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PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE
MEET THE 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 SFS 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 Amazon Studies](#)
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.

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. 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 do not need to apply for a visa in advance and will enter the country on a Tourist visa. Your admissions counselor will provide more information about 3-4 months prior to the start of your SFS program. There will not be an additional cost associated with this visa.

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:

- **Rabies Pre-Exposure Vaccination Series:** In response to the threat of rabies incidence in Peru, coupled with the rural and remote location of our program, SFS requires that all students obtain the rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment from their health care provider, prior to the start of the program. The series is given over the course of 21 or 28 days (Day 1, Day 7, and Day 21 or 28), so plan accordingly. Students are required to upload documentation of their completed vaccination series via the Magnus Health Portal prior to departure for the program.

- **Malaria prophylactic medication:** In Peru, malaria is present in all regions less than 2,000 meters (6,562 feet), including Iquitos. 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 Panama, including those visiting smaller cities, villages, or rural areas.
- **Yellow Fever vaccination:** In Peru, Yellow Fever is present in all regions less than 2,300 meters (7,546 feet), including Iquitos. The Yellow Fever vaccination is recommended for all travelers to these regions.

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 able to access potable drinking water at all times while on campus or on field trips. When off campus, students are encouraged to carry potable water from campus and consider safe drinking and eating practices. Remember:

- Water in many regions is often not potable, including ice, juices, and water for brushing teeth or showering. Be aware of how cups, plates, and utensils are cleaned or rinsed, as food or drink can be contaminated by utensils rinsed in non-potable water.
- If sampling street food, consider how it was prepared. Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish, and shellfish or cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature. Instead, eat food that has been 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. <strong>Do you tend to embrace change and think towards the future, or hold onto tradition and value the past?</strong> <strong>How might this impact cultural views surrounding issues like climate change?</strong></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. <strong>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?</strong></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. <strong>Consider how you may need to adapt to your host culture, and how this might be different from what you are used to.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>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. <strong>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?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
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Directness, Openness, Honesty

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 would 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!
LIFE IN THE FIELD:
WHAT TO EXPECT
ABOUT SFS PERU

Thoughts of Peru often conjure up images of Machu Picchu, the famous Incan city and the high Andes, but half of Peru’s territory rests in the Amazon rainforest. Peru is home to varied ecosystems: high mountains, canyons, coastal deserts, rainforests, and all the microclimates in between. SFS Peru is based in Loreto, an Amazonian region in northern Peru, on the only road leaving from the city of Iquitos towards the port town of Nauta. Iquitos is a bustling port city and the capital this region— it has a population of about 437,000, making it the largest city that cannot be reached by road. About 5% of the population lives in the rainforest, with about 55 ethno-linguistic groups being represented.

The Biodiversity and Development in the Amazon program seeks to understand both the conflicts and synergies of conservation and development. Students will gain a sense of the richness of the Andes-Amazon region—biodiversity, social and cultural diversity, and ecosystem services—while exploring strategies for sustainable livelihoods in this highly productive and diverse region of South America. The interdisciplinary themes of socio-ecological resilience, environmental justice, and conservation will guide our inquiry. Students will study people’s dependence on the environment, examine the threats to the environment and to social networks, and explore the tools and strategies for mitigating the threats and promoting well-being among rural communities. A strong component of the program will be examining the ecological patterns and processes that underpin the high diversity of the region. More information about Bhutan and the Strategic Research Plan can be found in the Academic Handbook for this program.

Program Schedule

SFS programs usually operate six days a week, Sundays off. In an effort to maximize the experience in Peru, Sundays are frequently filled with travel, optional cultural activities, and/or hiking. Please be prepared for limited down time!

During program time (six days a week) you will find yourself following a busy schedule. There is no real typical day we could describe for the program, as every day looks different on an SFS program. You may have class in the morning, a field exercise in the afternoon, then some homework. Or an all-day field exercise. Or a full day of classes, mixing lecture, discussion, and workshop. Throughout the program, students also participate in community engagement events.

On SFS programs, students enjoy communal meals at the Center and breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served at typical mealtimes. Sundays are the kitchen staff’s day off and students are responsible for feeding themselves—don’t worry, the student kitchen will be stocked with a mix of leftovers and fresh food to prepare your meals.

Students typically have free time after all program activities have concluded for the day (Monday through Saturday) and usually all-day Sunday. Students often spend this free time at the Center, studying, relaxing, watching movies or playing games together, or venturing into nearby communities of La Habana or Cahuide. Students typically travel into Iquitos on free Sundays. When festivals or other community or cultural events occur, students usually partake in these as well.

While SFS Peru is based in a rural community near Iquitos, there will be opportunity for excursions to other areas of Peru during the program. Previous excursion destinations have included Iquitos, Nauta, Allpahuayo-Mishana National Reserve, Sucusari, Cusco, and the Tamshiyacu-Tahuayo Conservation Area.

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

A Note on 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.

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 participating in community work projects (“mingas”), playing soccer or volleyball with staff and neighbors, interviewing local people, meeting with environmental or Indigenous rights NGOs, learning cultural dances, or spending time in Iquitos. 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.

In the communities surrounding the SFS Center in Peru, English is not commonly spoken. In more touristed areas, such as Cusco and Iquitos, it may be more common to find English-speakers.

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.

Weekends Away
There will be two “Weekends Away” during the semester, when students will have both Saturday and Sunday off, and will spend the night away from campus. The dates of the weekends away will be announced at the start of the semester. SFS has helped students travel to and from Iquitos, but students are responsible for covering their own food and accommodations.
Mid-Semester Break
The program includes a five-day break during which time the Center is closed and students are expected to travel on their own. This is a wonderful opportunity (and the only one during the program!) to do some independent travel in the region. Mid-Semester Break happens immediately after a group excursion to the Cusco region, and students have taken advantage of this opportunity to travel together to Machu Picchu or have friends/family visit.

Mid-Semester Break and Weekends Away are characterized as “Non-Program Time.” You can read more about what this entails in SFS Policies and Procedures.

LIFE AT THE CENTER

Setting
Our Center is located in the Loreto of Peru, an Amazonian region in northern Peru, along the only road leaving from the city of Iquitos towards the port town of Nauta. It is about an hour and twenty minutes from Iquitos and about half an hour from Nauta (by vehicle). While Iquitos is a large and bustling city, the SFS Center is in a far less populated and remote area. A 5-minute walk brings you to the community of La Habana, which has one small shop with basic snacks. Cahuide is a longer, 30-minute walk away, and has a few more amenities, though still very basic. Students have enjoyed getting to know their neighbors in these communities in the past during their free time and SFS often invites community members to the center for Eco Club events and sporting matches.

Weather and Climate
The program is based in a tropical environment, though the climate of excursions varies. The primary two settings to prepare for are:

- **The SFS Center** (200m above sea level): tropical equatorial climate, with constant rainfall throughout the year and temperatures ranging from 70F to 90F. It is hot, humid and rainy. The rainiest season is from November to May, primarily affecting the Spring semester.

- **Cusco and Peruvian Highlands** (about 3,400m above sea level): two weeks are spent in the highlands, which is at a high and has a dry climate. Temperatures can drop dramatically, especially at night, with a year-round average high of 68F and low of 40F.

The humidity and heat of the Amazon is intense, especially without access to certain amenities at the center like air conditioning. It is usually damp, items mold quickly, and this makes for a smelly environment at times, too! Please consider how you will cope with this environment, which can be physically challenging.

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. In addition to the communal living arrangements, a lot of the academic work is collaborative or group work. 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: setting up the dining area, cleaning up after dinner, setting out snacks, sweeping the classroom, and other activities to keep the center beautiful.
The Field Station
The SFS Center in Peru is nestled in the Amazon rainforest along the Iquitos-Nauta highway. The property itself is expansive, with multiple buildings, space for sports, fruit trees, and a trail network. Students will be staying in hotels, on a research vessel, and at field stations while traveling on expedition. Accommodations at the SFS Center in Peru as well as other field accommodations are not perfect and may be more basic than the accommodations students are used to on their home campuses – you will see large insects around (often in rooms and bathrooms), and there is no air conditioning at the center.

Housing
A large building is dedicated to the student dorms. These consist of large shared rooms with containing 1-3 bunkbeds each (up to 6 students per room). Students will share a large communal bathroom with four showers, four sinks and four bathroom stalls. Each room has shelves for students to store their clothing and other belongings, and students are provided with a tub to store under each bed where items that should be protected from the humidity can be stored.

Laundry
Students have access to washing machines at the campus in Peru. Clothes are dried via line dry. Students are responsible for providing their own biodegradable laundry soap, which cannot be found easily in Peru.

Other Facilities
The SFS Center in Peru also includes:

- Soccer field and volleyball court
- Two small hammock huts, surrounded by fruit trees and coconut palms
- Classroom building (locally referred to as the Maloca)
- A Main Hall, which houses the dining area, staff offices and the internet station
- Swimming pool
- Staff housing
- Trail system
- The jungle, which hugs all edges of our field station
Food and Cuisine
Breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be served at the Center six days a week:

- **Breakfast** usually includes eggs, fried yucca or plantains, and a fruit salad of papaya and some other fruits. Pancakes are sometimes served. Bread, jelly, and butter are always available.
- **Lunch** is the main meal of the day and generally includes rice, beans, meats, vegetables, and fruit juice.
- **Dinner** is often vegetarian with potatoes, rice, or pasta.

We try to serve an array of different vegetables and fruits, but we buy mostly local, in-season products, and are therefore subject to seasonality and market availability. We are currently in the stages of starting our garden with fresh produce that we hope to use in our meals in semesters to come.

Iquitos has local grocery stores that sell yucca chips, chocolate, nuts, snack foods, and a market that sells fresh fruit and vegetables. Our closest town, La Habana, has a small store that sells snacks like cookies and chips, and has soft drinks available for purchase. Students also have access to coffee, tea, and hot chocolate as well some sort of snack such as crackers, peanut butter, fruit, or bread. Students are not given access to the kitchen, but there is a student fridge for food storage. On Sundays, a student kitchen (stovetop, pots and pans, etc.) is set up in the dining area and stocked with cereal, milk, fresh food and leftovers for students to prepare their own meals.

**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**

You will have several options for exercise while at the field station! We often play soccer and volleyball in the evenings. There are some exercise videos at the Center (yoga and pilates). Morning is usually the best time for exercise. Past groups have done Zumba and yoga classes together, started running groups, taken advantage of our pool for lap swimming. There are 6 yoga mats, some exercises bands, and balance balls available for students to use.
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 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.

Additionally, students are invited to utilize the drying box which will operate during set hours multiple times per week.

For reasons listed above, SFS does not recommend that students bring Apple laptops to the program. Past students have either purchased less expensive PCs for the program or borrowed a PC from a friend or family member.

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 semester – it is required to bring a personal laptop.

Computer Programs
There are several programs that the professors request that you have on your computer, including:

• Microsoft Word (or some equivalent word processing program)
• Microsoft Excel (or some equivalent spreadsheet program that allows for entering data and basic statistical analysis and visualizing data)
• Microsoft PowerPoint (or some other slide making software)
• QGIS: https://qgis.org/en/site/
• Google Earth (Highly recommended, not required)
Electrical Appliances
Electricity in Peru is 220 V. Check your devices to see if they can convert this voltage. If not, you will need to bring a power converter. There are two types of electrical outlets in Peru. One accepts two-pronged plugs with flat, parallel blades, while the other takes plugs with two round prongs. Most Peruvian electrical outlets are designed to accept both types, so a cord with two flat prongs will work. However, if your appliance has a different plug attachment or is three-pronged, you’ll need to buy an adapter.

Power levels fluctuate often and power surges are very common so electronics should not be plugged in for long periods of time and students should bring their own surge protectors. Ensure that your surge protectors are rated for 110v-220v/240v. Surge protectors designed for the USA (120v) will not work in Peru and may damage your device. Some converters include surge protection. Do not plan to bring large power strips and plug in many devices at once, as this will overwhelm the power grid and can cause electrical fires.

Power outages are very common in Iquitos and more so in the area where the center is located. When necessary, we use a gas generator to power the common areas and important appliances of the center, such as fridges. The on-and-off power and the use of a generator can be harmful to electronic devices. Come prepared with adapters, converters, and surge protectors for your devices!

Internet
Wireless internet is not available at the Center. Internet access is only available via Ethernet cable for students at the field station. Students are permitted to use the internet via Ethernet for academic and personal use in accordance with the internet policies outlined in the SFS Policies and Procedures. There is an internet station with four Ethernet cable connections on the campus, which means not everyone can be connected at the same time and connection will happen in a central location. Students will have to share access to the internet and even when online, the connection will be slower than what you are used to and less reliable. You will need to ensure that your device has a port to connect an Ethernet cable into, or bring an adapter, and you will not be able to connect a smartphone to the Ethernet.

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 will be times during the semester 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.

Communication with Home
The most convenient and affordable way to communicate with your family and friends at home is via Internet-based written communications (email, Facebook Messenger, or other apps accessible through a laptop) and phone calls. You can also send and receive mail during the program.

Messaging Apps
While there is not WiFi on the SFS campus in Peru, there will be times during the semester where you do have access to WiFi (excursions away from the center, Weekends Away, Mid-Semester Break, etc.). When WiFi is available, you will be able 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 when it is available, though you will not be able to connect your device to the Internet 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 extremely limited based on Internet speed and availability!

_Phones_

Students will be issued a local cell phone by SFS to use for the duration of the semester. Cell phone service for Peruvian phones is fairly reliable around the center and this is another way to stay in touch with family and friends at home, as well as with the SFS Peru staff. Students are responsible for keeping their phones on them at all times and making sure it is charged and has phone credit.

Receiving calls from within or outside Peru is at no charge to the recipient; additional credit for outgoing international calls is at students’ own expense.

It is not recommended to purchase an international plan with your personal cellphone, since the networks of these often do not have good coverage where the center is located. Service can sometimes be found standing out by the gate of the property and is more reliable in the city of Iquitos.

It is also not recommended to purchase a Peruvian SIM card, or put the SIM from the SFS issued phone into your personal device, as students and staff have found the service to function poorly when not in a Peruvian device.

_Mail_

Mail can be sent to the center at a P.O. box in Iquitos:

   The School for Field Studies – Peru
   P.O. Box 703
   Iquitos, Loreto, Peru

Since the P.O. box is located in the city, students should inform the center staff if they are expecting mail, to ensure that the box is checked in a timely fashion. Please keep in mind that receipt of mail may be delayed depending on the schedule of the program and staff members.

Please tell friends and family to avoid sending packages to the center, as processing time is slow, and you will often have to pay a very steep tax on the value of your package. Additionally, packages are often held at the customs warehouse in Lima, which you would not be able to access during program time. If you have prescription medicines, make sure to bring enough for the entire session, as you will not be able to receive this through the mail. You should plan to pack and carry with you everything you will need for the duration of the program.
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/travelwarnings/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. 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. 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 do not 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 dormitory room has shelves to store clothes, and students will be given a tub/container to store items that need to be protected from the open-air.

Wear and Tear
Make sure all equipment is in good shape before leaving – check for leaks, broken straps, jamming zippers, etc. It’s good practice to clean off hiking gear or other items that are exceptionally dirty or have mud caked on. This can cause issues when going through security and customs.

The climate of the Amazon is particularly humid and damp. As such, items are easily damaged and clothing (especially cotton) can mold and hold smells easily. Don’t plan to bring your nicest/most valuable items on this program!

Culture and Clothing
SFS recommends that students dress modestly while in Peru out of respect for local culture. Additionally, for protection against sun exposure and insect-borne diseases, the following dress code is in place:

- **Daytime around the center**: modest, lightweight shirts and shorts, skirts, or pants are recommended. Shorts and skirts should follow the “finger-tip” rule where hemlines should fall to or below your fingertips when arms are held by your side.
- **Nighttime [6pm-6am] in lowland areas** (including the center): it is required to wear long loose-fitting pants (this does not include leggings), socks, and closed toe/ closed heel shoes that provide full foot coverage
- **Any trail use**: rubber boots, long pants, and long sleeves are required (to avoid exposure to disease-carrying insects and other hazards on the ground).
- **Community activities**: Field work that includes work with the community requires long pants, modest shirts, and closed-toed shoes or often times, rubber boots (farm visits). Modest tops are the minimum requirement for all excursions (any cut outs or side cleavage showing are not permitted). We encourage students to follow these requirements during their free time in the community.
- **Higher elevations**: layers are recommended based on increased sun exposure and colder nights

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 require biodegradable soaps, shampoos, conditioner, and laundry soap. 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.

Students will need to provide their own biodegradable laundry soap while living at the center. Biodegradable or more natural laundry soap cannot be purchased in Iquitos and may be hard to find depending on where you live. Plan ahead of time to order online if necessary.
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.

Note: this packing list does not suggest amounts, so pack according to your own needs and how frequently you plan on washing your clothes.

PACKING LIST: REQUIRED ITEMS

Clothing

Quick dry clothing is HIGHLY recommended as the humidity in the jungle can make it harder to dry clothing, and damp clothing is more prone to molding.

- **Pants.** Please note that pants need to be worn on every field excursion. This includes both trail hikes and visits to local communities, so please bring appropriate attire for both. Be aware that there are certain weeks that we will be on a field excursion every day, so plan accordingly. Pants also need to be worn every day from 6pm until 6am to protect against disease carrying insects. **Bring a few pairs for each purpose:**
  - Long, lightweight field pants. Loose, fast-drying cotton or nylon pants are ideal.
  - Long, LOOSE-FITTING pants to wear around the center and to town (some warmer pants for higher elevations and some lightweight pants for time spent at our primary field station). Loose, fast-drying cotton or nylon pants are ideal, past students suggest harem pants. **Note: Loose pants are required for protection against snakes and so leggings are NOT sufficient for nighttime protection and all pants must cover ankles.**
  - Shorts/Capris/Skirts/Sundresses for use around the center, in town, or for athletic activities. People in Iquitos often wear shorts, but short hemlines are not culturally appropriate in many Andean communities. Shorts are acceptable but please be conservative. For example, volleyball spandex and booty shorts are unacceptable to wear in town or at the center.
  - Comfy pants for lounging around the station on your free time and for travel days

- **Tops & Outerwear.** While long sleeves must be worn on trails, T shirts that cover the shoulders are the minimum requirement for all other field excursions as a means of sun protection and as a barrier against disease-carrying insects. During the two weeks spent at high elevations, warmer, long sleeved tops are a necessary layer to have on all field excursions as temperature conditions can change significantly and unexpectedly. Mosquitos and bugs can be very annoying at night around the center and lightweight T-shirts and long sleeve shirts can offer some relief. We recommend the following:
  - Short-sleeved shirts to wear for community/non-trail excursions, around the center, or for sports
  - Modest tank tops can be worn around the center and into the community
  - Long-sleeved, lightweight shirts for protection against insects, plants, and the sun while in the field (long-sleeved athletic, wicking, quick dry shirts are often most versatile for the program, though they are not as protective against mosquitos as button up field shirts)
  - Warm long-sleeved shirts for cooler days or at night (just need a few for travels to Cuzco-2 weeks)
  - Wool or fleece sweater or sweatshirt (cotton for a warm layer is not recommended for Cuzco)
  - Light raincoat or poncho (for dryness, not warmth; a waterproof shell that is also breathable is the most effective). Longer raincoats help to keep your lower half dry in the common downpours. An umbrella is also very effective for around the station or in town (compact travel umbrellas are handy to bring but normal umbrellas can be purchased in Peru).

- **Socks:** we recommend that you bring a variety (some cotton, some wool- 50/50 combination with polypropylene and wool for hiking, some tall for boots- like soccer socks- some lightweight). Bring quite a few pairs of short, tall and mid-calf socks as you will often use more than one pair a day.

- **Underwear:** Keep in mind that underwear will hang on a communal line to dry. Quick-dry underwear is also recommended and having several sports bras is helpful, as well.

- **Pajamas:** Bathrooms are open air in some of the places in which we stay, and are shared between students, volunteers, and guests, so pajamas should be appropriate for use in these spaces.

- **Clothes for town:** Bring some nice clothing for going into Iquitos. You will likely want a break from field clothes, so bring clothes that you are comfortable in.
- **Cold-weather accessories**: It can get quite cold in the Sacred Valley and the city of Cusco at night, so you may want to pack a warm hat (fleece headbands are also nice) and gloves! These items can also be found for reasonable prices in the markets of Cusco and the Sacred Valley.

- **Swimsuit**: Swimsuits should be appropriate for use in public areas where many locals bathe in tank tops and shorts, which is also an option when necessary. Women should opt for a modest one-piece or two-piece bathing suit that provides full coverage.

**Footwear**

- **Knee-high rubber boots** are REQUIRED for all field activities and hiking in the lowlands. You can find basic rubber boots at the local markets for approximately $10 unless you wear larger than a size 10 or have uniquely shaped feet or calves. Mid-calf boots will not be accepted nor will they be practical, as you may sometimes be almost knee deep in water.

- **Sneakers or running shoes**

- **Comfortable, lightweight, easy-on, closed toe (with a closed heel) shoes to wear around the station at night.** Reminder that closed toed shoes must be worn every night, so bring a pair you like and are comfortable in. The shoe must completely cover your foot, therefore shoes such as Toms, Crocs or clogs which leave parts of the foot exposed are not acceptable.

- **Sturdy Sandals** (e.g. Tevas or Chacos) and/or rubber or regular flip flops (these can also be used as shower shoes)

- **Lightweight but sturdy hiking shoes** are nice to have for hiking in the highlands, but not required

**Gear**

- **Rain/sun hat**: the sun is strong closer to the equator, so it’s always good to have extra protection!

- **Headlamp**: Lightweight, long-lasting. Waterproof is a great feature to have.

- **Binoculars**: Ideal magnifications for field binoculars are 10 x 40 mm. Bushnell, Swift, Vivitar, and Nikon make good, reasonably priced binoculars (may also be helpful for personal use!) You can purchase these second hand on apps and sites like LetGo, eBay or Craigslist.

- **Daypack** for field work and to carry your notebook, water, lunch in a Tupperware, camera, rain gear, first aid kit, and field guide books. Waterproof pack covers are great, or garbage bags work well for lining a backpack to make it waterproof.

- **A small to medium backpack for overnight trips/during mid-semester break.**

**Personal Items and Toiletries**

- **Personal first aid kit**: During field trips out of urban areas, we carry a first aid kit for emergencies. Otherwise, you will have to purchase medicine or supplies. You will find greater selection if you bring these things from home. Additionally, it is better to use medicines from home that you are familiar with and know work for you as most of these brands are not available in Peru. You should have:
  
  - Any necessary emergency medication (e.g. inhaler, Epi-pens, etc.)
  - Antihistamines (such as Benadryl)
  - **These are required for any extra-curricular trail use**
  - **Cold medicine**
  - Band-Aids
  - Antiseptic cream
  - Little scissors
  - Aspirin
  - Tylenol
  - Anti-itch cream
  - Motion sickness medication
  - Antacids
  - Pepto Bismol
  - Anti-diarrheals
  - Any personal needs

- **Biodegradable soap and shampoo**: We require biodegradable soaps, shampoos and conditioner because the water system in Peru is old, and used water is dumped back into nature without being properly treated. Conventional soaps and shampoos have an impact on the environment. Not all soaps and shampoos labeled “natural” are biodegradable (Brands that are typically biodegradable: Jason’s Natural, California Baby, Kiss My Face, Nature Gate-Rainwater, Dr. Bronners, Tom’s of Maine, Desert Essence and some Aveda products.)

- **Biodegradable laundry soap**: Students will need to provide their own biodegradable laundry soap while living at the center. Biodegradable or more natural laundry soap cannot be purchased in Iquitos and may be hard to find depending on where you live. Plan ahead of time to order online if necessary.
• **Tampons/sanitary pads and other toiletries.** Some items like pads, tampons and toiletries can only be restocked from Iquitos. Pack plenty, or consider using a menstrual cup to reduce waste!

• **Sunscreen.** Waterproof and SPF 30 or greater.

• **Insect repellent and anti-itch cream.** An effective repellent with DEET is highly recommended; Avoid bringing aerosol cans as these may be confiscated at the airports. More “natural” insect repellents are nice in the evening after showering and before going to bed in order to not sleep with DEET on.

• **Glasses or contact lenses.** Consider bringing an extra pair and lots of contact solution. To replace your contacts in Peru, you may have to pay for a complete eye exam and wait at least a month to receive the lenses. Glasses take less time.

• **Record of international travel immunizations.** This can aid in diagnosis and/or treatment should you get sick.

For the Dormitory

• **Sheets (2 sets):** fitted sheet, flat sheet and pillowcase(s) that fit a standard twin sized bed (not extra long).

• **Towels:** two bath towels (things take quite long to dry, and it’s good to have a back up) and one wash cloth (optional) – quick dry is best! A sarong is also useful.

• **Alarm clock** (okay to use phone/watch).

**Note:** pillows are provided at the Center, but if you are picky about your pillow feel free to bring your own! You are also welcome to bring a light blanket with you, but it will be warm, so nothing too heavy. We will provide mosquito nets for all beds in our dorms and on expeditions.

For the Field and Classroom

• **Computer.** Students are required to bring their own personal laptops (contact your SFS Admissions Counselor if this is a problem). Please refer to the “Technology and Communications” section of this document to review laptop requirements.

• **2 USB flash drive(s)-at least 2.0 GB** (having enough storage space to back up documents in case of computer malfunctions is recommended)

• **Rechargeable batteries and CHARGER or enough batteries for length of program:** Bring enough for your camera, headlamp and any electronics that you have (An extra set of batteries for cameras and headlamps are recommended for long excursions and times when power is not available). Iquitos does not accept used batteries for recycling and so if you choose to bring non-rechargeable batteries, please plan to carry them home with you.

• **Portable phone charger** if you take photos with your cell phone or like to listen to music on long boat and van rides. We will not have consistent electricity on certain excursions, so being able to charge your phone remotely may be practical for you.

• **Electrical Appliances** (devices must be compatible with 220v – see Technology and Communications for details)
  o Adapter – if your device is 3-pronged and will not fit into the 2-pronged Peruvian outlets
  o Converter – if your device cannot convert to 220v voltage
  o Surge protector – to protect against surges; must be rated 110v-220v/240v.

• **Tupperware container and reusable utensils (sporks) for to-go lunches.** We carry these for long days in the field, so making sure it is appropriate size for enough food to keep you full! Additionally, we will not be able to lend forks or knives from the center for field excursions.

• **2 durable water bottles** of at least 1 liter each

• **Student I.D.:** this can get you discounts on travel, hotels, and park entrances.

• **A large re-sealable plastic bag** with silica gel beads for computer storage is highly recommended to help protect your computer from humidity damage

• **Waterproof bags:** Ziplocs of varying sizes are always useful; small dry bags are more durable and great for carrying cameras in the field as they can clip easily to packs or belts

• **Notebooks** for five classes. Ones with graph paper quadrants can be easily purchased in town; students recommend bringing one 5-subject notebook, rather than 5 individual ones.

• **Waterproof field notebook/journal** with pencils or waterproof pens. There will be field days where you are standing in the rain all day needing to record data! Websites for waterproof materials: [www.kooters.com/fieldbook.html](http://www.kooters.com/fieldbook.html), [www.riteintherain.com](http://www.riteintherain.com)

• **Work or gardening gloves**
• Inserts, boot liners, or even a cheap pair of orthotics can help a pair of rubber boots fit better

PACKING LIST: ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED ITEMS

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

For Academic Use:

• Clipboard for writing in the field. Plastic clipboards where you can store things inside have been especially well-liked, however they take up a lot of room and may not be worth the trouble
• Spanish-English dictionary
• Laptop case to protect against moisture

For Entertainment:

• Camera: students are welcome to use smartphones for photography, though should be wary of pickpocketing – especially with iPhones – in more urban areas. For students wishing to bring more advanced camera equipment, please pack appropriate protective gear as it can be challenging to keep these devices dry. Students should have a waterproof bag or case to take into the field and carry all day because the rain can happen at any time, sometimes without much warning. For storage at the center, a good sealed case would be helpful and utilizing the drying box at the center weekly is recommended.
• Books
• Headphones: think about bringing a backup pair in case yours break or get lost. Keep in mind it may be more reliable to have headphones that do not need to be charged.
• Movies to watch during free time (you will not be able to download movies while in Peru due to internet limitations)
• Auxiliary cord for playing music during long van rides
• Portable speaker

For Food and Drink:

• Travel mug
• Small treats from home – granola bars, Nutella, Double-Stuf Oreos, your favorite tea, etc.
• Dietary supplements - vitamins (if these are something you normally take or you are concerned about supplementing your diet), fiber bars (helpful if you need to get things moving), protein bars (good boost for vegetarians, nice snack), electrolyte tabs (put into your water for extra hydration)
• Medicinal herbal teas. Smooth Move works great for occasional constipation, and Throat Coat is very effective for sore throats

For Comfort:

• Sunglasses
• Peppermint oil (very refreshing on hot days and helps with bugs), be prepared to dilute it with lotion!
• Extra pair of running/athletic shoes
• Loofah for shower (highly recommended to remove dirt and chiggers)
• Earplugs. Very important if you are a light sleeper and good for boat travel

Other:

• Water-resistant wristwatch
• Small tote bag
• Pocketknife or Multi-tool. Swiss Army Spartan and Tinker are good models. If you bring this, be sure to pack it in your checked luggage.
• Bandanas
• Wet wipes/ baby wipes, small packs of tissues
• Small sewing kit
• A guidebook for Peru
• Chigger-X medicated ointment
• External battery charger
• Bug head-net
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 can 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 Bhutan on Instagram: @thesfs/@elsfs_peru

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

- Financial Planner for Peru: all program costs, including expected out-of-pocket costs, information about currency, and money exchange
- Academic Handbook for Peru: 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 Peru: 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**
3. 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. abbr. daily meeting