



THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# BHUTAN

Center for Himalayan Environment and Development Studies

## Student Field Preparation Guide

Semester Programs

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)



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# Introduction

This Student Field Preparation Guide is an important tool to help you prepare for your SFS experience! Use it to prepare for your phone interview, after you are accepted to the program, as you prepare to depart, while you are in the field and even after you return home.

We begin with a reminder list of the vital tasks you need to accomplish, including what you need to send to SFS and when. There is information about traveling to and from the program, visa instructions, and arrival at the airport on the first day. Next, you will find information about the particular country where you will be spending a semester. 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 on a day-to-day basis and what to expect as far as living conditions. Finally, we have included some resources on safety and traveling abroad, and details on our school-wide policies. **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

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Please see the SFS website for PDFs of forms and access to your online account & checklist. Most forms can be submitted online through the account that you created when you applied to your SFS program, but any other forms/information can be submitted by mail, email, or fax:

**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)

If you have questions about items on your online checklist or cannot access it, please contact admissions.

**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:

- **Non-refundable Program Commitment Deposit of \$500.** 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 June 15 (Fall Programs) or November 15 (Spring Programs):

- **SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.** Submitted electronically through your SFS online account.
- **Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form.** Submitted electronically through your SFS online account.
- **FERPA Notice and Consent.** Submitted electronically through your SFS online account.
- **Passport number and expiration date** (passport must be valid for at least six months after the last day of the program). Submitted electronically through your SFS online account.
- **Scanned color copy of your passport** (biography and signature pages, make sure your passport is signed) sent via email as a JPEG OR PNG image. No black and white and no photos!
- **Scanned color copy of the front & back of your Student ID** sent via email as a JPEG OR PNG image. No black and white and no photos!
- **Scanned color copy of your complete visa application** (form will be sent to you via email as part of your travel instructions about 3-4 months prior to the start of the program)
- **SFS Medical Forms:**
  - **SFS Online Medical Review Form.** Self-disclosure form that you complete online. Submitted electronically through your SFS online 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.

- **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.
- **Documentation that you received the rabies pre-exposure vaccination series.** This is required for participation. The vaccination is a series of three shots given over 21 to 28 days. Plan accordingly. (Note: completion of this series is due before departure; while it is recommended to begin early, this documentation is not due on the aforementioned deadlines).

***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 Fall Programs:** June 1<sup>st</sup>

**SFS Spring Programs:** October 30<sup>th</sup>

## Other Preparation To Do's

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- Contact SFS alumni on campus or as provided by SFS to learn more about what to expect.
- If you are a non-US passport holder, check with SFS Admissions Counselor on your eligibility for a visa to Bhutan. *See Passport and Visa section of this Field Guide for more information.*
- If you are a permanent resident (NOT a U.S. citizen) 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.
- Schedule a consultation with a travel doctor or your physician **at least 60 days** prior to departing for the program. Be sure to review:
  - Your vaccination history and requirements for every region in which you plan to travel.
    - **Note: the Rabies pre-exposure vaccination series is required** for program participation. The vaccination is a series of three shots given over 21 to 28 days. Plan accordingly.
  - Recommended medications for every region in which you plan to travel
  - Your prescription and over-the-counter medications. Prescription medications should be in their original, labeled containers and packed with you in your carry-on luggage. Work with your physician and insurance to ensure you have enough prescription medication to last the full duration of the program, as it is rare you will be able to find the medicine you need in-country. **If you have trouble obtaining medication for the full duration of the program, please contact SFS Safety and Student Life department ([safety@fieldstudies.org](mailto:safety@fieldstudies.org)).**
  - Review and understand what the specific risks are for each region and country you will be visiting during the program and any pre- or post-program travel.

- The Program Information for Participants and Medical Professionals, listed on your Physical Exam and Authorization Form. Consider your level of fitness as well as any medical or physical accommodations that may be needed.
- Make sure you have **comprehensive international health insurance** (*required*). Documentation of your insurance is necessary on the SFS Online Medical Review Form. Check with your provider to make certain that your policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the country or countries where you are going.
- Configure your laptop to access your home school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field.
- Take care of any obligations or arrangements you might have at your home institution for the semester following your time abroad. This includes student housing, course registration, campus employment, etc. Opportunities to do this while on program may be limited.
- Make two clear copies of your flight itinerary and your passport. Take one copy of each with you and leave one copy with a friend or family member and save copies in your email inbox.

# 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 online, through your local travel agent, or by working with Advantage Travel Agency, which is the SFS travel agency of choice. **You will receive your specific travel instructions and contact information for Advantage Travel about 3-4 months prior to the start of your SFS program** – do not try to make arrangements before receiving these instructions.

## Advantage Travel

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SFS does not offer a group flight for this program, but we do encourage you to book your flights through our travel agent, Advantage Travel. You are not required to book with Advantage, nor is it guaranteed to be the cheapest offering available. However, there are several 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 a break or pre/post-program.
- It will be fun to begin your travels with your fellow SFS students!

## Making Your Travel Arrangements

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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 and date at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, Thailand (BKK).** The SFS staff members will be at the airport to meet students. We typically have students arrive in Bangkok a day or two before the first day of the semester to allow a buffer for travel delays. Students will spend a night or two at a hotel in Bangkok together before traveling to Paro, Bhutan. The cost of this hotel stay and transportation included in the cost of the program, so you will not incur any additional expense. During these overnight stays in Bangkok students are required to remain in the hotel with the group. Independent travel into the city or sightseeing will not be possible.

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.

The flight between Bangkok to Paro on Druk Air will be arranged by SFS. SFS will quote you a price for this flight and bill you separately for this ticket, once booked. **Please do not attempt to arrange for your own travel to Paro.**

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.

At the end of the program, if you choose to engage in personal travel, you may fly to an alternative destination (like Kathmandu, India, etc.), but you must arrange your flight departing Bhutan through SFS and it must leave the same day as the group departure. At the end of the program you **may not travel from Paro via land** to Nepal or India; your departure must be by flight. Unless you have made approved alternate arrangements, you cannot remain in Bhutan after the program has concluded.

**TRAVEL TIP:** 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:** To make your semester with The School for Field Studies more sustainable, we ask you to consider a carbon offset for your flights to and from Bhutan. Ask the airline or travel agent.

## Passport and Visa

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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. You must have your valid passport in hand four months prior to the program to ensure that we can secure a visa for you.

Your visa to enter and travel in Bhutan will be arranged through SFS. You will complete a visa application form and send a scanned color copy of your passport so that we can process this visa for you. Bhutan has very specific regulations for visitors to the country. Tourists are subject to a daily tariff (\$150-250 per day). SFS students are invited to Bhutan as visitors of UWICER and BES, our partners in Bhutan, and our visas are processed with their assistance. As such, there are some restrictions on student travel and visas:

- SFS cannot assist with any visa extensions before the program begins or after it ends. If you would like to spend extra time in Bhutan, you must contact a Bhutanese travel agent to make arrangements that allow you to be in the country legally. In summary: the visa will only cover you from the first day of the SFS program through the final day.
- Students must fly on the group flight into Paro at the beginning of the program (usually from Bangkok).
- At the end of the program, you may fly to an alternative destination (like Kathmandu or to India), but you must arrange your flight through SFS and it must leave the same day as the group departure.
- You may not travel from Paro via land to Nepal or India at the end of the program; your departure must be by flight.

U.S. citizens will not need a visa for Thailand. Non-US passport holders must determine if they need a visa for Thailand and apply for it if necessary.

# About SFS Bhutan

## About Bhutan

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Bhutan is known as *Druk Yul* or Land of the Thunder Dragon, where red chilies pepper most meals, Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product, and Buddhism is inscribed in the landscape. Located in one of the world's ten biodiversity hotspots, Bhutan has incredible biological diversity. The country is landlocked and encompasses about 46,500 square kilometers, sharing borders with the Tibet to the north/northwest and India to the south/southeast. It is said to be about half the size of the state of Indiana and is divided into three major geographic regions: the high Himalaya of the north, the hills and valleys of the inner Himalaya, and the foothills and plains of the south. Elevation ranges from 300 meters (100 feet) above sea level in the south to over 7000 meters (23,000 feet) above sea level in the highest peaks of the Himalayas in the north.

The Bhutanese people are comprised of Ngalo, Sharchop, Monpa, Tibetans, Lhotshamp, and many other smaller groups. Bhutan's population is only 700,000 people, speaking more than 19 languages and dialects. Dzongkha is the official language, but Nepali and English are common. Vajrayana Buddhism is the official religion of Bhutan, but Hinduism is another major religion. The people of Bhutan are known for their warmth and kindness.

Most of the Bhutanese population lives in rural areas, depending on agriculture and livestock. The main crops grown where the program is located are buckwheat, rice, potatoes, wheat, and barley.

Throughout history there have been many rulers and civil conflicts. Recently, the nation has again dramatically transformed its government. Bhutan's well-liked fourth king, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, abdicated to the crown prince in 2007, a year that marked a century of monarchy in Bhutan, and then set about drawing up the country's first constitution to prepare for the democratic elections of 2008. The fifth king, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, brought Bhutan through the transition to a constitutional democracy in 2008. The second national election took place in March 2013 and Bhutan citizens recently voted in Bhutan's third democratic election, electing the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT) party into power for the next five years.

The economy has had a steady and healthy growth rate over the past 25 years, largely due to exports of hydro-electricity to India. The government has invested well in health care (especially rural health care) and life expectancy rose from 40 to 66 years over 25 years. During the 1990s the primary school enrollment rate leapt by over a quarter to 72 percent. At the same time, the fourth King maintained strict control over the population—particularly, through decrees preserving the environment and the Buddhist culture of the majority. In a society rich in sacred streams and forests and memories of demons, this was, by and large, popular. It also ensured the protection of a precious ecosystem; under Bhutan's constitution at least 60 percent of the country must be forested.

There is much to learn about Bhutan -- the country, its government, society and economy, as well as its environment. You will come away from this program with a well-rounded appreciation for these topics in Bhutan.

## Program Overview

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A unique aspect of Bhutan is that progress is not purely defined by economic achievements as in most countries, but it is also based on the level of cultural and environmental preservation and development. In the Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan, people have developed rich cultural traditions and social and political institutions that reflect Buddhist principles of The Middle Path - integrating people and nature, and traditional knowledge and Western science. Sustainable management of natural resources, including soil, water, species and minerals, is critical for this country whose economy is largely based on these resources.

In early 2008, Bhutan's government shifted from a monarchy to a constitutional democracy, opening the door for devolution of authority over natural resources to regional governments and communities. Since most of the population resides in rural areas, sustainable management of natural resources is critical for achieving the dual goals of poverty

alleviation and biodiversity conservation in this country where limited transportation routes and communication lines can restrict access to markets.

Defining baselines for biodiversity and ecosystem function is critical and by coupling training in field research methodologies and scientific communication, scientists and environmental authorities will be more effective at reaching development and conservation goals. In Bhutan we will learn about culture, Buddhist philosophy, and environmental issues. Trekking across valleys and ridges and through villages, students will gain an intimate knowledge of the local environments and rural livelihoods. Students will develop skills in assessing environmental problems, defining research questions, conducting field research, and communicating results. They will gain an appreciation of the complexity of identifying and addressing conservation issues in a rapidly developing region.

SFS is partnered with the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environmental Research (UWICER), an international research and training facility in Bhutan, and the Bhutan Ecological Society (BES). SFS students and faculty will help UWICER and BES advance their research agendas in several priority areas.

## Program Schedule

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**PLEASE NOTE: SFS programs usually operate 6 days a week, Sundays off. However, in an effort to maximize the experience in Bhutan, Sundays are frequently filled with travel, optional cultural activities, and/or the trek. Please be prepared for limited down time!**

The academic program is delivered over a six-day week. During program time (6 days a week) you will find yourself following a rigorous schedule. There is no real typical day we could describe for the program, but we will be having breakfast, lunch and dinner at the usual times in the day. You may have class in the morning, a field exercise in the afternoon, then some homework. Or an all-day field exercise. Or a full day of classes, mixing lecture, discussion, and workshop. Although we do our best to reserve Sundays for studying, relaxing, or visiting, there are just too many things to dig into in Bhutan! You may find Sundays filled with optional activities such as exploring a monastery, volunteering at a school, taking a hike in the Paro valley, or spending time in town.

Please note that while we make every attempt to adhere to the schedule we've set, there are frequently changes, so we all must be flexible and patient when changes occur!

## Students and the Local Community

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During your stay at the Center, you are a member of several communities.

- The first is the SFS community. We will foster a supportive, stimulating learning community where our actions and behaviors are governed by a set of common values we will define as a group.
- Second, you will be part of an international research and learning community of UWICER and BES. This comprises a professional staff, including scientists, administrators, and logistical support.
- Third, you will be a temporary resident to the Paro and Bhutanese community. In these communities, our behavior will be governed by the local and national norms. There are many occasions when you will be expected to interact with the local residents in both academic and informal situations.

Please remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies from culture to culture and be sensitive to this at all times while interacting with community members. The staff will brief you on cultural norms in more detail during orientation.

Note that it is a great privilege to be in Bhutan. We want to ensure that we demonstrate an awareness of this privilege and respect for the country and culture. While we will be learning about the country and its people, each of you will be an ambassador of your own culture, country and school.

# What to Expect

## Weather and Climate

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Bhutan is the same latitude as Miami and Cairo, but can be considerably colder, especially in the mornings and evenings. The high elevation where we operate makes up for the low latitude. The climate varies widely depending on the elevation and the area. In the southern border areas, it is tropical, but in the high Himalaya regions, can always be cold! The SFS program will generally operate at an altitude of 7,200 ft, where the field station is located in Paro, but you'll travel to areas up to 13,000 feet and down to 1,000 feet on expeditions.

Bhutan has four distinct seasons:

- **Summer** is from June to September and is the Monsoon season.
- **Fall** is from September through December, is a much drier time of year. It is also slightly cooler.
- **Winter** is from December through March and brings light snow and temperatures below freezing at night.
- **Spring** typically occurs from March to June and rainfall may increase as the months move closer to the monsoon season.

Be prepared for rain, mud, sun, cool weather, and in some instances, snow. In the lower elevations, be prepared for warmer climates. The mountains always keep us guessing!

## Library and Computers

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**Students need to bring their own laptop computers with them for use during the program.** 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.**

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.

Be sure to take your project data with you upon completion of the program, as it will not be available from SFS later.

## Electrical Appliances

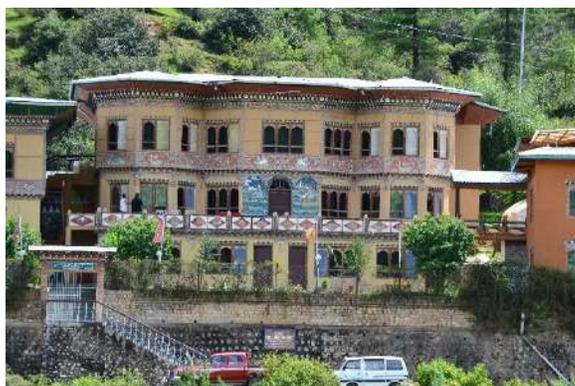
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The voltage in Bhutan is: 230V, 50 cycles, AC (in U.S. it's 110V). Almost every electrical charger will have a range of usable voltage printed on it; check your chargers and appliances for this usable range before packing. Bhutan uses the standard Indian round pin sockets (see image below). These adapters may be purchased in Bhutan. The Center is equipped with universal power strips, but you may wish to have an adapter/converter for travel.



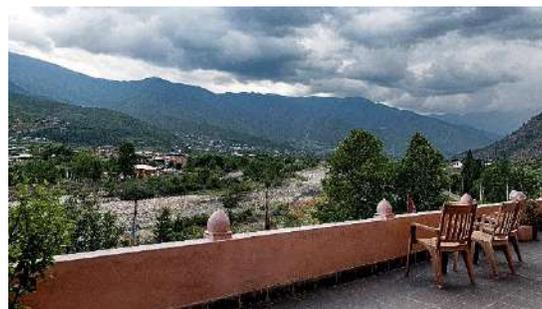
## Housing

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The field station is a former hotel located in Paro, Bhutan – a town located along the Paru Chhu River about one and a half hours west of the capital city of Thimphu. The rooms house 2-4 students and have a bed, desk, and storage spaces. Each student room has a private bathroom attached with showers, sinks, and western style toilets (these are rare – you'll encounter many squat toilets during your time in Bhutan). The field station also has a classroom space, kitchen and dining area, washing machines (line dry),

staff housing and office space, and common spaces for students to relax. You will be staying in hotels and homestays while traveling on expedition, as well as camping.



## Food

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All meals will be provided to us either on campus or at restaurants. While we will make every effort to accommodate special dietary needs, we will not be able to cater to individual preferences.

Be prepared to eat a lot of rice, and many interesting varieties of it. Vegetables may include fiddle heads (young fern fronds), potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, and chilies, among other temperate crops. Cheese, butter and milk are also a staple element of the Bhutanese diet. We try to have dal (lentils) available at least once a day.

If you have any favorite snacks from home, please be sure to bring them. A variety of snacks can be purchased locally, including chocolate, candy, potato chips, and dried fruits.

## Special Dietary Requirements

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**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 travel to 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, can sometimes 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. Being vegan is particularly difficult due to limitations of specialty food available in country and extensive use of dairy in meals.

## Special Religious Requirements

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If you have questions regarding a religious holiday which falls during program time, please contact your Admissions Counselor immediately upon acceptance. Schedules often involve complex coordination with many parties and reservations are often made months in advance.

## Communications

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### Internet

Internet access and email are available for students at the field station to support **research and educational work, and to communicate with friends & family back home**. The internet is often slow and un-reliable at the field station, so its strength should be reserved primarily for academic purposes. Email and apps like Viber/WhatsApp will be the best way to keep in touch with home regularly, but Skype video calls will not be permitted. 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.

### Telephone

Students will be provided with local cell phones to use for the duration of the program. If you have an unlocked cell phone that you are bringing from home, you may also purchase a SIM card in Bhutan (about 2 USD) and load it up with credit. Receiving calls from outside Bhutan is at no charge to the recipient.

### Mail

Do not expect to receive post mail while in Bhutan, but you can send mail home easily and Bhutan is known for their lovely postage stamps!

# Packing Guide

SFS's packing list includes items that are essential for this program. You must bring these items with you to Bhutan.

**SFS strongly advises packing your carry-on bag with the following items: a change of clothes, basic toiletries, one warm garment, rain coat, your binoculars and camera, laptop, prescription medications, and any other essential items to be comfortable for three days after arrival; luggage is sometimes delayed while in transit to the program.**

Druk Air limits passengers to two checked items with a combined 66 pounds weight limit and one carry-on bag (not included in the 66 pounds limit). We strongly recommend that you test-pack your belongings to make sure you meet baggage requirements. You will be charged for excess weight in the Bangkok airport, and you will have to pay in cash (Thai Bhat), so weigh your luggage before you head to the airport. Additionally, make sure that you can carry all your belongings without assistance – and leave space for souvenirs!

You will want to have a day pack that will fit your personal items and snacks during the day for the multi-day supported trek. **NOTE:** Your sleeping bag, pad, or all of your extra clothes will be transported by vehicle during the trek.

## Required Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items

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Bhutan is a formal and modest country – citizens are required to use the traditional dress in workplaces and businesses. Students should dress nicely for class, visits to villages and monasteries, and research presentations. In public (e.g. town, meetings, guest lectures, etc.) students should wear short or long sleeves and long pants or a long skirt. Most students have enjoyed purchasing and wearing the traditional Bhutanese dress (*kira* for women and *gho* for men) which is always very appreciated by the Bhutanese people and is well received at formal events. You will look great! Students can purchase traditional clothing in the first few days of the program. A full *kira* costs approximately 1500 Ngultrum (Nu – the Bhutanese currency, check online for the latest exchange rates) and a *gho* approximately 2500 to 3000 Nu.

Be advised that the following items are not appropriate to wear in public during our program:

- Tight clothing, including leggings or yoga pants. Leggings with shorts or a skirt over them are okay for exercising and class.
- Tank tops
- Short shorts
- Skirts with hem above the knee. Long skirts are best and what Bhutanese women wear!
- Shirts that are tight, have a low v-neck or back, cut-out style, or have very short sleeves. Neither bra straps or midriff should show.

Students should be prepared for the possibility of extended cold and damp weather: bring warm clothes, in layers. The temperatures will range and nights can be chilly – especially during the Spring semester. Bring multiple layers of warm clothes, including a hat and scarf, and mittens and/or gloves.

## Required Clothing and Footwear

- **Pants:** synthetic blends that dry quickly are best. You'll want rugged pairs for trek and field work, as well as casual pants (eg jeans). You'll also want some comfy pants for the dorm. Waterproof pants will be helpful during this program as well.
- **Shorts:** for sports only: long, to the knee (no short-shorts for sports unless paired with leggings underneath).
- **Tops & Outerwear:**
  - **T-Shirts:** wool or synthetic are great for chilly nights, wet weather, and field days. Cotton shirts are nice for non-fieldwork days but please keep them loose-fitting with no midriff exposed.

- **Long-sleeved shirts:** light fabric for working in the field and in the sun, and heavier ones for warmth and protection. Capilene or wool is a great option.
- **Formal top** (optional if you plan to purchase and wear the traditional Bhutanese formal outfit – *gho* or *kira*).
- **Light wool or fleece sweater:** you will likely use this layer every single day. Cotton sweaters/sweatshirts work well at the Center
- **Heavy wool or fleece sweater**
- **Winter coat** (down or synthetic – not just for field excursions, but also for down time at the Center or in town)
- **Waterproof** (NOT just water resistant) **hooded rain jacket**
- **Underwear and socks:** 4-5 pairs of wool or synthetic (not cotton) hiking socks (a pair of synthetic liner socks may help cut down on blisters). Past students have also recommended a pair of synthetic underwear for the trek.
- **Pajamas**
- **Footwear:**
  - **Hiking boots:** waterproof highly recommended as field work will be done in wet environments. Be sure to break in your boots in before the program.
  - **Casual shoes and/or sneakers** (durable, close toed, and good in the rain)
  - **Rubber sandals or flip flops** for around the center
- **Sun hat** - baseball or wide-brimmed (the sun is intense at high elevations)
- **Sunglasses**
- **Cold weather gear:** Wool or fleece hat and scarf and gloves or mittens

### Required Personal Items, Gear, and Toiletries

- **Headlamp** (or handheld flashlight).
- **Toiletries.** Due to luggage weight limits, we recommend that you purchase basic items such as toothpaste, soap and shampoo in Bhutan. Do bring special items if you need them.
- **Feminine Hygiene Products:** You can purchase basic feminine hygiene items (pads) in Bhutan, but if you prefer a certain brand, please bring along. Tampons may be difficult to find, so if you prefer this product, please bring enough to last the duration of the program. You might also consider using a menstrual cup as an alternative to reduce plastic waste.
- **Wristwatch** - preferably water-resistant
- **Small gift for day-stay:** There may be an opportunity for a day stay with a local family. If this occurs, it's good to bring a gift. We recommend gift be modest and represent home (it's great to bring pictures from home-the families love it). Great gifts are calendars, locally made items (maple butter, nice candy), picture frames, a CD, etc.
- **Personal First Aid Kit** - with anti-itch creams, Neosporin, Bacitracin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, Pepto Bismol, Band-Aids, tape, tweezers, anti-histamines, etc. You will find this to be useful.
- **Any necessary over-the-counter medications or prescriptions** (in sufficient supply for full duration of program and any additional personal travel. These medications will not be available at the field station and are difficult to find locally. This includes Tylenol, Benadryl, motion sickness meds (and ginger candies), cold and cough medicine and anything for flu. It is also recommended to bring a course of antibiotics (like Cipro and/or a Z-Pak) to treat sickness in the field (under the advice of a doctor). Probiotics and vitamin C are helpful as well. Please also note that roads in Bhutan are extremely curvy, so it is recommended to bring motion sickness medications, even if you normally do not experience motion sickness. SFS cannot provide these medications.

### Required Items for the Dormitory

**NOTE:** In the dorms and at hotels, sheets, towels, a pillow and a blanket will be provided. There are mirrors and dressers in each room.

- **Sleeping bag:** Warm sleeping bag (at least 20°F rating) for the camping trip and to supplement bedding provided if you tend to get cold.
- **Towels:** Even though towels are provided for the most part, you should bring one shower towel and one face towel/wash cloth to use during the trek or just as back up. Quick dry is best!
- **Sleeping pad:** (Therma-rest or cell foam pad for camping)

### **Required Items for the Field and Classroom**

- **Day pack** for field work and trek with waterproof pack cover; anywhere between 18-30L should suffice!
- **Duffel bag for overnight excursions** (can be purchased locally)
- **Waterproof stuff sacks or sturdy plastic bags** – gallon-sized Ziploc bags work well
- **Notebooks, pens and pencils** (can be purchased locally)
- **Tupperware/Rubbermaid container for packed lunches** (can be purchased locally)
- **Water bottles** – 2 bottles of 1L capacity, or 1.5-2.0L bag. Camelbaks are nice for the trek. (can be purchased locally)
- **USB memory stick.** Recommend at least 1 GB. You will use this to share work and to take your work and photos home with you at the end of the program (there tend to be a lot of pictures to take home).
- **Computer.** Students are required to bring their own personal laptops (contact Admissions if this is a problem). As a general recommendation, this should be less than 4 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2007 or later software, or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents. A tablet cannot replace a laptop. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure non-Microsoft Office products provide Microsoft Office compatible documents to faculty.

### **Optional Clothing and Equipment**

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- **Gaiters** to keep the mud and rain out during trek and field work
- **Rubber boots:** fairly light, below-the-knee-high, rubber boots with good tread. Do not plan to purchase in Bhutan; they are of poor quality. (There are 1-2 field activities that involve walking into the river where you may find these useful).
- **Swimsuit** to use at the hotel in Bangkok or if you are interested in visiting the hot stone baths in Bhutan during the semester!
- **Formal outfit** (eg formal pants and top, or long skirt or dress): If bringing a skirt or dress, they should be knee or floor length for nice occasions. Most students will purchase a kira or gho for formal occasions, however!
- **Camera**
- **Small bag for around town**
- A **small botanical hand lens** (10x) is recommended for those interested in plants and invertebrates.
- **Pocketknife** (do NOT carry this in your carry-on luggage)
- **Umbrella** (can be purchased locally)
- **Journal** (can be purchased locally)
- **Games** to play during free time
- **Snacks:** There will be opportunities to purchase snacks throughout the program (healthy options in Thimphu!). While snacks will be available, students are encouraged to bring a few emergency snack bars.
- **Baby wipes**
- **Hand sanitizer**
- **Trekking poles** (only if you use these at home for health reasons)
- **Binoculars**– preferably 8 x 40, but anything in the 6 x 30 to 10 x 40 range is fine. Make sure they are properly aligned before you leave.

## Prohibited Items

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Plants and animals, dead or alive, are prohibited upon arriving at the airport in Bhutan. As are packaged meats, soil, and that peanut butter and jelly sandwich that dad packed you for the flight. More information can be found at the website for Bhutan Quarantine and Inspection Service.

## Finances

Listed below is a partial cost estimate for the SFS program in Bhutan. The total amount will vary significantly with each individual's consumer tendencies (cookies, souvenirs, necessities) and their pre- and post-program travel plans, among other things. You may want to pay for any optional activities during your free time and also any extra snacks.

Bhutan still operates mostly on cash basis, though credit cards are accepted at some craft shops. Our recommendation is to bring enough U.S. dollars cash for the program **OR** ensure to have enough funds available in your bank account to use an ATM with debit card. Traveler's checks are not recommended. You will have access to ATMs in Paro, Thimphu, and Bumthang. You will get a better exchange rate with \$100 bills (instead of smaller bills) and bills must be clean, not torn or worn, and best if Series 2006 and newer. One hundred-dollar bills from the year 1996 are not accepted.

Remember you will be responsible for the \$200+ daily tariff should you choose to remain in Bhutan after the program ends, which you **MUST** arrange with a travel agent in advance.

## Estimated Costs

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<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Approximate amount (U.S. dollar)</i>
Spending money	\$1000-1500
Phone cards (~\$0.40/minute to U.S.) (optional)	\$20
Room key & SFS phone deposit	\$30 (refundable upon returning key & phone)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1050-1550</b>

# Tips for Living and Studying Abroad

## Introduction

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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### 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.

### ***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.

### ***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

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The SFS Center in Bhutan 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 10:00 pm on Sunday through Thursday. Curfew is 11:00 pm on Friday and Saturday. Quiet hours begin at 10:00 pm every night.

### *Buddy System*

Students must travel in groups of two or more whenever traveling off campus, including use of hiking trails and travel into town.

### *Dress Code*

Bhutan is a very conservative country, and modesty should be exercised. Out of respect for the community and the local culture, avoid dressing in tight clothing and short pants or skirts at all times, including on campus. If you wear leggings, wear shorts or a skirt overtop. If you wear shorts or a shorter skirt, wear leggings underneath. Avoid showing your back or shoulders.

### *Swimming*

Swift rivers, cold water, and the uncertain designation of some bodies of water as sacred are all risks surrounding swimming in Bhutan and for these reasons, swimming or wading in rivers, creeks, or lakes is prohibited for the duration of the program.

## Disciplinary Procedures

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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

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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

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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.

## Personal Property Insurance

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

## Travel Insurance

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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 altitude 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

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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 Bhutan

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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 field station in Bhutan is nearby a regional hospital that can provide mid-level, in-patient services, such as starting IV lines for rehydration, setting broken bones, stitching wounds, and stabilizing a patient for transportation and evacuation. This regional hospital has a laboratory and pharmacy. If advanced medical care is needed, students can be transported to the national hospital in Thimphu or possibly evacuated to Thailand.

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 Bhutan

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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 Bhutan

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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.** SFS **requires** that all students traveling to Bhutan receive the rabies pre-exposure vaccination series.

**Rabies** is a fatal viral infection that is transmitted from animals to humans through bites or scratches. The disease causes neurological symptoms that rapidly progress after a one to three-month incubation period. Rabies is present in bats, dogs, and among other domestic and wild animals. The most effective way to avoid rabies is to avoid animals. Do not pet or approach animals, including dogs. The prophylactic administration of rabies vaccine (which consists of three doses) does not eliminate the need for taking vaccine if you are bitten by a potentially rabid animal. It does, however, reduce the number of injections that are required from five to two, and eliminates the need to administer rabies immune globulin. In response to the growing threat of rabies incidence in Bhutan, coupled with the rural and remote location of our program, **SFS requires that all students obtain the rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment from their health care provider, prior to the start of the program.** This is a three-shot series that takes 28 days, so plan accordingly.

**Malaria** is a disease that is transmitted by mosquitos. Symptoms usually appear within 7 to 30 days but can take up to one year to develop and include high fevers, shaking chills, and flu-like illness. Malaria can cause severe illness and can be life threatening if left untreated. Prevention includes prophylaxis, minimizing exposed skin (long-sleeved shirts and pants) especially between dusk and dawn when the mosquitos are most active, and applying insect repellent containing DEET. In Bhutan, the majority of the program takes place at an altitude of 7,000 feet or above. However, two weeks of the program will include travel to locations at an altitude of 2,000 feet or lower, which is in the range of malaria. Please discuss this with your travel doctor. **If you plan to take malaria prophylaxis medication while in-country, please bring the appropriate amount of medication needed for two weeks of exposure, as it will not be possible to obtain this medication in-country. Students who opt not to take the medication will be asked to sign a waiver, acknowledging that they understand the risks of opting out of the medication.**

**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 Bhutan 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 all travelers to Bhutan get this vaccination.

**Japanese encephalitis** is a disease that is transmitted by mosquitos. Symptoms usually appear within 5 to 15 days and can include fever, headache, and vomiting. More rarely, symptoms can include changes in mental status, neurologic deficits, generalized weakness, and movement disorders leading to paralysis and even death. Prevention includes vaccination, minimizing exposed skin (long-sleeved shirts and pants) especially between dusk and dawn when the mosquitos are most active, and applying insect repellent containing DEET. In Bhutan, the majority of the program takes place at an altitude of 7,000 feet or above. However, a one-week component of the program will include travel to locations at an altitude of 2,000 feet, which is in the range of Japanese encephalitis. Please discuss this with your travel doctor.

**Yellow Fever** is not present in Bhutan, but the government does require proof of yellow fever vaccination if you are arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever. This does not include the US. If you are traveling from a country other than the US, check the CDC website to see if you may be required to get the yellow fever vaccine. Also, if you have spent longer than 12 hours in an airport in a yellow fever risk area, you may need a vaccine.

*The recommendations enumerated above are specific for Bhutan. If you are planning to travel outside these countries, 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 Bhutan

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There are a number of non-vaccine preventable insect-borne diseases found in Bhutan 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).

**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 woman 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).

**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 Bhutan

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

**Altitude:** Altitude illness is a potentially fatal condition that can occur at elevations greater than 5,000 feet, but is more common at elevations greater than 8,000 feet. For the majority of the program, you will be staying in Paro at approximately 7,200 feet. You will travel to areas between 10,000 to 12,000 feet on expedition. The most common complication of altitude, acute mountain sickness (AMS), has symptoms that include weakness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and insomnia. Other complications include high altitude cerebral edema (HACE) and high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE). Both are medical emergencies that, if not properly treated, can result in coma and death. Signs and symptoms of altitude illness will be covered in program orientation but it is also important to have a basic understanding of the affects that altitude can have on your body, as well as self-awareness of signs and symptoms while on program. Prior to coming on program, some students are prescribed a medication to take prophylactically or at onset of altitude sickness. If this is the case, please let the Safety and Student Life Department know that you plan to take this medication or carry it with you on program.

**Motor Vehicle Accidents:** Driving on Bhutanese roads is more hazardous than driving in the US, 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, or other motorized vehicle.

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

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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

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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



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

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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.

Please use the resources available on the Diversity & Inclusion page of our website ([www.fieldstudies.org/about/diversity-inclusion](http://www.fieldstudies.org/about/diversity-inclusion)) to inform yourself as you prepare for your abroad experience.

## Coping With Cultural Adjustment

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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!**