dialogue and understanding of the concept of consent in the US often does not apply in other cultures. Situational awareness and understanding of local cultures is an important factor in reducing risk in certain situations.
- Protect yourself from sexually-transmitted diseases by using protection (e.g. condoms) or practicing abstinence. While it may be intriguing to start a relationship in a new country, consider the ramifications that a fleeting or short-term relationship may have within the local community.
- Avoid events that might be prone to civil disturbances, including protests, demonstrations, elections, and anniversaries of difficult events. If you see a protest forming, leave the scene. Even demonstrations meant to be peaceful can turn violent with little or no warning.
- Trust your instincts; if a place does not feel right, move to an alternative location as quickly and safely as possible. If that is not an option, find a secure area and shelter in place.

## Local Laws and Cultural Norms

---

Know the local laws to avoid putting yourself in a situation that could have been easily prevented. Behave maturely and in a way that is respectful of local cultural norms.

- Be aware that there might be country- or region-specific laws on alcohol consumption, smoking, behavior in public (e.g. public displays of affection, public intoxication, behavior at cultural sites, photography, etc.), carrying prescription medications, and many others.
- Wear clothing that is consistent with, and respectful of, local dress. Some monuments and places of worship may require certain parts of the body to be covered.
- Be aware that non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in the United States may be inappropriate or culturally insensitive to people in other countries.
- Be aware of local events or holidays where you are traveling, as some religious events or holidays require a heightened sense of cultural awareness or specific behaviors.

## Food Safety

---

Water used for consumption and food preparation at SFS centers is filtered or boiled. Students are able to access potable drinking water at all times while on campus or on field trips. When off campus, students are encouraged to carry potable water from campus and consider safe drinking and eating practices. **Remember:**

- Water in many regions is often not potable, including ice, juices, and water for brushing teeth or showering. Be aware of how cups, plates, and utensils are cleaned or rinsed, as food or drink can be contaminated by utensils rinsed in non-potable water.
- If sampling street food, consider how it was prepared. Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish, and shellfish or cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature. Instead, eat food that has been cooked through and is still steaming hot.
- If consuming fruits or vegetables, select options that can be peeled or appropriately washed.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products, including cheeses.

## Protection from Insects

---

When exposure to ticks or biting insects is a possibility, travelers should practice preventative measures:

- Take prophylactic medications where recommended
- Use a chemical-based insect repellent
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing

- Tuck pants into socks and wear closed-toe shoes and long-sleeve shirts
- Be aware of active times of day for insects in the region, and prepare accordingly
- Use a mosquito-net at night, if needed
- Check yourself for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day

## Policies

By signing the SFS Terms and Regulations Contract, students agree that they have read, understand, and will abide by all SFS policies. Violation of any policy may result in disciplinary action.

**SFS Policies are in effect at all times throughout the full duration of Program Time, including downtime, rest days, and field trips.** The SFS Policies function under a set of Operational Objectives, which are common sense principles designed to support SFS centers and their students in functioning safely and successfully. The Operational Objectives include:

- Ensuring the well-being, health, and security of students and staff
- Providing high-quality academic programming
- Maintaining positive and cohesive local community relations
- Maintaining local and international standards necessary to successfully operate all Centers and SFS Headquarters

Students should consider the Operational Objectives at all times in order to prevent circumstances that may prevent them from successfully completing the program, disrupting the program experience of other students, or compromising the ability of SFS to operate. Such circumstances can include injury, preventable illness, reckless behavior, poor judgement, or acting in a way that harms community relations. Through pre-departure literature and program orientation, SFS works to empower students and requires them to manage their behavior in order to achieve the following objectives and aims:

- Taking responsibility for their own behavior
- Being aware of health, safety, and security risks present in the local area or specific to an activity
- Having good situational awareness
- Behaving maturely and in a way that is respectful of local cultural norms
- Knowing the country or region-specific laws
- Maintaining good individual and SFS relationships with the local community and other communities you may encounter

During Non-Program Time, which on certain programs may include designated breaks such as Weekends Away or Mid-Semester Break, certain SFS Policies are not in effect. While not under the full set of SFS policies, students are expected to observe the SFS Operational Objectives at all times.

### SFS-Wide Policies

---

#### *Alcohol Policy*

No possession or consumption of alcohol is permitted on SFS property including any SFS vehicles, common areas, student quarters, Center grounds, field trip sites, or during any program activities. Any use of alcohol that in any way compromises the Operational Objectives will be addressed and may include disciplinary action. The permissible drinking age is defined by the laws of the country that the Center is located in. Centers may have additional restrictions. Please check with the Student Affairs Manager or Center Director regarding pertinent local laws.



### ***Drug Policy***

Use or possession of any drugs, chemical or medications that are illegal or interfere with the Operational Objectives of any SFS program or site, is prohibited. Illegal drugs are defined by United States and host-country laws. SFS reserves the right to interview, investigate, search for and confiscate any substances or paraphernalia in violation of this policy. SFS has a zero tolerance illegal drug policy – violation of this policy will result in expulsion. This policy is in force from the beginning to the end of the program, including Non-Program Time.

### ***Violence Policy***

There is no place for violence of any kind at SFS. Violence can be verbal as well as physical. Some examples include making threats, verbal intimidation, bullying, aggressive physical contact or behavior otherwise designed to frighten or intimidate. This list is not intended to be comprehensive. Violence of any sort will not be tolerated by SFS and may be grounds for immediate expulsion from the program. This policy is in force from the beginning to the end of the program, including Non-Program Time.

### ***Sign-Out Policy***

All students must sign themselves in and out of the Center so that they can be located in case of an emergency.

### ***Visitor Policy***

Aside from visiting professionals and guest lecturers, SFS does not allow visitors on site during the program because it is disruptive to the program schedule and the dynamics of the group. For security reasons, no local visitors are allowed on the Center property without prior consent from the Center Director. This policy increases students' and staff's safety, security, and sense of privacy.

### ***Local Laws Policy***

SFS supports and complies with all local laws. Students will be briefed on local laws and expectations soon after arriving at the Center. Any violation of a local law will result in SFS disciplinary procedures and in addition, may subject you to local penalties such as fines, arrest, or deportation. This policy is in force from the beginning to the end of the program, including Non-Program Time.

### ***Non-Program Time Policy***

During designated Non-Program Time, such as Weekends Away or Mid-Semester Break, students may have the opportunity to travel to other regions of the host country or neighboring countries. During this time, while not under the full set of SFS policies, students are expected to observe the SFS Operational Objectives at all times.

SFS does not provide students with recommendations for activities during Non-Program Time, but informs students about the inherent risks associated with travel and certain activities. Please note that students are responsible for their actions, judgement, safety and well-being during this time.

Prior to travel, students are expected to submit itineraries, including emergency contact information, mode of transportation, and accommodations. Travel to countries currently under a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Warning Level Three are prohibited during the full duration of the program. Additionally, the SFS Safety and Student Life Department may prohibit travel to regions with known or foreseeable political unrest, credible threat of terrorism, unstable weather patterns, or other factors of high risk upon review of student itineraries.

Non-Program Time dates are clearly established by SFS staff and travel must be done within this established time frame. **Individual early departures or late returns will not be permissible.**

## **Swimming Policy**

Swimming is always at your own risk. Where SFS maintains swimming pools or conducts recreational swimming during program time or on SFS property, protocols and guidelines will be presented. Recreational swimming is always optional and may be prohibited on certain programs or in certain regions due to local hazards or cultural practice. In Panama and the Turks and Caicos, where swimming is integral to the program, there will be a swim assessment and orientation to waterfront guidelines. In such cases, students must successfully complete a swim assessment, conducted by trained SFS staff, before participating in any other swim-related activities.

## **Motor Vehicle/Boating Policy**

SFS students may not operate SFS motor vehicles or motor boats. SFS students may not ride in an SFS motor vehicle or motor boat without an SFS-approved operator. Students may not ride in non-SFS motor vehicles or motor boats without prior Center Director approval. Operating a motor vehicle, or operating or riding on a motorbike, motorcycle, moped, ATV, or motorized recreational watercraft, is prohibited for the full duration of the program, including Non-Program Time.

Seatbelts must be worn in all motor vehicles, where available. SFS Centers that utilize motor boats have additional Center-specific protocols including maximum occupancy, approved seating, personal flotation devices, radio protocols, rescue and first aid equipment in compliance with all local regulations.

## **Sexual Harassment Policy**

It is the policy of SFS to respect the rights of students to work and study in an environment free from any type of sexual harassment and to investigate and resolve any reported cases of sexual harassment. Each administrator, faculty member and student is responsible for ensuring a work and learning environment free from sexual harassment. SFS policy specifically prohibits any faculty or staff member from having a sexual relationship with a student at any time while the student is enrolled in an SFS program. In addition, no SFS employee shall threaten, promise, or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that any student's refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect the student's status with SFS, including but not limited to influence on grades or recommendations.

Moreover as a part of its overall nondiscrimination policy, SFS prohibits all forms of harassment of others because of race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual preference, national origin, physical or mental disability, or veteran status. In particular, an atmosphere of tension created by disparaging racial, ethnic, sexual, or religious remarks does not belong in the SFS workplace or learning environment and will not be tolerated.

## **Campus-Specific Policies**

---

The SFS Center in the Turks and Caicos has policies that are unique to the program, taking into consideration local environmental hazards and the local community and culture. Campus-specific policies may change at the discretion of SFS staff. Upon arrival to campus, students will be presented with a complete list of campus-specific policies; the following list is not exhaustive.

### **Curfew**

Curfew is 11:00 pm on Sunday through Friday. Curfew is 12:00 am on Saturday. The sign in/out board is across from the front gate. Students MUST sign out/in when leaving the Center, except during program-related activities accompanied by staff.

### **Quiet Hours**

Quiet hours begin at 10:00 pm every night. During quiet hours (10:00 pm to 6:00 am), swimming in the pool is not allowed. The classroom, the computer room, and the staff offices are designated quiet areas all of the time. CMRS has 24 hour courtesy hours, so you are justified speaking up if an individual is causing excessive noise.

## Buddy System

It is recommended that students travel in groups of two or more outside of the Center.

## Swimming

Students who wish to use the campus pool must complete the on-site swim test. Swimming is always at your own risk. Pool hours are 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. There is no diving or jumping into the pool or running on the pool deck.

Large and small vessel boat traffic, wind, waves, weather, water currents, and marine life pose significant hazards to swimmers in Cockburn Harbour. To manage these risks, we have a swim zone, marked with buoys, next to the dock area directly in front of the Center. No swimming in channels for your safety; please refrain from jumping from elevation on and off of SFS property.

Students must use the buddy system while swimming. SCUBA will be led by waterfront staff only. There is no swimming or snorkeling within 12 hours of having consumed alcohol and no SCUBA diving within 24 hours of having consumed alcohol.

## Animals

Pets or animals of any kind are not allowed in the Center. Please do not bring any stray dogs or cats back to the Center as we do not have the resources to care for animals. You will notice stray dogs and cats on South, and this is a serious problem of the community. With limited funds, the government is not focusing on the problem, and locals generally do not care for their animals in the way you would at home in the US. Thankfully there are two non-profits whose mission is to protect and aid the overwhelming populations. We help our contacts at The TCI SPCA and The Potcake Place, based in Providenciales, by 1) turning the CMRS into a temporary veterinary clinic for annual spays and neuters, 2) sending sick animals to them (when space is available), and 3) educating you about their programs that help visitors adopt TCI animals. Please also take caution when near animals on South; there are wild horses and donkeys which are not accustomed to human interaction. Some of the stray (and owned) dogs and cats can also be aggressive.

## Disciplinary Procedures

---

Violations of any SFS-wide policies, Center-specific rules and protocols and Operational Objectives may result in one or more of the following disciplinary actions:

- Verbal warnings
- Written warnings
- Probation
- Expulsion

All staff and students are expected to understand and to actively support the standards of behavior as presented in our written materials and in our on-site orientations. While all staff are responsible for understanding and enforcing our standards for behavior, all formal disciplinary measures for students are at the discretion of the Center Director in consultation with his or her staff and Headquarters, where appropriate. Generally speaking, behavioral issues arising out of misunderstandings or that are not overly compromising to SFS Operational Objectives will be addressed with education, clarification and intermediate disciplinary measures (warnings/probation). However, any behavior that significantly compromises the Operational Objectives or any violation of SFS policy may be cause for immediate expulsion. In the event of an offense at the level of Written Warning or above, SFS will contact the student's home institution. SFS also reserves the right to contact parents/guardians in the event of any behavior that potentially compromises the student's ability to participate in our program. In the event that a student is asked to leave the program, SFS will return the student to the point of program departure at his or her own expense. At this time, any and all responsibility on the part of The School for Field Studies will cease. Students who are expelled or who depart early from the program will be withdrawn from all courses and receive no credit. All outstanding financial obligations to SFS remain in full effect.

# Insurance

## Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance

---

All SFS students are automatically enrolled in the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan through American International Group, Inc. (AIG). This insurance is effective for the duration of the program and does not cover personal travel before or after the program.

Benefits of the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan include:

- \$350,000 for emergency medical evacuation
- \$100,000 for emergency security evacuation
- \$20,000 for repatriation of remains

The coverage provided by the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan is NOT the same as health, medical, or dental insurance. The plan covers the cost of transportation, accommodations, and medical care associated with an evacuation (e.g. life-saving support during transport in an air evacuation), in cases where the evacuation is deemed medically necessary. This insurance plan does not cover urgent or emergency medical care, basic medical care, laboratory tests, or pharmacy needs. Therefore, students on SFS programs are required to supply their own health insurance, valid in the country or countries in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program.

## Health Insurance

---

Students on SFS programs are required to supply their own health insurance, valid in the country or countries in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program. Students are not allowed to join an SFS program without identifying such coverage.

Students looking to obtain health insurance should keep in mind the following:

- Most domestic health insurance plans do not cover out-of-country medical expenses. Students should check with their policy provider on what services are available out-of-country.
- Students should check to see if their home institution provides or offers international health insurance.
- Most insurance companies provide international coverage on a reimbursable basis, as most foreign public or private medical care facilities do not accept insurance for payment. Therefore, **students need to carry cash and/or a high-limit credit card to pay for medical expenses up front**, and then request reimbursement when they return home.

In the event that a student requires medical attention during a program, a staff member will accompany him or her on the visit(s) to a medical care facility. Students are liable for all incidental expenses, including medical costs, transportation, accommodations, etc., incurred by all parties involved during these visits. Students must pay in full for these expenses prior to departure from the program.

## Divers Alert Network (DAN) Insurance – **REQUIRED** for SCUBA Diving

---

Neither healthcare plans nor SFS' additional emergency evacuation policy will pay for treatment should you develop decompression sickness or other diving-related conditions. Dive-related injuries and illnesses are extremely rare at SFS, but they can happen, and the costs of even basic treatment can be high. Recompression facilities are available in the Turks & Caicos Islands, but the cost of those services can easily exceed US \$2,000.

Currently, medical coverage is available through the Divers Alert Network (DAN) for US \$75 per year. When compared to the cost of professional medical treatment, SFS believes that a dive-specific insurance policy is a smart investment. For this reason, SFS requires all students who will be participating in SCUBA diving to purchase DAN insurance before the start of the program by calling 1-800-446-2671 or finding DAN online at [www.diversalertnetwork.org/scuba-dive-insurance](http://www.diversalertnetwork.org/scuba-dive-insurance). It is possible to buy a membership to DAN without purchasing DAN insurance, so if you are planning to dive during your SFS program, you need to make sure that you have in fact purchased DAN insurance.

DAN is a non-profit organization dedicated to dive safety and accident prevention and is a recognized leader in the field of dive medicine research. **At a minimum, you must register for the DAN Master Plan** (The total cost is \$75, including a DAN membership), which provides coverage for any and all in-water injuries.

**When you register for DAN insurance, include the SFS sponsor number: 030697**

You must bring proof of coverage with you to the Center upon your arrival. The South Caicos staff will verify your policy at the start of the program. **You will not be allowed to SCUBA dive without proof of DAN insurance.**

## Personal Property Insurance

---

SFS does not provide insurance for personal property of students, staff, and visitors.

## Travel Insurance

---

SFS does not provide travel insurance or reimbursement for trip cancellation. Students can look into options for travel insurance through their personal travel agent or through Advantage Travel.

# Health and Safety

## Introduction

---

Every region has its own unique health challenges. Statistically, the most common injuries sustained by students on SFS programs are recreational in nature and the most common medical problem is traveler's diarrhea. However, international traveling and living presents potentially significant health and safety risks and challenges.

## 24-Hour Emergency Hotline

---

If a parent or guardian needs to urgently contact a student in the field, an emergency call can be made to the **SFS 24-hour Emergency Hotline: 978-741-3544**. After dialing, press "2" when prompted to leave an emergency message and to receive a call back from the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. For non-emergency inquiries while a student is in the field, a message can be sent to [safety@fieldstudies.org](mailto:safety@fieldstudies.org).

## Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications

---

Students should bring enough prescription and/or over-the-counter (OTC) medication to last the entire duration of the program. This also applies to any personal travel that may be done before or after the program. If you are having difficulty procuring the full amount of medication, please alert the SFS Safety and Student Life Department immediately, as most medications cannot be replaced or refilled once in country, including common OTC medications. It is important to note that it is illegal to send medications through the mail and this will result in confiscation, criminal charges, or deportation.

While traveling, keep all medications in their original container to avoid issues through border control and customs. Note all medication on the SFS Online Medical Review Form and please alert the Safety and Student Life Department to any changes, including dosage. It is highly recommended that students do not discontinue or alter the dose of certain prescription medications before or during the program. Please consult with your prescribing physician and the Safety and Student Life Department with any questions.

## **Dietary Requirements**

---

If you have a medically-necessary dietary requirement, you must contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department within one week of acceptance. All dietary restrictions or preferences (e.g. gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, etc.) should be noted on the SFS Online Medical Review Form and discussed with either your Admissions Counselor or the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. SFS is able to accommodate most dietary needs, but variety of food may be limited due to local availability, cultural practice, and cost.

## **Accommodating Students with Disabilities**

---

Students requesting physical and health accommodations should contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. Students requesting learning accommodations should contact the SFS Office of Academic Affairs. SFS will work with students, home institutions, and physicians to determine the required level of accommodation and whether or not it can be safely and reasonably maintained on program. While SFS strives to make accommodations for most disabilities, due to the remote nature of the programs, there are varying levels of accessibility, services, and accommodations at each SFS center.

## **Physical Conditioning**

---

Field work by its very nature is physically arduous: the days are long, the traveling seldom comfortable, and creature comforts generally lacking. The program involves a few fairly strenuous hikes as part of the academic program, so physical conditioning is strongly advised. In order to withstand the pace and rigors of the program as well as any “foreign” health risks of the country, it is strongly advised that you be in good physical health. Due to the humidity and temperatures, SFS has noted that chronic health problems often flare up, even if they are under control in the U.S. You should discuss such conditions seriously with your physician and SFS Admissions or the SFS Safety and Student Life Department to see if this SFS program will be right for you.

## **Existing Medical Conditions**

---

Students must note any current or past medical conditions on the SFS Online Medical Review Form. If you have any medical conditions that could lead to sudden illness, such as allergies to foods or insect stings, asthma, chronic heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, or others, you must inform the SFS Safety and Student Life Department.

If you carry any critical medications (e.g. Epi-Pens, inhalers, glucagon, etc.), you must carry them with you at all times while on program.

If you have asthma, even if you have not had any issues in recent years, it is strongly recommended to bring an inhaler on program. Past students have found that their asthma can be triggered by environmental conditions (e.g. humidity, heat, dust, elevation, allergies, etc.) of certain program locations. Keep in mind, you may be exposed to allergens or environmental conditions you have not been exposed to in the past.

If you have a severe allergy or a family history of severe allergies, even if the reaction has been minor in the past, it is strongly recommended to bring two or more Epi-Pens with you on program. Due to the remote nature of the program, access to medical care can be delayed. In addition, you may be exposed to allergens that you have not been exposed to

in the past, as well as the possibility of repeat exposures. Please contact the Safety and Student Life Department with any questions or concerns.

**Be certain to take care of any existing medical issues before arriving in country.** Due to the remote nature of the program, medical care is not always easily accessible. You may be responsible for all costs acquired to reach advanced medical care for treatment of pre-existing or non-emergency issues, including transportation and accommodations for yourself and an accompanying staff member.

## Medical Care in the Turks and Caicos

---

Each SFS Center has a Student Affairs Manager (SAM) who is responsible for risk management, health, and safety on program. SAMs are certified Wilderness First Responders (WFR) and can provide initial first aid in the event of an illness or injury. If further medical care is needed, SFS staff will accompany the student(s) to the nearest and best available medical care facility. In the event of an emergency or hospitalization, SFS will contact appropriate emergency contacts as necessary.

The SFS Center in the Turks and Caicos is located within walking distance to a community health care clinic. The clinic is normally staffed by two Registered Nurses (RNs) and one doctor and provides basic health care. The clinic charges \$25 for a visit and accepts cash only. However, certain medications are not available at the local pharmacy, and thus must be ordered from a neighboring island and paid for by credit card.

The closest advanced medical care is on the island of Grand Turk, approximately a 10 minute flight away, or Providenciales, approximately a 25 minute flight away. The hospital on Providenciales is well-respected and has a 24-hour recompression chamber for diving accidents. Keep in mind, organizing transportation to a neighboring island via flight or ferry may take several hours and will be expensive. In case of a major trauma or medical emergency, students may have to be air evacuated to Miami, Florida.

Keep in mind that most insurance companies provide international coverage on a reimbursable basis, as most foreign public or private medical care facilities do not accept insurance for payment. Therefore, **students need to carry cash and/or a high-limit credit card to pay for medical expenses up front**, and then request reimbursement when they return home.

There are some medical emergencies or conditions that may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program, including injuries and illnesses such as infectious mononucleosis, malaria, or orthopedic injuries that result in reduced mobility. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS in conjunction with the treating physician.

## Disease in the Turks and Caicos

---

SFS requires that all students consult with a travel medicine clinic or physician who can look at the personal travel itinerary and medical history to develop a health strategy for travel, including appropriate vaccinations, medications, etc.

To locate a nearby travel medicine clinic, ask the Study Abroad Office at your university for recommendations. Your university may provide these services on campus. Alternatively, you can look up nearby travel medicine clinics on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

## CDC-Recommended Vaccinations for Travelers to the Turks and Caicos

---

For a list of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended vaccinations, visit the CDC website at: [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). **Be sure to schedule your appointment at least six weeks prior to departure, as some vaccinations require a series of doses over a specific time frame.**

**Hepatitis A** is a viral infection of the liver that results in jaundice and severe malaise. It is rarely fatal, but disease can be protracted, and infected persons can be ill for six weeks or more. The disease is transmitted through ingestion of food or water that is contaminated by infected fecal matter, even in microscopic amounts. Symptoms occur two to six weeks after first exposure to the virus. There are now two vaccines licensed in the United States that are extremely effective in preventing hepatitis A infection, and that are quite safe to administer. Both vaccines require two doses (the booster dose is given six to nine months after the initial dose). The initial dose, however, is effective in providing protection. The CDC recommends that all travelers to TCI receive this vaccine.

**Hepatitis B** is a contagious virus that is transmitted through blood, blood products, and other body fluids (such as semen). Symptoms include a sudden fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, dark urine, joint pain, and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice). Symptoms may last from several weeks to several months, or can develop into chronic hepatitis B with increased chance of liver disease and liver cancer. Travelers can become infected through unprotected sex with an infected person, injection drug use, transfusions with unscreened blood, and contaminated needles, so the CDC recommends this vaccine for travelers who might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures. Please keep in mind, medical procedures could be necessary due to unforeseen accidents or illness.

**Typhoid fever** is a serious disease caused by bacteria in contaminated food and water. Symptoms of typhoid include lasting high fevers, weakness, stomach pains, headache, and loss of appetite. Some patients have constipation, and some have a rash. Internal bleeding and death can occur but are rare. The CDC recommends that most travelers to TCI get this vaccination.

*The recommendations enumerated above are specific for TCI. If you are planning to travel outside the country, the health risks may be different, and you should consult with your travel medicine specialist as to what additional measures may be required.*

## **Non-Vaccine Preventable Disease in the Turks and Caicos**

---

There are a number of non-vaccine preventable insect-borne diseases found in the Turks and Caicos and protective measures are recommended.

**Dengue** is a viral infection that can cause a very severe flu-like illness. Subsequent exposures can cause symptoms to increase in severity. While rare, severe cases of dengue can be fatal. The disease is transmitted by mosquitoes and is becoming increasingly common in many tropical countries. There is no vaccine against dengue available. Preventative measures include chemical-based mosquito repellent and protective clothing (e.g. lightweight, loose-fitting, long sleeves and pants). While local transmission of dengue has been reported in the Turks and Caicos, there have been no reported cases on South Caicos island.

**Chikungunya** is a viral infection transmitted by mosquitos and recently detected in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Symptoms most commonly include high fever and joint pain. The virus is transmitted by the same mosquito that carries dengue (active during the daytime), so preventative measures are the same: chemical-based mosquito repellent and protective clothing (e.g. lightweight, loose-fitting, long sleeves and pants). While local transmission of chikunguna has been reported in the Turks and Caicos, there have been no reported cases on South Caicos island.



**Zika Virus** is a mild viral infection that causes flu-like symptoms, including fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis. The primary concern for Zika virus, as stated by the CDC, is for women who are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant. In rarer cases, incidents of Guillain-Barre syndrome and other neurological disorders have been reported. The virus is transmitted by the same mosquito that carries dengue (active during the daytime), so preventative measures are the same: chemical-based mosquito repellent and protective clothing (e.g. lightweight, loose-fitting, long sleeves and pants).

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV Infection** rates among heterosexuals in the TCI were high at one point, but have been decreasing for years as education efforts increase. Students are advised to be as careful as they normally would in regards to transmission of these sorts of diseases.

**Diarrhea** is the most common ailment that students encounter. Diarrhea can be caused by a number of different factors, including 1) the process of acclimating to a new environment or new foods, 2) stress or other emotional challenges, 3) use of certain medications, and 4) infections caused by bacteria, viruses, or parasites. Shortly after arriving in country, students participate in an orientation that explains the importance of diligent hand washing, personal hygiene, kitchen hygiene, careful food handling, and water purification. These are important preventative measures that all students are expected to closely follow throughout the full duration of the program. Students who do experience diarrhea are encouraged to inform the Student Affairs Manager or other SFS staff member so that they may receive the proper treatment, which may include oral rehydration, a bland diet, and potentially a visit to the local medical clinic for diagnostics and medication, if necessary. Prior to coming on program, some students are prescribed an antibiotic for “traveler’s diarrhea” by a home physician or travel clinic. If this is the case, it is highly recommended to consult with the Student Affairs Manager at the onset of diarrhea, prior to starting this medication. Overuse or improper dosage, attempting treatment for a non-bacterial or non-parasitic cause of diarrhea, or failure to properly complete treatment could result in a persistent or worsening condition.

## Other Hazards in the Turks and Caicos

---

Some of the hazards associated with this SFS program, field work and living in the Turks and Caicos are described below. While SFS has tried to anticipate as many risks as possible, you may nonetheless encounter risks that are not described below.

**Heat/Sun:** You should bring along a good supply of sunscreen, and carefully monitor your exposure to the sun, especially during their first week of adjustment to the climate. Use sunscreen, wear a hat, stay in the shade when possible, wear loose, light-colored clothes and get out of the sun if you feel dizzy. Dehydration occurs easily in hot environments. A conscious effort should be made to replace fluids lost through evaporation, which can be as much as two quarts an hour when exercising.

**Insects:** There are scorpions and poisonous spiders on South Caicos, but they are reclusive and rarely encountered. Biting centipedes and wasps produce painful bites on rare occasion. Students with bee sting allergies should consult their physicians about bringing a bee sting kit which contains antihistamine and epinephrine. A prescription is necessary to obtain a kit. Mosquitoes become serious pests when there has been rain or the wind dies. For these times, SFS recommends a supply of good insect repellent.

**Bacteria:** Many different strands of bacteria occur in healthy individuals and cause no problems. However, close living conditions, heat, and humidity can increase the risk of bacterial infections if the skin has been damaged or disrupted by bug bites, cuts, or a skin condition (e.g. eczema). Students must take daily precautions to maintain hygiene, including covering cuts and scrapes, protecting themselves from bugs, and staying dry when possible.

**Hazardous Marine Life:** Several biting and stinging marine animals are common, including fire coral, bristle worms, sea lice, and sea urchins. More serious are scorpion fish, sting rays, and biting fish. A wetsuit, worn as thermal and anti-

sting protection, is highly recommended along with booties or water shoes. Students will be provided with information on all hazardous marine life during the program orientation.

**Motor Vehicle Accidents:** Driving on roads in TCI is more hazardous than driving in the U.S., especially at night or during periods of heavy rains. It is also important as a pedestrian to have a heightened awareness of traffic. Do not assume pedestrians have the right-of-way. It is important to utilize only reputable and verified modes of transportation. At no time are students allowed to operate an automobile, boat, motorcycle, scooter, personal water craft (e.g. Jet Ski), or other motorized vehicle. Students are not permitted to ride on motorcycles, motorbikes, scooters, or personal water craft at any time during the program, including Mid-Semester Break.

*Please note this list is not exhaustive or complete. If you plan to travel to other areas, either inside or outside of the country, the health and safety risks may be different, and you should educate yourself and consult with your travel medicine specialist as to what additional measures may be required.*

## Cultural Adjustment

### Defining Cultural Adjustment

---

Think about how you are feeling now as you prepare to go abroad with an SFS program. Are you feeling excited? Anxious? Overwhelmed? Content? Afraid?

Now, think about how you might feel when you first arrive at your host country. Will you feel high on life? Bombarded by the newness of it all? Jet-lagged? Irritated or humbled by the reality that you are unable to communicate as well as you are used to being able to?

How will your emotions and thoughts change with time after the initial high of arrival? Will you be amazed and/or frustrated by the differences between how things are done at home and how things are done at your temporary home abroad? Confronted with these differences, will you question values you held and always thought were in the “right”? Will you grow in depth of thought and sense of self? Will you be unbearably homesick and seek out a friend to talk with?

It may seem like a very long time from now, but imagine returning home after study abroad. How do you hope you have changed as a result of your time abroad? How will others see your new personal, cultural, social, and academic developments? Will it be easy to reconnect with family, friends, and your community? Will it take effort? How will you communicate your experiences and developments and help loved ones take part in an important period of your life?

The flow of emotions and experiences above describes the cultural adjustment process that many students move through before, during, and after their study abroad terms.

So, what *is* cultural adjustment? Most simply put, cultural adjustment is the process of adjusting to a different cultural context. It is the process of filtering through initially identifiable differences in eating style, language, customs, and more to discover the underlying values and assumptions that are the foundation of a certain way of life. Whether you are from the United States or from another country, encountering another way of life may entail questioning your own basic values and beliefs. Cultural adjustment may beg of you to ask the question, “Who am I?” By asking such a fundamental question and working through the answers, you can build a strong sense of self, gain more confidence in who you are, learn to identify at a basic level with people from any background, and become more accepting of others. At this point, you will have begun to develop a sense of global citizenship, a crucial key to developing a peaceful global society.

### Signs of Culture Shock

---

Experiencing some difficulty adjusting to your new environment is normal and even important for personal development. Some students experience:

- Homesickness
- Physical symptoms such as mild colds and headaches
- Anxiety, depression, disappointment, and/or frustration
- Defensiveness toward home culture(s)
- Tendency to put the host or home culture(s) and way(s) of life on a pedestal
- Criticism toward home or host countries
- Gratitude for the chance to rethink world views and customs

## Cycling through Cultural Adjustment: The “W” Curve



Based on Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963)

The model above puts into visual format the process of cultural adjustment previously described.

**Arrival:** Upon arrival, many students are exhilarated by the myriad of new sights, sounds, and smells of their host country. You may feel physically exhausted from the travel, and you may need to give your body time and care to help it adjust to the different weather, geographic conditions, food, and time schedule. During this initial period, you may experience a variety of heightened emotions.

**Culture Shock:** After the initial high period, you may begin to notice the many differences between your home and your temporary home abroad. Processing these differences may be difficult, and many students report emotions of anxiety, stress, confusion, homesickness, discouragement, hostility toward the local culture and customs, and even depression. You may experience physical symptoms such as colds, headaches, or stomach upsets. On the other hand, some students experience very little culture shock.

**Recovery:** Fear not! With effort and time, you will get your legs back under you again. You may wish to employ some of the coping strategies listed in the next section, or find your own way to regain and rethink equilibrium.

**Adaptation:** At this stage, students have renegotiated belief systems and “the way things are done.” You may feel at home in your residence abroad.

**Returning Home:** Some students find that just when they have become comfortable with their surroundings abroad, it is time to return home! Because you are traveling back to a familiar place, you may not expect to experience reverse culture shock, which mirrors the culture shock process. Many students experience re-entry culture shock more severely than they do culture shock. The best way to smooth the reverse culture shock process is to prepare for it before, during, and after your time abroad. Make sure to share your experiences and personal development with important family and friends so that they can take part in your growth! Continuous communication in a spirit of sharing (rather than expecting or needing others to understand) will greatly smooth the reentry process.

## What Does It Mean To Be From Another Place?

Perhaps this is your first time visiting a foreign country for an extended period. By removing yourself from the USA or your country of origin and being confronted with difference, you may gain a greater awareness of what it means to be American, Chinese, Mexican, or whatever your nationality.

In part because of the USA's prominent media and political and economic presence, you may find that people around the world have formed viewpoints, even stereotypes about Americans.

Below are some examples of stereotypes of Americans that you might encounter in-country. Keep in mind that there are many different points of view on Americans.

- Wealthy and wasteful
- Caring about the environment
- Heavy drinkers
- Careless
- Want to help others
- Loud and dumb
- Openly friendly and kind
- The youth like to party
- Academically-oriented

As you can see, stereotypes are not always accurate, and they do not apply to every person within a culture. Making generalizations about a culture or people is normal and even useful in learning about them. However, be aware of the possible negative impact of stereotyping. Be open to and appreciative of the great differences between individuals within a population.

## A Note to Women And Diverse Students

---

What it means to identify as LGBTQIA+, a woman, a person of color, a member of a certain religious group, a participant with a disability, etc. may be very different in your host country than at home. For example, a gay student may find that the host community is much less accepting of homosexuality than his university community. Students who are accustomed to being part of the majority group at home (e.g. Caucasian students) may need to readjust to living as a minority abroad. The change may be for better or for worse, but you might not be treated or viewed in the way that you are accustomed to at home.

There is more information about women and underrepresented students traveling abroad than it is possible to cover in this section. Please use the resources below to better inform yourself as you prepare for your abroad experience.

- Women Travel Tips – Women: <http://www.womentraveltips.com/index.shtml>
- University of Minnesota's Learning Abroad Center (Scroll down page for links): <http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/index.html>
- All Abroad – Ethnic Minorities: <http://allabroad.us/>
- Mobility International USA – Students with Disabilities: <http://www.miusa.org/>

## Coping With Cultural Adjustment

---

What are some tricks for coping with and growing through the cultural adjustment process?

- Keep a journal. Be your own best counselor and write about the experiences, emotions, and thoughts that you have.
- Take care of your physical body. Be sure to get sufficient exercise, and take care of your body's nutritional needs. Get enough rest and sleep.
- Communicate. If you are feeling particularly down, approach a friend, staff member, or mentor. Sometimes just talking about difficulties you are facing makes the burden seem lighter. Many of the people surrounding you at the Center have experienced or are experiencing the same cultural adjustment process as you. There is strength and comfort in sharing!
- Step out of your comfort zone. When everything around us is new, we sometimes just want to withdraw. Although some level of withdrawal can be helpful, in the end, there is more joy in living fully than hiding from fear. Do not do anything unreasonably risky or foolish, but practice your language skills with community members. Try delicious foods you had never heard of before. Take advantage of your abroad experience, because you will not have the same exact opportunity again!
- Breathe! The simple act of inhaling and exhaling a few times will help clear your mind.

- Keep in touch with family and friends at home. Regularly sharing your experiences will help ease the reentry process. However, be aware of spending too much time on the phone or Internet to the detriment of your abroad experience.
- Remember to be grateful for what you have. A sense of gratitude makes cultural adjustment easier because of a positive outlook. You will see things in a more positive light, and those you meet will respond to you more positively because they can sense your humility and good feelings.

The above are just examples of strategies for facing cultural adjustment. There are a multitude of ways that people of cope, and you may discover other strategies that work particularly well for you.

**Everyone at The School for Field Studies extends a warm welcome to you and looks forward to seeing you in the field!**