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PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE
MEET THE SFS ENROLLMENT TEAM

As you prepare for an SFS program, you will work with a few different folks at SFS Headquarters. So, here’s a quick guide for getting your questions answered!

General Questions? Our Enrollment Coordinator works with students as they submit materials through the SFS portal. You can contact them with questions about applying for SFS Financial Aid, submitting application materials, inquiries about which program is the best fit for you, or questions about the admissions process in general.

Contact the Enrollment Coordinator at admissions@fieldstudies.org.

Program specific questions or questions about your enrollment in the program? Your SFS Admissions Counselor will be your main point of contact during the admissions and pre-departure process. They will help you through the application steps, conduct your interview for admission, support you through your enrollment steps, and guide you through all travel and visa logistics. You can contact your admissions counselor with any specific questions related to this program.

Contact your admissions counselor at admissions@fieldstudies.org.

Questions about the billing process? Our student billing team works with students, schools, and families to coordinate payments for SFS programs. You can contact them with any questions about deposit payments, invoices, charges to your account, financial aid packages, billing deadlines, or loan paperwork.

Contact the billing department at billing@fieldstudies.org.

Questions about medical approval or health and safety? Our Safety and Student Life team conducts the SFS Medical Approval Process for SFS students. You can get in touch with them to ask questions about immunizations, safety in the field, managing a medical condition during your program, dietary needs and preferences, and your Magnus Health portal.

Contact the Safety and Student Life team at safety@fieldstudies.org.

Questions about learning accommodations? The Office of Academic Affairs coordinates with our staff and faculty in the field to assess options for learning accommodations. Students who have learning accommodations on their home campus should contact the Office of Academic Affairs after accepted to an SFS program, and prior to entering the field. More information can be found in the Academic Handbook for this program.

Contact the Office of Academic Affairs at academics@fieldstudies.org.

Want to learn more about the SFS HQ team? Find the full list of the SFS team bios here!

Want to learn more about the people you’ll work with in the field? Find their bios here!

SFS ONLINE RESOURCES

We have many helpful resources on our website. Here are a few to save and reference:

Admissions Overview
SFS Blog
Program Costs and Billing
SFS Financial Aid
Preparing for Departure
Learn more about the SFS Center for Wildlife and Water Studies: https://fieldstudies.org/centers/kenya/
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Booking your flights
Students will work closely with their admissions counselor to arrange their travel and are responsible for the cost of these flights. **Students will receive specific travel instructions about 3-4 months prior to the start of their SFS program** – do not book flights before receiving these instructions.

Arrival to your program
SFS staff will meet students at the airport on the date and at the time specified in the travel instructions and will provide transportation to the Center. If you plan to arrive in country before the set arrival date for personal travel, please contact your admissions counselor.

The designated arrival/meeting time at the airport is generally in the evening, so the group will spend one night at a hotel one hour from the airport before traveling to the Center the following morning.

SFS is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power or communications.

PASSPORT AND VISA

You must have a passport to enter all the countries where you plan to travel. Make certain that your passport is valid until six months after your intended departure and has a minimum of 5 blank pages for visa stamps. You must have your valid passport in-hand four months prior to the start of the program. If you will not be able to meet this timeline, please contact your admissions counselor.

Students will receive comprehensive information about visas along with their travel instructions about 3-4 months prior to the program. SFS students will travel in Kenya on a tourist visa, which can be processed online prior to arrival. The fee for this tourist visa is $51 USD for US citizens. Students will also process a tourist visa for Tanzania upon arrival at the airport (as we typically use the Kilimanjaro International Airport in Tanzania).

Non-US citizens may require a different visa process. Please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss.
MEDICAL PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD

SFS Medical Approval Process
As part of enrollment in an SFS program, students are required to complete the SFS Medical Approval Process. This review is designed to inform SFS staff of the medical and mental health needs or accommodations that may be required. The review is not meant to exclude, but to inform and allow support systems to be put in place. Should SFS have any concerns about accommodations for a particular physical or mental health condition, the student and the student’s physician or mental health provider will be contacted to discuss strategies for successful program participation.

The medical review process will be completed using a HIPAA-compliant online portal. Any forms required will be accessible via this portal and can be submitted electronically. Students will receive instructions for setting up their account after acceptance as part of the enrollment process.

No student may enter the field until final medical approval is granted by SFS personnel. This includes receipt and review of:

- **SFS Vital Health Record**: To be completed by the student through the Magnus Health Portal
- **Physical Exam and Authorization Form**: To be completed by a physician, physician’s assistant, or registered nurse practitioner who is not related to the student.
- **Supplemental documentation from a medical specialist**: if determined necessary by SFS. This may include information regarding counseling history and documentation of prescription medications.

As part of your medical review, you may be required to complete a phone call with one of our team members to discuss preparation and expectations for the program. The SFS Safety and Student Life team will contact you directly to schedule this call after submission of your Vital Health Record.

Be certain to address any existing medical issues before arriving in country. Students are responsible for informing SFS of any changes to their health status that occur after submission of the SFS medical forms. 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.

**Accommodating Students with Disabilities**
Students requesting physical and mental health accommodations should contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. Students requesting learning accommodations should contact the SFS Office of Academic Affairs, as outlined in the Academic Handbook for this program. SFS will work with students, home institutions, and physicians to determine the required level of accommodation and whether 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.

**Accommodating Dietary Needs and Preferences**
If you have a medically necessary dietary requirement, please contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. All dietary restrictions or preferences (e.g. gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, etc.) should be noted on the SFS Vital Health Record and discussed with either your admissions counselor or the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. SFS can accommodate most dietary needs, but variety of food may be limited due to local availability, cultural practice, and cost.

**Insurance**
Health Insurance
Students on SFS programs are required to procure their own comprehensive health insurance, valid in the country (or countries) in which the program operates, for the full duration of their SFS program. SFS does not review individual insurance policies to ensure comprehensive international coverage; it is the students’ responsibility to ensure that the insurance coverage meets the following requirements:

- Valid in the program country or countries. Keep in mind trip itineraries for any personal pre- or post-program travel.
- Provides coverage for the full duration of the program, including any personal pre- or post-program travel.
• Covers more than only emergency medical care. Look for a comprehensive medical insurance plan that includes coverage for basic medical care, including non-urgent illness or injury (i.e. gastrointestinal distress, ear infections, ankle sprains, etc.), laboratory tests, and pharmaceutical needs.

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

• Most domestic health insurance plans do not provide comprehensive coverage for 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 international health insurance. Please note that home universities may have their own insurance requirements for participation in study abroad.
• 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 should bring sufficient funds (i.e. a credit card with a high limit of at least $3,000) to pay for medical expenses up front, and then request reimbursement when they return home.

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

Benefits of the SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation insurance plan include:
- $350,000 for emergency medical evacuation
- $100,000 for emergency security evacuation
- $20,000 for repatriation of remains

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

Medical Consultation
SFS recommends that students schedule a consultation with a travel doctor or physician at least 60 days prior to program departure to complete the Physical Examination and Authorization Form (available through the Magnus Health Portal) and review the following topics:

**Physical Conditioning**
Field work by its very nature is physically arduous: the days are long, the traveling seldom comfortable, and familiar comforts generally lacking. SFS programs involve some strenuous activities, including hikes over steep and uneven terrain, open-ocean swimming, long days in the rain, hot sun, or wind. All SFS programs involve multiple hours of standing or walking during field exercises as part of the academic program. We don’t require students to be Olympic athletes, but consider that these programs require physical stamina, energy, and a positive attitude!

**Existing Medical Conditions**
Due to the rigorous nature of the program and stress of travel, existing and chronic health issues can be triggered or exacerbated while abroad, even if currently well-managed or in remission in the US. You should discuss all medical conditions with your physician and the SFS Safety and Student Life Department to see if this SFS program will be right for you. Consult with your physician and/or specialists and inform the SFS Safety and Student Life Department of any medical conditions that could lead to sudden illness, such as allergies to foods or insect stings, asthma, chronic heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.
• Make sure to bring and carry on your person at all times any critical medications (e.g. Epi-Pens, inhalers, glucagon, etc.).

• If you have asthma, even if you have not had any issues in recent years, it is strongly recommended to bring your inhaler (and a back-up inhaler, as these can generally not be sourced in country) 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.

**Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications**

Students should bring enough over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medication (including any prophylactic medication that may be recommended by your travel doctor or physician for travel to your program country) 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.**

Make sure to consider the following:

• Insurance companies typically do not dispense more than a three-month supply of medication, so you will need to work with both your prescribing physician and insurance provider to request a “Vacation Override” or other means to procure a supply for 100+ days.

• Supply of controlled substances and steroid medications may have additional restrictions, so we recommend starting conversations as early as possible with your prescribing physician and insurance provider.

• In the event of unprotected sexual encounters or activity, please be aware that prophylactic sexually transmitted infection (STI) medication and emergency contraception are often difficult to obtain while abroad due to availability and legal implications. Consult with your physician about options for preparedness.

• Medical marijuana is prohibited on our programs due to host-country laws, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and Transport Security Administration (TSA) restrictions. If you currently use medical marijuana, please discuss alternative options with your physician. Travel with some types of Cannabidiol (CBD) oil is also currently restricted by the FAA and TSA and may be restricted or illegal by host-country law.

While traveling, keep all medications in their original container and in carry-on luggage to avoid issues through border control and customs. List all medications on the **SFS Vital Health Record** and please alert the Safety and Student Life Department to any changes to your medication list, including dosage, as early as possible. 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.

**Mental Health**

Studying abroad can be an exciting and energizing time for students. It can also present myriad challenges, including adjustment to a new culture and daily routine, unfamiliarity with the local environment, forming of new relationships, and a lack of familiar support systems. In addition, SFS programs operate in remote regions with delayed access to medical care and limited or absent mental health resources.

Students with mental health conditions should discuss any concerns with their physician, mental health provider, and the SFS Safety and Student Life Department prior to participation on an SFS program. Students who undergo regular counseling or therapy should verify that their mental health provider is available via phone, email, or other means of telecommunication while the student is abroad. Keep in mind that some mental health providers have jurisdiction restrictions when it comes
to client communication. It is important to check-in with your mental health provider and see what availability they may have during your time abroad. SFS will also work with students to develop a set of coping strategies that can be utilized while studying abroad, in addition to preparing them for what to expect in their individual host countries. To read more about self-care while abroad, please see “Self-Care and Wellbeing.”

**Vaccinations and Prophylactic Medication**

For logistical and programming purposes, SFS requires the following vaccinations:

- **Yellow Fever vaccination**: The CDC recommends the Yellow Fever vaccination for all travelers to Kenya. Also, students travel through the Kilimanjaro International Airport in Tanzania, and for entry into Tanzania at the end of the session travelers must show proof of Yellow Fever vaccination via an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (also known as a Yellow Card). Students are required to upload documentation of their completed vaccination via the Magnus Health Portal and carry the original documentation on their person during travel between Kenya and Tanzania. The border will only accept an international health Yellow Card, not a doctor’s copy of proof of vaccine.

- **Malaria prophylactic medication**: In Kenya, malaria is present throughout the country, including game parks. Please obtain enough medication prior to arriving in country to last the full duration of the program.

SFS strongly recommends that all students are up-to-date with routine vaccinations (i.e. MMR, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, etc.) to protect themselves as well as vulnerable populations in country that may not have access to preventative vaccinations. SFS also strongly encourages students receive the following CDC-recommended vaccinations and prophylactic medication for travel to the program country:

- **Typhoid fever vaccination**: Recommended for most travelers to Kenya, including those visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas.

- **Rabies pre-exposure vaccination series**: The most effective way to avoid rabies is to avoid touching or getting too close to wildlife. Another precautionary measure is receiving the pre-exposure rabies vaccination prior to departing for Kenya. This vaccination series consists of three vaccinations administered over 21 to 28 days, so plan accordingly. The vaccination does not eliminate the need for getting a post-exposure vaccination if there is any potential exposure to rabies, which can include licks, scratches, bites, or close encounters with both domestic and wild animals. It does, however, reduce the number of post-exposure injections that are required and eliminates the need to administer rabies immune globulin, which may not be available in country.

In addition, there are a number of non-vaccine preventable insect-borne diseases that are present in country. For up-to-date information on risk-factors, prevention, and treatment, please visit the CDC Travel webpage: [https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/)

**Protection from Insects**

Students should practice preventative measures to reduce the possibility of illness from exposure to insects:

- Take prophylactic medications where recommended
- Be aware of active times of day for insects in the region, and prepare accordingly
- Use a DEET-based insect repellent
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, socks tucked into pants, and fully enclosed shoes
- Use a mosquito-net at night, if needed
- Check yourself for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day

**Food and Water Safety**

Water used for consumption and food preparation at SFS centers is filtered or boiled. Students are always able to access potable drinking water 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 thoroughly cooked, 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.

**Altitude**
If your program includes travel to higher altitudes (generally considered above 8,000 feet in elevation), please discuss preparedness, including the use of prophylactic medication and any implications considering your personal medical history (i.e. asthma, prior altitude-related illness, heart conditions, diabetes, etc.). SFS does not make recommendations on use of prophylactic medication for altitude. Please consult with your physician or travel doctor with any questions.

**IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN A NEW CONTEXT**
On your SFS program, you will engage with people that come from a variety of cultural contexts. Most SFS students expect to encounter differences between themselves and those from the host country culture, but don’t realize that some of the most significant cultural differences they may face will be between themselves and members of their own student group. Reflecting on your own culture and identity before studying abroad with SFS can help you better navigate your experience abroad.

**How do we define culture?**
Culture is defined as the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people. It is also a system for making meaning of things, and, as a result, we all wear cultural lenses or filters when we interpret a situation. Most of us are unaware of our own culture until we experience another.

**Cultural Values**
Each cultural group has a set of underlying values. These values affect our behavior and the way we perceive the behaviors of others. The table below lists a number of common U.S. values and prompts you to consider how other cultures or people might have values that differ. Of course, not everyone from the same cultural group shares the same set of underlying values in that culture. Therefore, it is helpful to think of cultural values existing along a continuum. By being open to and curious about another set of cultural values, we can connect with others more easily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Values</th>
<th>Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>In the U.S., it is common to value change and novelty over tradition and the ways of the past. Do you tend to embrace change and think towards the future, or hold onto tradition and value the past? How might this impact cultural views surrounding issue like climate change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Its Control</td>
<td>Punctuality is valued highly in U.S. culture. Many U.S. Americans live very scheduled lives, abiding strictly by time commitments and tardiness is not accepted most U.S. contexts. In other cultures, human interaction is generally valued more than time commitments and timeliness. It may be acceptable to be 30 minutes late to a commitment if it means stopping to talk with an acquaintance on the street or spending time with family or friends. Do you feel the pull of time in your daily life? What are some ways that a cultural difference in perception of time might impact you while abroad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>U.S. culture tends to emphasize equality over hierarchy and social status. While inequality in the U.S. certainly exists, there remains a culture of democracy, self-determination, and an expectation for equal treatment. Other cultures place a greater emphasis on hierarchy and social rank. Think of countries where there is not a democratic tradition and where it is expected to respect and honor the government, prevailing religion(s), and certain cultural beliefs. Think of how it may be different to be expected to honor certain members of society, such as a monarch or elders. In some cultures, foreigners, or specifically Westerners, may be regarded highly or given special treatment. Consider how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
you may need to adapt to your host culture, and how this might be different from what you are used to.

### Individualism

There is a common emphasis on the individual in the U.S. There is an idea that if you—personally—work hard, you can determine your future success. There are a lot of expectations put on the self in the U.S. Think about how commonplace it is to set personal goals or focus on enriching your personal knowledge and skills. Being unique and standing out is often desired and valued. In contrast, other cultures place a greater emphasis on a sense of belonging within a group rather than standing out. Instead of self-reliance, it may be more customary to rely on advice or assistance from others. It is often expected to help others and share knowledge and resources more so than in a more individualistic culture. **Where does your culture fall into this continuum? How will you navigate being in a culture that might be more collectivistic or more individualistic than you are used to?**

### Directness, Openness, Honesty

In the U.S., there is a tendency to express opinions, thoughts, and dissent openly and directly. U.S. culture often values openness and candor about beliefs and emotions. Other cultures may have a more indirect communication style where it is not typical to express dissent or emotions directly and confrontation is avoided. In many cultures, it is important to avoid humiliation or embarrassment in what is called “saving face.” In these cultures, people tend to express disagreement or emotion in more subtle, indirect ways. **Be cognizant of how you may want to adapt your communication style while abroad. Have you considered this cultural difference before?**

### Local Laws and Customs

When studying abroad, it’s important that you be prepared to take responsibility for your actions in a new place, as local laws and customs are likely different than the ones you are used to at home. The field staff will go into more detail about local laws and customs during SFS Orientation, but please consider the following:

- 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.
- Appropriate clothing that is consistent with, and respectful of, local dress may be required. Some monuments and places of worship may require certain parts of the body to be covered.
- Non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in your home country may be inappropriate or culturally insensitive to people in other countries.
- Local events or holidays may occur where you are traveling, and some religious events or holidays require a heightened sense of cultural awareness or specific behaviors.

You can play an active role in keeping yourself safe and successfully adjusting to a new culture by learning about local laws and culture. It is always important to practice situational awareness and is even more so when in a new place.

### Your Role in the Community

During your SFS program, 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. This comprises a professional staff, local contacts, community partners, elected officials, and SFS support staff.
- Third, you will be a temporary resident to the local community. There are many occasions when you will be expected to interact with the local residents in both academic and informal settings.

Note that it is a great privilege to study in another country and be welcomed into these communities. 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. SFS is a place-based program and our campuses are permanent fixtures in the community. These communities are home to our staff members who live either on-campus or nearby year-round. This is distinct from a tour or casual visit to your host country and it is
important to consider how your interactions with the local community can last beyond your time abroad. Behavior that is disrespectful, illegal, or contrary to cultural norms can degrade the relationship with the community and can impede healthy and meaningful interactions for your peers, SFS staff members, and future students. Thoughtful and purposeful interactions with the members of the local community will greatly enhance your study abroad experience!

Identity
As you plan to study abroad with SFS, consider how different aspects of your identity might be perceived in a new cultural context. All countries and communities have cultural values and societal norms that are woven into the fabric of their collective identities. These norms and values are important to these communities whether we agree with them or not. You will be a guest in your host culture(s), and it is not your role to change the culture or its values. Reflecting about your own identity will help you navigate this experience.

All aspects of your identity have the potential to be impacted, challenged, and strengthened while abroad. You may find that a part of your identity that is very important to you on your home campus is not as relevant amongst your peers at SFS. Or you may find that an aspect of your identity that is less significant to you at home is an important part of how people in your host culture perceive you.

Remember that you are part of a cohort and that your identity will vary from that of your peers. Each student’s background will inform their understanding of and response to a new situation. An important part of being a member of a team is supporting each other, even when you have differences of opinion or perspective.

The more open you can be to that varied experience, the more you will thrive and the better you will be able to support your peers, as well. We’re in this together!

For Your Consideration
No place is 100% free of discrimination and intolerance. Every country is shaped by its respective histories, and therefore attitudes towards gender identity, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic relations, and religious diversity can differ greatly from those in the U.S.

Your identity(ies) may grant and/or deny you power and privilege with local people, as well as your fellow peers.

You may find that people in your host culture are more direct and have less concern with political correctness than in the U.S. Keep in mind that local people may have never encountered a person like you. Therefore, what seems like discrimination may simply be curiosity.

Researching the country that you will be living in can help you prepare yourself for the situations you may encounter abroad. In specific, you may want to research the following topics of the country you will be living in:

- Current political and societal issues
- Minority, majority, and plurality racial and ethnic composition
- History of racial and ethnic relations
- LGBTQIA climate
- Religious breakdown
- Cultural norms

We encourage you to connect with your SFS Admissions Counselor if you’d like to talk about your identity abroad. Another great resource is to connect with a student who has participated on the program before through the Alumni Contact list. Students on the Alumni Contact list have shared topics they feel comfortable talking about, which makes connecting with a student who identifies similarly to you very easy. You can find the Alumni Contact list on your “Resources” tab in your SFS portal after you are accepted to the program, or request that your SFS Admissions Counselor email this list while you are still in the application process. We encourage you to use alumni as a resource before departure!
LGBTQIA Rights in Kenya
Consensual same-sex sexual activity is illegal in Kenya and is punishable by prison sentences. Public displays of affection between persons of the same sex may be met with harassment or violence. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support the LGBTQIA community and their staff may also be targeted and harassed by local authorities.

Please consider the following sources to read more about the current climate within Kenya for members of the LGBTQ+ community:

- US Department of State Country Information (Kenya), information under Local Laws and Special Circumstances section: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Kenya.html
LIFE IN THE FIELD:
WHAT TO EXPECT
ABOUT SFS KENYA

Program Schedule

PLEASE NOTE: SFS programs usually operate 6 days a week, with one day as a free day. Please be prepared for limited down time!

Our weekly schedule in Kenya will vary over the course of the program. After a few days of orientation, we jump right into classes. The days are filled by lectures, both in the classroom and the field, and field trips. You may have class in the morning, a field exercise in the afternoon, then some homework or a full day of classes, mixing lecture, discussion, and workshops. You may also have full days of class at the center, or full days of field work. Academic scheduling is on a six day/week schedule. One day is generally reserved for studying, relaxing, or exploring in town. The schedule really does vary week to week, though, so be ready to be flexible.

Here is a more specific example of a program day’s schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0630</td>
<td>Early wake up time for rotating Breakfast Crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0730</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0800</td>
<td>Lecture or Field Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Lecture or Field Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Lecture or Field Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>Free Time, soccer/games, community visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>ReKAP (Reflection, Kiswahili/Kimaasai, Announcements, Presentation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other activities may include workshops, guest lectures, community service projects, student-organized activities (nature film, talent show, group game, or committee meetings), or free time.

A Note of SFS Structure and Self-care

SFS programs are highly structured and we encourage you to reflect on how the SFS program will differ from your daily life on your home campus. The 6-day per week academic model is distinct from a typical college campus, and allows time for fieldwork, travel, and cultural and community activities. SFS program policies additionally make the daily student experience on an SFS program different from most home campuses. The SFS program model and policies are part of what makes the SFS experience unique and are designed to help keep students safe, healthy, and create an environment where students can have a positive experience abroad. It’s important to consider how you will adjust to this shift in routine, especially as it relates to your ability to manage self-care while abroad. You can review “Self-Care and Wellbeing” later in this document for a further reflection on managing self-care while on an SFS program.

It’s important to understand that the structure and policies of SFS programs are designed to facilitate student, staff, and local community member safety and well-being, create an environment where students can have a positive experience abroad, and help students manage the rigors of SFS programs. Taking the time to fully consider and understand SFS structure and policies, as well as the reasoning behind it will help you to have a positive experience abroad and promote a healthy and productive environment for all those around you. Please review SFS Policies and Procedures to read through the SFS program policies, behavioral expectations, and information about disciplinary action when these expectations and policies are not upheld.
We encourage you to discuss any questions or concerns about the structure of your program with your SFS Admissions Counselor or SFS Safety and Student Life.

ReKAP: Reflection, Kiswahili/Kimaasai, Announcements, Presentation
During the course of the program each student will be asked to lead a ReKAP session at least once. The Reflection is generally something creative you’d like to share with the group such as a question, quote, poem, or song that helps reflect on your experience that day or throughout the program. The Presentation is an opportunity for you to share something about yourself with your fellow students. Whether you choose to teach a song, a dance, a new game, or make a presentation on a fun trip or experience you’ve had, this is an opportunity to help the other students get to know you better.

Community and Language
One of the ways SFS is different from many traditional study abroad options is that our programs do not follow the traditional model of cultural and language immersion.

Think about how you will experience local culture on this program. On an SFS program, you will live at a field station with your team, rather than in a homestay, local apartment, or university dorm. You and your cohort will spend much of your time together – living, working, and studying as a group. This means that you will not necessarily be eating local cuisine, speaking a local language, or navigating the local culture every day. However, we fundamentally believe that meaningful environmental research is only possible with the input of local people and in consideration of cultural history. We develop our research plans in collaboration with our community partners and stakeholders, but we do not consider it our role to make decisions on their behalf or to impose our ideas. An important part of every SFS program is to explore environmental issues within the context of the community and ecosystems we call home.

On this program you might interact with the community by attending house-warming parties, church, playing sports, and talking with people you meet as you spend time in the community. We will always take the lead from our community, so activities may vary term to term to reflect the needs and requests of our partners.

Consider your exposure to the local language through this program. The language course is not intended to help you achieve fluency in the local language, but rather to give you a few tools to use to navigate the local culture and to communicate on a basic level with community members. If you have a goal to enhance your language abilities during your SFS program, it is important to take initiative: read a local newspaper, listen to local music, practice your skills when you have free time, and engage with local staff members. English is commonly spoken in our nearby community of Kimana.

Overnight Homestay
As you learn about the culture and livelihoods of Maasai people in your courses, you will have the chance to experience it firsthand through an overnight home stay at a Maasai boma. You (along with a small group of other students) may help tend to livestock, cook a traditional meal, assist with water collection, or jewelry making with the Mamas (Maasai women). It is a unique opportunity to practice your Swahili skills, and to catch a glimpse of how the Maasai way of life has adapted to the ever-changing environment and political pressures.

Basic Kiswahili
Kiswahili is spoken throughout East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda), along the Eastern borders of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, and along the Northern border of Malawi. Swahili is a Bantu language that originated on the coasts of Kenya and Tanzania and was adopted as a trading language between Arabs, Bantus, and colonial powers. Thus its vocabulary has been influenced by Arabic, German, Portuguese, English, Hindi, and English. It is still spoken in its purest form along the coast of Tanzania and on the island of Zanzibar. The language tends to become less formal as one moves further inland, and while the language form spoken and written in Kenya is essentially the same, it is marked by its own idioms and style. Except for the coastal people, Kiswahili is not frequently the first language spoken by Kenyans. It is, however, the national and official language of Tanzania. It is the general language of communication for East Africans, most of whom also speak their own mother-tongue language such as Iraqw, Maasai, Chaga, Nyiramba etc. Expect to use Kiswahili to communicate with community members and some of our SFS staff. All of your professors and upper management at KBC are fluent in English.
In Kenya, most local community members and staff speak different levels of English. You will have a great opportunity in Kenya to learn some Swahili and practice how to communicate with people with limited English.

Here are a few of the basics which you might like to practice before your arrival in Kenya.

**Vowel Pronunciation**
- A as in “Father” or “Far” but slightly shortened
  - e.g. MAMA – mother; BATA – duck; BWANA – man/mister/sir
- E as in “Bed” or “End”
  - e.g. EMBE – mango; WEWE – you; KWELI – true, truth
- I as in the double E sound in “Feel”
  - e.g. MIMI – I/me; RAFIKI – friend; KITI – chair
- O as in “So” or “Coast”
  - e.g. HUJAMBO and SIJAMBO – how are you/I’m fine; MOJA – one; MOTO – hot; SOKO – market
- U as in the double O in “Loose” or “Too”
  - e.g. GUMU – difficult; TATU – three; KUKU – chicken

**Consonant Pronunciation**
They are pretty much the same as in English, except there is no Q and there are slight changes in the pronunciation of:
- J takes on a slight “DY” sound as opposed to the “DJ” sound Americans are used to. R has a slight tip-of-tongue roll (such as Spanish) which can be picked up after hearing it.

**Double Consonant Pronunciation**
These look very strange to the American eye, but are sprinkled liberally throughout Kiswahili and are easy once you get the hang of them. You will see lots of “M”s and “N”s before other consonants and the trick to pronouncing them like a native is to NOT make the classic Western mistake of sticking a vowel between them. For example: NZURI - This word means “good” and pronounced by almost humming “NNN” and then saying “ZURI.” “DH” makes a “th” sound as in that. Many non-natives struggle to learn n’g which is a nasal sound resembling the “ng” from “sing.” In Kiswahili it is found at the beginning of words as in “ng’ombe” – cow – or “kung’ata” – to bite.

**Good Words/Expressions to Know**

- HUJAMBO/SIJAMBO How are you? / I’m fine (singular-between two people)
- MAMBO/POA What’s up? / I’m good (Informal/most common greeting)
- HABARI? How are you?
- NZURI Good (response to Habari)
- POLE Sorry
- TAFADHALI Please
- NDIO Yes
- HAPANA/LA No
- MBAYA Bad
- ASANTE Thank you
- KARIBU Welcome (or You’re Welcome)
- MINGI Many, Much
- SANA Very
KIDOGO
Little, Few
KUBWA
Big
SHINGAPI
What is the Price?
GHALI
Expensive
RAHISI
Cheap, Easy
GUMU
Difficult
PESA
Money
JINA LANGU NI
My name is...
NINASOMA
I am studying...
SITAKI KUNUNUA
I don’t want to buy
NINATAKA HII
I want this
UNAFANYA NINI
What are you doing?
SIFAHAMU
I don’t understand
SIJUI
I don’t know
UNATAKA NINI
What do you want?
NINAHITAJI MSAADA
I need help
KWA HERI
Goodbye
TUTAONANA BAADAE
See you later
MIMI NI MWANAFUNZI
I am a student
NAMBA
Numbers
MOJA
One
MBILI
Two
TATU
Three
NNE
Four
TANO
Five
SITA
Six
SABA
Seven
NANE
Eight
TISA
Nine
KUMI
Ten
KUMI NA MOJA
Eleven
KUMI NA MBILI
Twelve
Center Hours
Due to the residential nature of SFS programs, there is a curfew set for when students are required to return to campus. We will present specific information regarding Center closing hours during Orientation at the beginning of our program.

Special Religious Requirements
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.

LIFE AT THE CENTER

Setting
Kilimanjaro Bush Camp, which opened its doors in the summer of 2001, is located approximately 215 km southeast of Nairobi at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro and 25 km north of the Kenya/Tanzania border. KBC is a 25-acre property located in the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

The camp is located among private farms, Kuku, Kimana and Mbirikani Maasai group ranches and the Kimana Wildlife Sanctuary, all of which are within the Amboseli-Tsavo National Parks corridor and wildlife dispersal area. This ecosystem presents numerous research opportunities in wildlife management and resource-use conflicts. You will have the opportunity to examine the options from a broad range of perspectives – from the viewpoints of individual private landowners as well as community and state agencies, such as the Kenya Wildlife Service.

The Kilimanjaro Bush Camp is located about 5km from the community of Kimana - be adventurous and get there on foot or get a ride into town during free time! KBC is also directly behind an all-girls secondary school where our students have an open invitation to go for church and other activities. Additionally, KBC is surrounded by several Maasai families who students stay with during homestay and who are always happy for students to visit. Remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies in every culture and be sensitive to this when you are away from the Center or interacting with community members. The staff will brief you on this in more detail during Orientation.

Weather and Climate
Our Kilimanjaro Bush Camp is sandwiched between the Highland/Rift Climate Zone’s southern edge and the Coastal Zone and lies at a lower elevation. Note that the seasons in East Africa are the exact opposite of the seasons in the United States.
Summer in the U.S. is winter in East Africa, and vice-versa. June and July will technically be winter months in Kenya, and it will be a bit cooler than you might expect! Nights and early mornings can be chilly (in the 50s or 60s), and average daytime temperatures may reach into the 70s or 80s. While the heat and sun can be intense, it is not humid.

Community Living
On an SFS program you are part of a team, living and working with a small community of your fellow students and staff.

This isn’t just having a roommate or a classmate. This experience is intensive and involves many hours spent together in close quarters and out in the elements. It will require patience, open-mindedness, resiliency, and cooperation. The benefit of this cohort experience is that you will have a community to support you when the going gets tough and laugh with you along the way. Center life will be both rewarding and challenging and will require you to take responsibility for being an active participant at the center and a supportive team member to your peers.

Chores
The Center relies on a group living model, where everyone on campus does their part. Students and staff alike are expected to do their own dishes and to engage in keeping our home beautiful. Specific chore responsibilities and schedules will be shared with students during orientation but may include: cleaning personal and shared spaces around campus, site maintenance, monitoring recycling/composting and organizing the library. Student cook crews prepare breakfast each day and are responsible for washing all pots, pans, utensils, and plates after dinner in addition to other cleaning duties. This is a great way for students to get to know the local staff, fellow students, and will also introduce you to some East African recipes! Please come prepared to contribute and pull your weight as part of the team.

The Field Station

Student cabins (bandas):
Common space for kitchen, dining, classroom, and study space (chumba):

View of Kilimanjaro from campus (left) / running & walking path around campus perimeter (right):

Housing
Student bandas consist of rectangular-shaped units, raised on a cement platform with cement-block walls to four feet high, and then thatched with v-shaped roofs. Bandas have two entrances, each with a porch, and can accommodate four students. The bandas are partitioned inside with wooden shelves. Each student will have a bed with mosquito netting provided. Several blocks of student bathrooms are located near to the bandas, all with flush toilets, showers and sinks. Showers have electric hot water heaters which are somewhat reliable, so you can expect a mix of warm and cold showers throughout the program.

Laundry
There are no washing machines or dryers at KBC – laundry must be washed by hand using buckets and hung on lines to dry! If you’re not comfortable hand washing your clothing, laundry can be done by local women for $2-$4 per bucket – it’s a great way to support the community.

Other Facilities
The chumba is at the center of all camp activities with the kitchen, dining area, library, and computer room attached. Students do not have open access to the kitchen but can make special requests to cook meals for the group. There is a student fridge, microwave, and panini press that students always have access to for storing their own groceries and making snacks/meals. A separate building houses office space for the faculty and staff, and there are three gazebos for students to use in the center of campus as well as a fire pit. There is plenty of space for soccer, volleyball, badminton, and Frisbee. Surrounding the central student area are faculty and staff housing units. If you enjoy running and walking, try a loop along the inside of the camp perimeter. The loop is about a mile long. Running water is available in the chumba and bathrooms. Drinking water goes through a three-tiered filtration system and is always available. The camp’s electricity is backed by a diesel engine generator, but power outages are common so it’s good to be prepared for that (make sure you have your headlamp with you at night and...
keep all of your devices charged). The property is surrounded by a 10-strand electric fence and the main gate is monitored 24/7 by security guards (askaris).

**Vehicles**
In order to travel anywhere in Kenya you will be transported in an SFS vehicle. Whether for field exercises, game drives, expeditions, or for non-academic excursions, you will be spending a good amount of time in SFS vehicles. Most of the vehicles have hatched-top roofs for easy viewing of wildlife. When vehicle pop-top roofs are open it is prohibited to sit on top of the roof at any time safety reasons.

Kenyan roads are an adventure in and of themselves, ranging from smooth tarmac, to bumpy rocky dirt, to sticky mud, to dusty tracks, to cow path, to no road at all. Flat tires come with the territory!

**Food and Cuisine**
Expect familiar meals with an East Africa twist such as pasta dishes, curried or sautéed vegetables, pizza, lentils, rice, beans, potato dishes, maize, and meat. You will regularly be treated to novel East African vegetarian favorites such as chapatti (flat bread), sukuma wiki (collard greens), and maandazi (fried dough/donuts).

Breakfasts usually include eggs, pancakes, toast, fruit juice, porridge, and cereal. Packed lunches during field exercises are generally chopped veggies, rice, beans, chicken, hard-boiled eggs, apples, and bananas.

While you will probably be familiar with most dishes and their ingredients, the actual food preparation differs somewhat from the Western norm. Dishes prepared in East Africa – whether they are traditional or Western – tend to be cooked with a greater amount of oil than you might be used to. For those individuals who maintain a strict “fat-free” diet or prefer fat-free foods, the food preparation in East Africa will require you to be flexible and open-minded.

**Specialty Diets**
SFS is able to accommodate most dietary needs and preferences, but students will find that the variety of food may be limited due to local availability, cultural practice, and cost. Additionally, when away from the Center, options may be further limited. For example, specialty food products high in protein, such as tofu, quinoa, dark leafy greens, and raw fruits and vegetables may not be readily available on campus. Rice and cooked vegetables comprise many alternative meals for students with specialty diets. Therefore, SFS recommends bringing snacks (i.e. protein powder, protein bars, nut butters, trail mix, etc.) to supplement dietary variety.

For students with a medically necessary dietary requirement, please refer to the “Medical Preparation for the Field” section of this guide.

**Exercise and Recreation**
Students can go for walks and runs outside of campus during specific hours as well as on the footpath around campus (which is about 1 mile long). There is a badminton net and soccer field on campus, and plenty of space for frisbee and other yard games. There are no traditional gym facilities available, so students are encouraged to get creative! Students will have time and space to do yoga, pilates, and other body weight exercises. Bringing downloaded exercise videos or using apps on your phone are great ideas.
TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

Computers
Students need to bring their own laptops with them for use during the program. A tablet alone is not sufficient, and Chromebooks or devices that rely on Internet connectivity are not recommended. Your laptop should contain Microsoft Office or have the ability to export and receive documents that are compatible with Microsoft Office. Your laptop also must have a USB port.

Computer Care
Due to the varying weather conditions at our field stations, electronic devices are subjected to a much harsher environment than they normally operate in. Back up your data regularly onto a USB or external hard drive in the event your computer fails during your program. Internet is not always available, so do not plan to rely solely on the cloud for storage!

Please be aware that the heat and humidity can be very hard on electronics and can cause serious damage to your devices. In particular, Apple products do not fare well in high humidity and are more difficult to repair or replace locally. PCs are more common in this region and local electronic repair centers are better equipped to handle PC repairs.

Given the conditions, students should take some precautions to give themselves the best chance of success. Here are some examples:

- Bring a waterproof or water-resistant case or a re-sealable bag for all devices (especially touch screens).
- Use moisture absorbing material in your case any time your laptop is not in use. (Rice is a good option and available locally!)
- Consider bringing a cooling mat, a laptop fan, and a spare battery and charger.
- Pay attention to your device function: if it’s working hard, give it a rest!
- Avoid exposing your device to direct sunlight, precipitation, dust, or other harmful elements (like sunscreen)!
- Consider purchasing personal insurance for your valuable devices.

SFS has a couple dedicated student computers which are used primarily for sharing group data, documents, etc. In the case of a personal computer failure, these computers can be used by students for their work but must remain as a shared resource. Do not plan to use an SFS computer as your laptop for the session – it is required to bring a personal laptop.

Electrical Appliances
There are electrical outlets in the bandas and common areas at KBC, but power outages are frequent so plan to keep your devices charged as best you can. The voltage in East Africa is 220-240v so you will need a converter if your device is 110v. Note that laptop computers often already include a built-in converter – check the label on the back to see if this is the case (if it says “110-240v,” that is fine). You will also need adapters to fit your plug to the shape of East African outlets (British-type plugs with three large rectangular prongs in a triangular formation, one perpendicular to the others). The adapters need to be British – the ones that say “for Africa” on them are usually not compatible.

Because electricity is limited, you should not bring any appliances such as hair dryers, curling irons, etc.
Internet
Wireless internet is available at the Center. Students are permitted to use the internet for academic and personal use in accordance with the internet policies outlined in the SFS Policies and Procedures. The internet has limited bandwidth and is shared amongst students and staff.

Part of living at a field station entails working with limited resources, including the Internet. You should expect internet connection to be slow and intermittent, so you should not expect to use the Internet in the same way you do at home. There may be times during the program when you do not have access to the Internet. Limited access requires a good deal of patience, and you should get ready to unplug!

Things to think about:
- Set up WhatsApp and/or other messaging apps before you leave for your program
- Download offline playlists, as you won’t be able to stream music from Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, YouTube, etc.
- Bring an external hard drive with your favorite movies and shows, as you won’t have access to streaming platforms like Netflix, Hulu, etc.
- Set communication expectations with your family and friends at home – your schedule and access to internet will change often.
- The WiFi is only available while we have electricity, and there are frequent power outages on campus (as previously mentioned).
- WiFi hotspots are available around the chumba and offices, but not in the bandas, so you will only be able to use the WiFi in these public spaces.

Communication with Home
Messaging Apps
The most convenient and affordable way to communicate with your family and friends at home is via WiFi-based messaging such as WhatsApp, iMessage, GroupMe, Facebook Messenger, and email.

Students are welcome to bring their personal smartphones to use on the WiFi at the center. Please remember that many apps require a text or call verification code during the setup process, so we recommend that you install and set up any apps you intend to use prior to departure.

Remember that access to video chat will be limited based on Internet speed and availability!

Phones
Students will be issued simple cell phones within the first few days of the program. You can use this phone to communicate with your fellow students and SFS staff, but you can also share this number with friends and family to make and receive calls. It will be your responsibility to keep the phone charged and add calling credit to the phone, which will cost you about two cents per minute for calls to the US. You may also explore getting an international calling & data plan for your personal phone from home. If you have an unlocked cell phone (not linked to a US based service provider like Verizon or AT&T), you can purchase a Kenyan SIM card to use in that phone.

Despite these options, the time difference and busy schedule of the program can make it hard to stay in touch regularly, so make sure that your friends and family are aware that your ability to call home will be limited.

Mail
Mail should be addressed as follows:

Student Name
Center for Wildlife Management Studies
P.O. BOX 358 – 00209,
LOITOKTOK, KENYA
East Africa
It is important to ask your family and friends not to send packages of any kind (including care packages) to the Center. The only mail which is easily accepted by the post office is regular letter envelopes; 5 inches by 7 inches is the largest size envelope the SFS post office box can receive. Also, please do not send money, credit cards or valuable documents, as they can easily get lost.

Airmail from the U.S. usually takes 10 to 14 days. Mail is collected from our mailbox and transported to the Center once per week unless the program is on expedition. However, please be aware that mail may arrive after the program has been completed due to delays in processing. Outgoing mail is deposited in a mailbox at the Center and deposited at the central post office 1-2 times per week.

The approximate cost to mail a letter or postcard to the U.S. from Kenya is 120 Kenyan Shillings, which is approximately $1.20 depending on the exchange rate.
HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS IN THE FIELD

SFS Staff and Student Affairs Manager

Due to the remote location of many SFS field stations, several SFS field staff are certified in Wilderness First Aid (WFA) and trained on how to respond in the case of an emergency. In addition, each SFS program is staffed with a full-time residential Student Affairs Manager (SAM) who is the primary medical responder and student support personnel on campus. The SAM is certified as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) and in Mental Health First Aid; they also receive training in sexual assault first response. In addition to their role as a medical responder, the SAM also coordinates program logistics, engages students in community outreach, advises and counsels students on group dynamics and adjusting to life abroad, and conducts in-country risk assessment and management.

Orientation

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. The goal of orientation is to:

- Familiarize students with SFS-wide and campus-specific policies and procedures
- Introduce students to potential risks and hazards inherent in the program and its location
- Introduce students to potential risks and cultural norms of the local community
- Build foundations for good group dynamics and a functional student community
- Introduce a sustainability contract
- Help students understand their role in conservation and community relations on campus
- Foster self-awareness

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 resources may be helpful to you in this research:

- Bureau of Consular Affairs: www.travel.state.gov
- U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/
- Diversity Abroad: https://www.diversitynetwork.org/page/publications

24-Hour Emergency Hotline

SFS maintains a 24-hour emergency hotline while students are abroad, and during their travels to the program. If a parent or guardian needs to urgently contact a student in the field, an emergency call can be made to this emergency hotline at 978.219.5113. When prompted, leave a message including your name and phone number. You can expect to receive a call back from the SFS Safety and Student Life Department within one hour. For non-emergency inquiries while a student is in the field, please e-mail safety@fieldstudies.org.

Medical Care on Program

SFS maintains a detailed Risk Assessment and Management Plan for each Center, which outlines country risks and response protocols, including local, national, and international medical facilities and their treatment capabilities. These plans ensure that SFS staff are always aware of the closest and most capable medical facility in their current vicinity and the protocols outline the best route for medical care access. If a student requires medical attention during a program, the Student Affairs Manager (SAM) on campus will assess the illness or injury and determine next steps (i.e. first aid, monitoring, medical attention, etc.) If a visit to a medical care facility is needed, an SFS staff member will assist in facilitating care and accompany the student to the appointment. Please be aware that there may be times when access to medical care may be delayed or unavailable, such as during travel or on expedition. Students are responsible for all incidental expenses, including medical costs, transportation, accommodations, etc., incurred by all parties involved. Some medical emergencies or conditions, including injuries and illnesses that cannot be supported in the field, may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS.
### Mental Health Support

SFS is partnered with Morneau Shepell to provide students with My Student Support Program (My SSP). This program provides 24/7 mental health and wellness support in the form of chat, phone, and video that connect students with Student Support Advisors. It also provides wellness tips and reminders that can be a helpful source of support while adjusting to new routines, roles, and responsibilities while abroad. The resource is accessible via the My SSP App, which can be downloaded for free in the App store or by visiting the My SSP website, [https://us.myissp.com/Home/UniversitySearch](https://us.myissp.com/Home/UniversitySearch). Students will have a full introduction to the resource during their in-country program orientation but are encouraged to download and explore the App or website prior to departure. It is helpful to complete the APP profile before departure and accept the push notifications.

This resource can be used for both immediate and ongoing consultations during a student’s time abroad. However, MySSP is meant to be a supplemental resource during the program. Students should work with the SFS Safety and Student Life Department and their home mental health provider to make a support plan to manage mental health while abroad.

### Sexual Health and Wellness

When it comes to sexual health and wellness or relationships during your SFS program, please consider:

- The ramifications that a short-term relationship may have on a small residential campus or within the local community. These relationships can have long-term effects on local communities that can last beyond your time abroad.
- The current dialogue about and understanding of consent in the U.S. often does not apply in other cultures.
- If you decide to engage in sexual interactions during your program, use protection (e.g. condoms/dental dams).
- Prophylactic sexually transmitted infection (STI) medication and emergency contraception may not be available in the remote locations in which we operate.
- Students who feel subjected to sexual harassment should walk away from any situation that makes them uncomfortable without concern for being culturally inappropriate. Students should report harassment or assault to any SFS staff member or HQ representative with whom they feel comfortable.
- In the case of a sexual assault, SFS will make every effort to support a student. This includes access to medical care, the option to report to the local law enforcement, and identifying support systems and additional resources. Local laws, definitions, and legal implications often differ from those in the US. Different laws and limited availability of resources such as rape kits can be complicating factors in responding to a report of sexual harassment or sexual assault in foreign countries.

### Self-Care and Wellbeing

Study abroad can be an exciting time for personal reflection and growth. However, the adjustment to new routines, relationships, and cultural environments, while away from your usual support systems, can be challenging especially if you do not take time for self-care. Self-care is an essential tool for maintaining good mental, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing during your time abroad. As you prepare for your SFS program, take time to consider how you might react to challenges that you encounter. Do you have self-care practices that you use at home during times of stress or transition? For example, do you journal? Create art? Exercise? Go for a long drive in the car? The ways you manage stress, take care of yourself, or find joy are your coping mechanisms. Consider that some of these outlets may not be available to you while you are abroad on an SFS program. For example:

- **Communication with support systems.** Limited internet connectivity, unexpected power outages, and busy academic and travel schedules can reduce the frequency and ease with which you are able to contact family, friends, pets, mentors, counselors, etc. If you currently talk to a mental health provider, and plan to stay in touch while abroad, this limited connectivity can pose a challenge. Similarly, talk to your family and friends to figure out the best communication plan (i.e. WhatsApp, calling card, etc.) and remember that you may not be able to be in touch as frequently as you are on your home campus.
- **Social media.** Limited internet bandwidth can make it difficult to engage with others through pictures and videos over social media platforms. Upload speeds are significantly slower and, at times, not possible. This can be a source of stress for students who are used to constant connections, and can cause frustration, irritability, sadness, and anxiety. What other ways can you communicate with others about your study abroad experience? For example, setting an
expectation with friends and family that you will update a blog might reduce a feeling of stress to provide social media updates in real time.

- **Privacy and time alone.** On campus, it may not be possible to find a private spot to rest and recharge daily. On a residential campus, there will be a lot of interaction with your peer group (i.e. sharing meals, attending classes, studying, recreational time, etc.). Think of ways that you can create some space for yourself when you are unable to physically distance yourself from others. Perhaps using headphones or stringing up a hammock can provide similar space.

- **Off-campus transportation.** Access to transportation may be limited and you will not be permitted to operate vehicles (including cars, motorboats, motorcycles, etc.) at any time while on program. Think about how this limited mobility might impact coping mechanisms that you use at home, such as taking yourself for a long drive.

- **Solo runs or hikes.** While the locations of most SFS campuses allow for regular exercise, it may look different from your normal routines at home. For example, SFS campuses do not have athletic facilities or equipment such as treadmills or weights. You will be required to use the buddy system when exercising off campus. (For more information about the SFS Off-Campus Policies in **SFS Policies and Procedures**). While away from the SFS center, it may not be feasible to find time or space for recreational exercise. SFS encourages students to be flexible with their exercise routines. Students are encouraged to bring compact workout equipment, such as resistance bands, for use during the program. Bringing downloaded exercise videos (i.e. yoga, pilates, etc.), using apps that can be accessed offline, coaching one another through favorite workouts or playing a pick-up game of soccer or frisbee can be creative and fun ways to stay active.

When you do not engage in self-care during times of stress, you may be more apt to turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, which can include risk-taking behaviors such as increased alcohol consumption, inappropriate or unhealthy relationships, rule-breaking, or resistance to structure.

This phenomenon is articulated by psychologist Dr. William Glasser as “Choice Theory.” “Choice Theory” holds that behavior is driven by an attempt to fulfill five basic needs: security, love, power, freedom, and fun. If one or more of these behaviors is not being met, then you may be more likely to act out in other aspects of life. For example, if you feel “power” is not met due to a lack of autonomy in a new, unfamiliar environment, you may seek to increase levels of “fun” by drinking to excess when you may otherwise not. It is important to understand that these types of behaviors can have more serious repercussions while abroad, due to unfamiliarity with the local culture, environment, and local laws and customs. Risky student behavior can put you and others in dangerous or unsafe situations disrupt the ability of staff and students to perform research. and/or have adverse impacts on the local community.

**Managing Social Drinking**

If drinking alcohol is part of how you socialize with friends, this will remain an option to you during your time abroad at local restaurants and bars in your free time. According to the SFS Alcohol Policy, SFS maintains dry campuses, and alcohol consumption is not permitted at the field station. More information about this policy can be found in SFS Policies and Procedures.

If you do choose to consume alcohol, we ask that you do so in moderation. Situational awareness and understanding of local cultures are important factors in reducing risk in certain situations. In some cultures, alcohol abuse is a systemic problem in the community. Therefore, over-indulgence of alcohol by SFS students can be viewed negatively by the community and construed as students being “part of the problem”. It is always important to demonstrate respect and gratitude towards the local community by maintaining respectful behavior.

Excessive consumption of alcohol can reduce your vigilance, lessen your awareness or response to cultural nuances or faux pas, and possibly lead to black outs, injury, assault, abuse, reckless behavior, and impaired judgement and decision making. To mitigate these risks, it is important to consume alcohol in moderation, pay attention to how much you consume, hydrate, make sure you don’t drink on an empty stomach, keep an eye on your drink at all times, do not accept drinks that you did not see being opened or prepared in front of you, maintain a buddy system, and practice bystander intervention.

This topic will be covered more in SFS Orientation during the first week of the program. Students who anticipate challenges managing alcohol consumption abroad should discuss with the SFS Safety and Student Life department prior to departure and can continue to seek support from their Student Affairs Manager (SAM) during their program.
PACKING GUIDE
PACKING TIPS

How to Read the Packing List
You will see two sections of the packing list. The first section includes required items that are necessary for the program. The second section is comprised of suggestions and recommendations from previous students and staff in the field. Remember that everyone’s needs and preferences are different, so some of these items may not be essential for you!

Luggage
SFS does not have a specific policy regarding how much luggage students should bring for their program and does not have a preference regarding wheeled or non-wheeled luggage. Alumni recommend using packing cubes to save space and keep your belongings organized. Remember that you’ll need to navigate one or more airports with your luggage, so make sure you bring only what you can maneuver yourself!

Storage Space
Each banda has some shelving and a few spots to hang things, but in general storage space is limited and you should be ready to keep most items stored in your suitcase.

Wear and Tear
Make sure all equipment is in good shape before leaving – check for leaks, broken straps, jamming zippers, etc. Your gear will undergo heavy use, so bring anything you might need to take good care of it like patch/sewing kits, etc.

Culture and Clothing
The style of dress in East Africa is much more modest than in the US due primarily to a large conservative Christian and Muslim population, so it is important to make sure that one’s clothing is culturally appropriate. Standards of dress are always modest in local communities - meaning long slacks for men and long skirts or long, loose pants for women. While at the Center you will have more flexibility in what you can wear than you will while interacting with community members, but you will always be surrounded by Kenyan staff so we must ask that you keep the following in mind as you pack your bags. If you pack in accordance with these recommendations, you and those around you will feel comfortable.

Use the images below to help you plan for clothing that you’ll wear around campus vs. what you’ll wear out in the community. Loose fitting clothing that covers your shoulders, midriff, and thighs is best.

If you plan to bring shorts, please make sure they are knee-length. If your shorts are shorter than this, please wear leggings underneath to cover more skin. Use the images below as a guideline.
Consider your impact!

As you pack, please consider the impact of the products that you bring with you to your program. Think about both the ingredients and packaging of what you bring. Plastic waste, for example, is incredibly detrimental to the ecosystem and waste management in remote locations is quite difficult. Consider replacing bottled products with products that come in bars or jars, such as shampoo and deodorant.

We highly encourage biodegradable soaps, shampoos and conditioner. Conventional soaps and shampoos can have a significant impact on the environment. As you consider biodegradable options, remember that not all soaps and shampoos labeled "natural" are biodegradable. Brands that are typically biodegradable include Jason’s Natural, California Baby, Kiss My Face, Nature Gate-Rainwater, Dr. Bronners, Tom’s of Maine, Desert Essence and some Aveda and Garnier products.

To keep your single-use plastic/paper consumption to a minimum, think about bringing a reusable shopping tote, metal straw, cloth napkins and other items.

PLEASE NOTE: As of June 1, 2019, all single use plastic bags are banned in Kenya. This ban extends to tourists/visitors as well as local residents, so that means that you cannot use plastic bags while packing. This includes Ziploc bags, trash bags, and even duty-free shopping bags.

Please keep in mind that this packing list does not have amounts suggested, so please pack according to your own needs and how frequently you plan on hand washing your laundry. Students in the past have said that packing enough clothes to last for about one-week was enough, but this can vary from individual to individual.

PACKING LIST: REQUIRED ITEMS

Clothing

- Shorts. Must be loose fitting and knee length.
- Loose fitting long pants.
- Loose T-shirts and tank tops. Tank tops should have wide, shoulder-width straps.
- Long-sleeved shirts: Light fabric for working in the field and for protection from the sun and insects, and heavier ones for warmth and layering
- Sweaters or sweatshirts for layering in colder weather
- Rain jacket
- Loose-fitting dresses or skirts for women. Dresses should cover the shoulder (thick sleeveless straps are acceptable if you have a light sweater or shawl to wear over your shoulders) and go to the knee.
- Slacks for men
- Some normal “every day” clothing! Jeans, sweaters, etc. Skinny jeans are acceptable. You don’t need strictly field clothes. You should bring some of the clothing that you’d normally wear to class or out with friends for days when you are just around the field station or spending time at cafes in town.
- At least one nicer outfit for nights out at restaurants
- Pajamas.
- Underwear and socks: including at least two pairs of wool (light wool) or synthetic (not cotton) hiking socks.
• Sports bras for women

Footwear
• Sturdy and comfortable sneakers and/or hiking shoes. We won’t be doing any strenuous hiking here, so there is no need to buy a new pair of hiking boots. We do play a lot of soccer and Frisbee at the Center, so running sneakers will be used frequently! In the evenings, all students will be required to wear closed toe shoes. Styles such as Crocs or closed toe sandals are not appropriate for evenings.
• Rugged sandals (brands like Chaco or Teva, something with straps and a thick sole)
• Flip-flops for the shower

Please note that our schedule includes relatively little hiking but plenty of time enjoying nature from the SFS vehicles. Take this into consideration when packing – it is **not necessary to purchase a hiking backpack, new hiking boots, or a full new wardrobe of quick-dry clothing.** The type of clothing available in outdoors stores will come in handy on expedition, particularly in the event of inclement weather, but most students indicate that they wore their ‘everyday’ clothing more often than they’d expected during the program. However, you should still plan that any clothing you opt to bring will experience plenty of wear and tear during the program due to work in the field, excessive wear, and hand washing – don’t pack any clothing that you wish to keep in perfect condition!

Gear
• Hat(s) for sun and rain protection
• Bandana or handkerchiefs to protect you from sun and dust
• Sunglasses
• Reliable, strong flashlight with extra batteries and bulbs; headlamps are strongly recommended
• Electrical converters/adapters, if needed for electrical appliances, computers, etc.
• 2 one-quart (or one-liter) plastic canteens or water bottles. Water bottles with a narrow mouth or with a splashguard insert are especially useful because it’s very difficult to drink out of wide mouth bottles while traveling along the bumpy roads.
• Portable mug for hot drinks while on expedition
• Tupperware container for packed lunches. Multi-chambered is best!
• Knife, spoon and fork for expedition "Mess Kit"

Personal Items and Toiletries
• Sunscreen. The equatorial sun can be more intense than in most areas of the U.S.
• Insect repellent.
• Small bag of toiletries. Past participants recommend bringing enough to last the length of the program. Some European and American products can be purchased in town but are generally more expensive. Students should bring enough tampons or sanitary napkins for the duration of the program (or consider alternatives such as the Diva Cup). If possible, all products you bring should be biodegradable. Be sure to include 2-3 small bottles of hand sanitizer in your toiletries.
• Nail clippers/files
• Personal first-aid kit (aspirin, motion sickness medication, Band-Aids, antibiotic cream, ibuprofen, tweezers, clippers, Q-tips, Pepto Bismol - preferable to Imodium - antibiotics, etc.) You should bring over-the-counter medications you might need as they will not be available at the field station and are often not available locally!
• Powdered drink mixes to flavor your water (Gatorade, etc.) This may seem minor, but it is important for hydration and for some variety in your beverage options!

For the Banda
• Lightweight sleeping bag (good to about 50 degrees F) and stuff sack (waterproof and dustproof). You can use this for bedding in your banda as well as on camping trips.
• Pillow, pillowcases, and sheets (fitted and flat - the beds at the field station are standard single/twin size)
• Sleeping pad for expedition. You can bring a foam or inflatable sleeping pad. The inflatable sleeping pads are easier to pack, but often pop because of acacia thorns, so definitely bring duct tape if you choose to bring an inflatable pad so that you can repair it!
• Alarm clock if you do not have an alarm feature on your watch/phone.
• Bath towel and washcloth – towel made of quick-dry material in dark color suggested.

For the Field and Classroom
• Binoculars - an integral part of the field experience! Look for something that is relatively lightweight but sturdy. 8 or 10 x 40's are ideal. Make sure they are properly aligned before leaving
• Laptop computer with protective case. As a general recommendation, this should be a PC (preferably) or Mac laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2003 or later software, or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents. If you are bringing a Mac computer, bringing a VGA adapter will allow you to connect your Mac to a projector to display PowerPoint presentations (we have a few extras at camp but they break and go missing, so bringing your own is a good idea). Mac computers are less resilient and sometimes fail in the hot, dusty weather in East Africa, so bring a PC computer with you if possible. We also recommend bringing silica gel packets to combat occasional damp weather. There are no computer repair services available locally.

NOTE: 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. You will be responsible for backing up and managing files saved on your personal laptop or on any Center laptops. Be sure to take your project data with you upon completion of the program, as it will not be available from SFS later. It’s a good idea to bring external drive, or Discs to back up photos and documents in case anything happens.

• 2-3 Notebooks; lots of pens and/or pencils. Three-subject notebooks are handy!
• 1 USB flash drive (also known as a USB keychain drive, USB micro drive, or USB thumb drive), with a capacity of at least 4 GB. You will use this to take your work and photos home with you at the end of the program, and to move data files between computers.
• Small, collapsible camp chair or stool field lectures and expeditions (Crazy Creek is a good brand). SFS Alumni highly recommend bringing these to improve your field lecture experience!

PACKING LIST: ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED ITEMS

This list is not exhaustive – just a few different items to consider packing based on your needs and interests!

Food & Drink:
• Any snack food or candy that might not be available in East Africa. It is easy to find Nutella, peanut butter, chocolate, cookies, chips, and soda locally, but harder to find things like trail mix or specific brand names like Oreos or M&Ms.
• Protein bars or powder are a must if you wish to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet during the program.
• Vitamin C supplements or powder to mix into your water
• Probiotics. You might experience some stomach upset while in Tanzania due to the different food, water, and bacteria. Bringing probiotic supplements (beneficial bacteria that can help prevent stomach upset and diarrhea) can help with this.

Entertainment & Exercise:
• Yoga mat
• Hammock (highly recommended by past students)
• Hard drive or flash drive with movies/shows (you won’t be able to access Netflix from the Center, so bring your favorites with you)
• Swimsuit. Swimming is only done at tourist lodges and is always optional. Two-piece swimsuits are acceptable for women.
• Paperback books (can be shared with other students and left at the Center at the end of the program)
• Writing materials (journal, stationary, address book)
• Materials for ReKAP
• Musical instruments- please bring these! Check the baggage requirements for your airlines to find out how best to pack. We have a guitar at the field station for students to share.
• Recreational items for free time such as Frisbees, hacky-sacks, board games, cards, knitting, DVDs (and portable speakers if your laptop speakers aren’t loud enough!)
• Small tape recorder. The sounds of Africa are as interesting to take home as the sights.

Comfort & self-care:
• Earplugs (especially if you are a light sleeper) – the camp is often loud in the morning due to chickens and some students getting up early to help in the kitchen
• Sleeping mask – the security lights outside the bandas that need to be on all night can be bright and often bother students while they are trying to sleep
• Spare glasses or contact lenses
• Baby wipes – can be very useful during days in the field or on expedition
• Pumice stone/foot cream – your feet will get very dry!

Time spent in the field/in town:
• Camera, extra batteries (enough to last several days during expedition), and lots of memory cards. If you plan to use rechargeable batteries, you need to bring your own charger.
• Gumboots (wellies/rubber boots). We have a good supply at the Center and these can be purchased easily in town for about $8, but you can of course bring your own if you prefer. If you pack them from home, make sure they are fairly light-weight, shin-high, and water-repellent with good tread – they are good for rainy days and to protect your feet from unwelcome attention from critters!
• Roll of duct tape. This can come in handy for fixing all kinds of things.
• Water-resistant watch
• Small repair kit (needle, thread, safety pins, super glue, etc.)
• Clipboard for taking notes in the field
• English to Swahili dictionary, ideally a pocket dictionary (google translate is often incorrect for Swahili translations)
• Used schoolbooks, children’s reading books, or other general reading material for local elementary and high schools.
• Items to donate to the community or trade at markets. Students have found that they were sometimes able to trade watches, water bottles, pens, sunglasses, and new clothing.
• Puzzles, crayons, coloring books, or colored pencils to donate to local community projects
• Recommended field guidebooks. We have many copies of these field guides in the KBC library for students to check-out, but if you wish to have personal copies, please purchase them before arriving at the Center.
  2. The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals by Jonathan Kingdon (the pocket version of this guide is NOT an acceptable substitute)
  3. Birds of Kenya & Northern Tanzania (Helm or Princeton edition) by Dale A. Zimmerman, Donald A. Turner and David J. Pearson

A NOTE ON FAA AND TSA REQUIREMENTS

When packing, please make sure to check Federal Aviation Association (FAA) and Transport Security Administration (TSA) for the latest prohibited items, which may include electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, medical marijuana, or cannabis-infused products, such as Cannabidiol (CBD) oil. You can find this information at https://www.faa.gov/.

Electronic Cigarettes and Vaping Devices
The FAA prohibits these devices in checked bags. Battery-powered E-cigarettes, vaporizers, vape pens, atomizers, and electronic nicotine delivery systems may only be carried in the aircraft cabin (in carry-on baggage or on your person).

Over forty countries have banned or have some restrictions on the use, sales, or importation of vaping devices, including SFS host countries of Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Chile, and Panama. It is therefore critical to check your host-country laws before possessing, purchasing, or using electronic cigarettes or vaping devices while in country. Keep in mind that some
countries do not have written law or policy regarding vaping devices but may target individuals using these products based on lack of recognition of their use and purpose.

**Medical Marijuana**
Possession of marijuana and cannabis-infused products, including some Cannabidiol (CBD) oils, is currently illegal under federal law. Federal authorities do not recognize medical marijuana laws or cards from U.S. states where it is legal, so travelers with any amount of medical marijuana can be arrested and detained in U.S. airports. Similarly, marijuana is illegal in most countries. Students with a U.S. state-issued medical prescription cab be arrested, prosecuted, and deported if in possession of any illegal substance, including marijuana and cannabis-infused products. Students should note that products containing or made from hemp with overt labeling may not be permitted on international flights, and host-country laws may vary in the way they are interpreted and enforced by local authorities. Alternatively, travel with clothing, jewelry, and bags made of hemp material is acceptable.

SFS does not allow possession of any drugs or medications that are illegal, as defined by U.S. federal and host-country laws. **The SFS Drug Policy prohibits possession or use of marijuana for the full duration of the SFS program, including free time and weekends away.**
We can’t wait to meet you and look forward to having you join us in the field!

Stay engaged with SFS while you prepare for your program:

- Keep up with the SFS News from the Field blog
- Follow SFS and SFS Chile on Instagram: @thesfs/@thesfskenya

Didn’t find what you were looking for? Check the following resources for more information:

- **Financial Planner for Kenya**: all program costs, including expected out-of-pocket costs, information about currency, and money exchange
- **Academic Handbook for Kenya**: information about the environmental issues of the region, SFS’s approach to grading and assessment, transcripts, academic policies, using research data for a thesis
- **Travel Guide for Kenya**: specific information about booking flights, visas, arrival to the program. Emailed to enrolled students 3-4 months before the program.
- **SFS Policies and Procedures Manual**: behavioral, administrative, medical, operational, and financial policies
And if you’re looking to pass the time, try your hand at this SFS-themed crossword!

Life in the Field

Across
5. neighbors, partners - the people you’ll meet
7. pl. might cause an itch
11. large scale impact studied at every center
14. rain or waves won’t stop me
16. solution for mid-afternoon grumbles
17. in the lab or in the field

Down
1. porch or tree hangout spot
2. puts the S in STEM
3. variety of life
4. stamped and signed from far away
6. lasting, balanced, a goal for our future
8. substitute for night vision
9. meal staple
10. can’t leave home without it
12. carries all the things you’ll need in the field
13. solar consequences
15. abbv. daily meeting