



BHUTAN FIELD GUIDE



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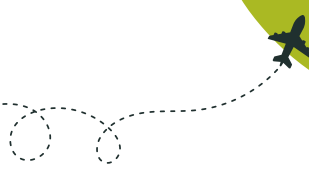


PANAMA



LIFE IN THE FIELD

PERU



Academic Foci

- The center is set in the Paro Valley of the Himalayan mountains (elevation 7,218 ft) surrounded by Rhododendron forests.
- Bhutan is known as Druk Yul or Land of the Thunder Dragon and is one of the world's top ten biodiverse hotspots.
- Gross National Happiness outranks Gross National Product and Buddhist philosophy resonates throughout Bhutan's culture competing with community livelihoods to inform their ever-evolving environmental policies.
- Endemic species such as black-necked cranes, takins, golden langurs, snow leopards, and tigers all call Bhutan home.

SEMESTER:

HIMALAYAN ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

SUMMER 1:

FORESTS IN THE LAND OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

Mountain, forest, and river ecology, resource management and conservation. Geology and hydrology of mountain regions. Environmental governance. Gross National Happiness and the influence of Buddhist philosophy. Urban migration. Agriculture and food security.

Mountain, forest, and river ecology, resource management and conservation. Geology and hydrology of mountain regions. Environmental governance. Gross National Happiness and the influence of Buddhist philosophy. Urban migration. Agriculture and food security.

Each program combines theory learned in the classroom alongside field-based applications. Time in the classroom is structured to give students a solid understanding of environmental history, theory, and conservation techniques before deploying their knowledge or specific techniques in the field.



Setting and Facilities

A former hotel nearby the quiet town of Paro.

RURAL



URBAN

PARO

10-minute walk

Population ~12,000

Nearest town. Restaurants, shops, cafes, and bars.

THIMPHU

60-minute drive

Population ~115,000

Capital city. Restaurants, shops, cafes, bars, and hospital.

HOUSING

Ten rooms, 2-3 people per room in twin beds. Personal desks and storage.

En-suite bathroom with shower (hot water) and western-style toilet.

OTHER FACILITIES

Common room with TV, books, and games.

Classroom, kitchen, dining area, and terrace.

Five washing machines (detergent provided). No dryers, clotheslines only.



Food

SFS can accommodate most dietary needs, but the variety of food may be limited due to local availability and cost. SFS cannot accommodate life-threatening allergies to dairy or strict Halal or Kosher diets. Due to limited dietary variety, SFS always recommends bringing vitamins, protein bars, nuts, favorite snacks, etc.

Meals consist of rice, starchy vegetables, legumes, and spicy chilies. Cheese, butter, and milk are common ingredients. Raw vegetables are not common. Snacks include tea, juice, fruit, and crackers.



AUSTRALIA



Exercise

The center has a ping pong table, volleyball net, and badminton rackets. There are a few running routes around the center. A gym is available in town for approximately \$30 USD per month.



Climate

Fall runs from September through November. Temperatures in Paro range from 47-75°F. Winter runs from December through March and brings light snow. Temperatures in Paro range from 20-54°F. Spring runs from April to June with increasing rainfall. Temperatures in Paro range from 39-75°F. Climate varies widely depending on elevation, so be prepared for both hotter and colder weather



KENYA



Money

The local currency is the Bhutanese Ngultrum (Nu) and Indian Rupee (INR). Thai Bhat (THB) will be used during the short layovers while flying to and from Bhutan.

Bhutan and Thailand are cash-based economies. Students cannot use credit/debit cards for most purchases. However, all students are required to bring a credit/debit card with at least \$3,000 in funds in case of emergencies. Mastercard and Visa are the most commonly accepted cards internationally. Notify banks about international travel.

Please bring the entire amount of USD needed to start. Staff will assist students in exchanging USD to Nu upon arrival. Students should withdraw THB or exchange USD for THB while at the airport. When bringing USD to exchange, travel with bills in excellent condition (clean, unwrinkled, unmarked, with no tears). Students will have access to ATMs to replenish their cash supply in Paro and Thimphu, however the ATMs are unreliable.



CHILE



Electricity

The electrical voltage in Bhutan is 230 and in Thailand is 220 (the U.S. uses 120). Check all electrical devices to see if a voltage converter is needed. Bhutan uses plug type D, F, and G and Thailand uses types C and O (the U.S. uses A and B). All students will need plug adaptors.



Internet

Wireless internet is available at the center and Thai hotel, but it is slow and intermittent. SFS reserves the right to limit internet activities occurring on our servers including, but not limited to, streaming or downloading audio/video content (Facetime, Netflix, etc.).



Computers

Students need to bring laptops with Microsoft Office (or the ability to open Microsoft files offline) and a USB port. Electronic devices are subjected to a much harsher environment than normal. In particular, Apple products do not fare well in high humidity and are more difficult to repair or replace locally. Please take precautions to protect all devices.



Phones

Students are provided local phones and/or local sim cards in Bhutan. Students are responsible for maintaining credit on their phones to communicate with staff and peers. This will cost around ~\$1 USD per month. Additional credit will be needed for international calls. During the short stay in Thailand, students will rely on WIFI only.



TANZANIA



Mail

No packages can be sent to the center. Letters may not arrive due to the unpredictability of local mail service. Send all letters through USPS (not UPS, FedEx, or DHL). The average one-way travel time for airmail from the U.S. to Bhutan is 3-4 weeks. Therefore, no mail can be sent during the last month of programs, as students will not receive it! Mail will not be forwarded.

Address: ATTN: Staff, Student Name, The School for Field Studies, Gangtey Palace, P.O. Box 1308, Taju, Wangchang Gewog, Paro, 12001, Bhutan



CAMBODIA



Community Engagement

Students live at a field station, rather than a homestay, local apartment, or university dorm. This means they will not necessarily navigate the local culture, cuisine, or language every day. However, SFS believes that meaningful research is only possible with the input of local people, so community engagement varies each term to reflect the requests of our partners.



Chores

There is no cleaning service at the center, so students are expected to take responsibility for their space. Students will help set up/clean up for meals and engage in center-wide clean-ups. Specific chore responsibilities will be shared during orientation



Off-Campus Policies

Because center locations are often unfamiliar to students, there are off-campus policies in place to keep students safe including nightly curfew, sign-out logs, and a buddy system. Specific campus policies will be shared during orientation.

ITALY



Time-off

Due to Bhutan visa restrictions, students will not be given a mid-semester break or the opportunity to travel independently.



Drinking & Drugs

There is no consumption or possession of alcohol allowed on campus. Students who choose to consume alcohol on their days off in which they are off campus, need to do so in moderation and maintain respectful behavior toward others.

Possession of marijuana and cannabis-infused products, including some cannabidiol (CBD) oils, is currently illegal under U.S. federal law. SFS does not allow possession or use of any drugs or medications that are illegal for the full duration of SFS programs including free time and weekends away. Check local laws before possessing, purchasing, or using electronic cigarettes or vaping devices on program.

CROATIA



Health & Safety in the Field



24-Hour Emergency Hotline

SFS maintains a 24-hour emergency hotline. To urgently contact a student in the field, call 978.219.5113.



Student Health & Wellness Manager

The Student Health & Wellness Manager is a full-time primary medical responder and student support personnel on campus. They are certified in Wilderness First Response, or equivalent certification, and trained in sexual assault first response. They also counsel students on adjusting to life abroad, conduct risk assessments, and help coordinate program logistics and community outreach.



Orientation

Upon arrival to campus, students receive an orientation about the local community and culture, center operations, and relevant risks and hazards. Prior to arriving on program, students should research the inherent risks associated with traveling abroad.



Medical Care

SFS maintains a detailed risk assessment and management plan outlining risks and response protocols, including nearby medical facilities and their treatment capabilities. These plans ensure staff are always aware of the best route for appropriate medical care.

If a medical care facility visit is needed, staff will accompany the student to the appointment. There may be times when medical care access is delayed, i.e., expeditions. Students are responsible for all medical costs and all incidental expenses incurred by all parties involved including transportation, accommodations, etc. This may include costs related to COVID-19 quarantining. Some medical conditions may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS.



Mental Health Support

Adjusting to new routines, relationships, and environments while away from usual support systems can be challenging. Many students also struggle with the rigorous schedule that is inherent to SFS programs. The ways students manage stress, take care of themselves, or find joy may not be available while they are abroad. There may also be decreased communication with home, limited privacy and alone time, and infrequent or modified opportunities for exercise.

SFS is partnered with Morneau Shepell to provide students with access to free, mental health and wellness support by chat, phone, and video via WIFI. Students should download My Student Support Program (My SSP) in the app store or on the [My SSP website](#). My SSP is a supplemental resource, and students should work with their mental health provider to create a primary support plan. Students with regular counseling should verify that their mental health provider is available while they are abroad.



Identity

Each country is shaped by its history, and therefore attitudes towards gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and religion can differ greatly. What seems like discrimination may simply be curiosity. Additionally, most students expect differences between themselves and their host country but don't realize the most significant differences may be between themselves and their student group. Students should research how their identity might be perceived in a new context, in specific political and societal issues, racial, ethnic, and religious composition, LGBTQIA+ climate (Resources [1](#) and [2](#)), and cultural norms and local laws.

It is a privilege to study in another country and be welcomed into their community. It is not our students' place to change its culture or values. While students are learning about the country and its people, they will be ambassadors of their own country and culture. SFS campuses are permanent fixtures, and these communities are home to staff year-round.

Behavior that is disrespectful, illegal, or contrary to cultural norms can degrade the relationship with the community and impede meaningful interactions.



Sexual Health & Wellness

When it comes to sexual health and wellness during the program, please consider:

- The ramifications that a short-term relationship may have on a small residential campus or within the local community.
- Access to protection, medication for sexually transmitted infections, and emergency contraception may not be available.
- The current dialogue and understanding of consent in the U.S. does not always apply in other cultures.
- If anyone feels subjected to sexual harassment, they should walk away from the situation that makes them uncomfortable without concern for being culturally inappropriate. They can report harassment or assault to any staff member.
- In the case of a sexual assault, SFS will make every effort to support students. This includes access to medical care, the option to report to local law enforcement, and identifying additional support resources. Local laws, definitions, and legal implications often differ from those in the U.S. 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.



LGBTQIA+

SFS is welcoming of all students at our centers. However, when traveling throughout the country, please be aware of the following:

- Laws and social customs may differ from one's home country, and countries that criminalize same-sex partnerships may also use the law to criminalize gender identities or expressions.
- Cultural practices may not support freedom of expression and travelers may experience discrimination and harassment.
- Some cultural practices are based on traditional gender roles and expressions. As a result, those who do not identify as they physically present may sometimes be misgendered or misidentified.
- Some languages are gendered, resulting in a lack of terms that encompass non-binary and gender-neutral identities.
- Health services specific to transgender people may be limited or unavailable. Students may also be denied services in their affirmed gender while they are traveling abroad.
- It is not always possible to use preferred names or gender (visa paperwork, plane tickets, hotel reservations, and government sites). Gender X is not recognized worldwide, and students may need to provide binary sex information.



**PREPARING FOR
DEPARTURE**

CHILE



Program Costs

The relationship SFS has with students' schools will determine the billing process. Within a week of acceptance, students or their schools will be required to pay a non-refundable deposit to reserve the spot. Afterward, we will reach out to students or their schools to collect tuition payments. Up-to-date costs and refund policies can be found [here](#).

Included in SFS program costs are program advising and orientations, tuition and research fees, airport transfers, housing, meals during program time, field excursions and cultural activities, emergency evacuation and 24/7 support, and official transcript processing.

PROGRAM	BILLING DEADLINE
Spring	November 1st
Summer 1 or 1+2	April 1st
Summer 2	May 1st
Fall	June 1st

BASIC COSTS (BILLED BY SFS)	SEMESTER	SUMMER 1
Tuition	\$22,000	\$7,500
Room & Board	\$7,950	\$4,000
BASIC PROGRAM COST	\$29,950	\$11,500
ADDITIONAL COSTS (ESTIMATED, ACTUAL COSTS MAY VARY)		
Airfare (to and from Thailand)	\$2,000	\$2,000
Passport	\$200	\$200
Visa fees (if applicable)	N/A	N/A
Immunizations/Medications	\$2,000	\$2,000
Personal Expenses	\$800	\$500
Program Breaks	N/A	N/A
ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL PROGRAM COSTS	\$5,000	\$4,700
TOTAL PROGRAM COSTS (BASIC + ADDITIONAL COSTS)		
ESTIMATED TOTAL PROGRAM COST	\$34,950	\$16,200



Financial Aid

All students are encouraged to apply for SFS financial aid. Financial aid applications are reviewed on a rolling basis starting in February for summer programs, April for fall programs, and September for spring programs. Early submissions are welcomed. Students who submit an SFS financial aid application by the payment deadline will be considered for our full range of aid options. Learn more [here](#).



TRAVEL



PASSPORT

Students must have a passport in hand four months prior to departure that is valid for at least 6 months after departure from Bhutan.



VISA

Bhutan

Students' Bhutan student visas will be applied for by staff and will last for the duration of the program only. Visa costs are covered by tuition. Travel before or after the program within Bhutan is not possible.

Thailand

U.S. citizens do not need a Thai visa for travel under 30 days. Students may be asked for proof of onward travel or sufficient funds in order to receive the visa waiver upon arrival. Nothing needs to be done for the waiver pre-arrival. If traveling before or after the program in Thailand, ensure the visa waiver will remain valid for the entire stay. Non-U.S. citizens may require a Thai visa and are responsible for applying for, obtaining, and paying for their own Thai visa valid for the duration of their stay.



FLIGHTS

Students are responsible for the cost of flights to and from their program. Students will receive travel instructions at least 2 months prior to the start of their program. Do not book flights to Thailand before receiving these instructions.

SFS staff will meet students at the airport on the date and time specified in the airport instructions and transport them to the center. Students will receive airport instructions 1-2 weeks prior to the start of their program. If students are traveling before or after the program, they are responsible for meeting the group at the airport at the designated date and time. Additionally, SFS is not responsible for transporting or storing luggage before or after the program.

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



COSTA RICA



KENYA



PANAMA



Medical Requirements



Medical Approval Process

Students are required to complete the SFS medical approval process using our HIPPA-compliant portal to inform SFS staff of their medical and mental health needs and accommodations. The review is not meant to exclude, but to inform and allow support systems to be put in place. No student may enter the field until medical approval is granted by SFS. [More information.](#)



Vaccinations & Medications

Required

- Rabies pre-exposure vaccination series (must be completed at least 2 weeks before arrival).

Recommended

- [Centers for Disease Control](#), travel clinics, or medical providers can provide further recommendations.



Insurance

Students are required to buy health insurance. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their coverage is valid in their program country(s) for the full duration of their program and covers basic medical care, including non-urgent illness or injury, laboratory tests, and pharmaceutical needs. SFS does not provide company recommendations. Keep in mind:

- Most domestic health insurance plans do not provide comprehensive coverage for out-of-country medical expenses.
- Schools may provide international health insurance or have their own insurance requirements for studying abroad.
- Most insurance companies provide coverage on a reimbursable basis. Therefore, students need to bring an emergency credit card/debit card with at least \$3,000 USD to pay for medical expenses and then request reimbursement later on.

Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance

All students are automatically enrolled in an emergency evacuation and repatriation insurance plan through American International Group, Inc. (AIG) for the duration of their program only. This plan covers the cost of transportation, accommodations, and medical care associated with medically or politically necessary evacuations (e.g., life-saving support during air evacuation). It includes up to \$350,000 for emergency medical evacuation, \$100,000 for emergency security evacuation, and \$20,000 for repatriation of remains. The coverage provided does not cover basic medical care, laboratory tests, or pharmacy needs. Students on SFS programs are required to supply their own comprehensive health insurance as outlined above.



Accommodating Disabilities

SFS works with students, schools, and physicians to determine required accommodations and whether they can be safely and reasonably maintained on program. We strive to meet students' needs, but due to the remote nature of programs, there are varying levels of accessibility. Questions regarding physical and mental health accommodations or learning accommodations can be directed to the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Academic Affairs respectively.



PACKING GUIDE



Packing Considerations



Luggage

SFS does not have policies regarding how much or what type of luggage students bring, so pack according to personal needs. Bring only what can be maneuvered oneself and check with all airlines for luggage restrictions and fees. Druk Airlines limits each person to 66 lbs of luggage which includes carry-ons; most students choose to pay the correlated fees instead.



Culture & Climate

Many students bring old clothes to wear in the field and leave behind at the end of the program. Do not bring anything that cannot be damaged!

Bhutan regulates that all citizens wear traditional dress in workplaces, businesses, and schools. While SFS students do not need to buy traditional clothing, please be aware it is required to dress culturally appropriate. Pack enough jeans, t-shirts, and sweaters for casual wear in town as well as formal pants/skirts/dresses for special occasions.

While packing, consider the impact of the products brought to the program, both the ingredients and packaging. Plastic can be difficult for waste management in remote environments. Think about bringing a reusable tote, metal straw, cloth napkins, etc. We also highly encourage biodegradable soaps, shampoos, and conditioners.





Required Packing

▪ **Shorts**

▪ **Pants** Lightweight blends that dry quickly. Some for field work, jeans for day-to-day, and comfy pants for inside the bedroom. Consider waterproof pants as well.

▪ **T-shirts** Synthetic or merino wool for chilly nights, wet weather, and field days. Cotton shirts for non-fieldwork days but must be loose-fitting with no midriff exposed.

▪ **Long-sleeved shirts** Light-weight fabric for working in the field and heavier ones for warmth.

▪ **Formal top** Can buy local, traditional clothing instead.

▪ **Warm wool sweaters, jackets, or fleeces** worn nearly daily.

▪ **Waterproof jacket with a hood** Water resistant is not sufficient.

▪ **Winter Coat, Warm scarf, Hat, Gloves, etc.** 1 set.

▪ **Underwear** Past students recommend a pair of synthetic/quick-dry underwear for the trek.

▪ **Socks** 4-5 pairs of wool or synthetic hiking socks (not cotton).

▪ **Pajamas** appropriate for shared spaces.

▪ **Sun hat and sunglasses**

▪ **Hiking boots** Preferably waterproof.

▪ **Sneakers** Durable, close-toed, and good in the rain.

▪ **Rubber sandals** Crocs, flip-flops, etc.

▪ **Sleeping bag (SEMESTER ONLY)** At least 20°F rating for the camping trip and to supplement bedding provided. Sheets, a pillow, and a blanket will be provided for all sessions.

▪ **Towels** 1 large shower towel and 1 face/hand towel for the camping trip. Quick dry towels are best!

Additional towels will be provided at the center.

▪ **Toiletries** Basic items can be purchased in town but bring enough for at least a week. Preferably biodegradable.

▪ **Masks and COVID tests** Bring enough masks to last the duration of the program and home rapid tests.

▪ **Record of immunizations and Health history**

▪ **Personal first-aid kit** including Anti-itch creams, Neosporin, Bacitracin, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Pepto Bismol, Band-Aids, Tape, Tweezers, Nail clippers, Antihistamines, Pro-biotics, Antidiarrheals, Vitamin C, Cold medicines, Hydration salts, etc.

▪ **Prescriptions** Overseas prescriptions are not always accepted. Bring adequate supplies of prescription medications to last the duration of the program alongside doctors' prescriptions to avoid customs delays. Think about inhalers, allergy medication, contacts/glasses, etc.

▪ **Motion sickness medication/ Dramamine/ Ginger chews** Even for those who usually don't experience motion sickness!

▪ **Period care** Students can purchase pads in town, but tampons are not common. We encourage menstrual cups or environmentally friendly, biodegradable options.

▪ **Flash drives and/or External hard drive** At least 1 GB recommended.

▪ **Computer** that can open Microsoft Office documents offline and has a USB port.

▪ **Plug adaptors**

▪ **Headlamp or flashlight** Rechargeable recommended.

▪ **Dry bags or sturdy plastic bags** Gallon-sized Ziploc bags work well.

▪ **Day pack with waterproof cover** Small backpack suitable for taking gear into the field. 15-30L recommended.

▪ **Weekend bag** to bring on overnight field excursions or weekends off. 35-55L recommended.

▪ **Water bottles** 2 bottles with 1L capacity each.

▪ **Tupperware and Travel mugs** for packing lunches. Can buy locally.

▪ **Small gift for day-stay family** There may be an opportunity for a day stay with a local family. If this occurs, it's good to bring a gift. We recommend that the gift be modest and represent your hometown. Great gifts are locally made items (maple syrup, special candy, calendars or postcards, magnets, etc.) and family photos.





Optional Packing

- **Purse/tote bag** for town.
- **Small clothing repair kit**
- **Laundry bag** One shared basket is provided per room.
- **Swimsuit**
- **Sweatpants**
- **Additional formal outfits**
- **Rubber boots** The center has several pairs of rain boots for student use, but students with especially large or small feet should bring their own. Lightweight, shin-high boots with good tread are best. Can purchase in town.
- **Pocketknife** Checked luggage only.
- **Sleeping pad (SEMESTER ONLY)** Thermo-rest or cell foam pad for camping. Only used 1 or 2 nights.
- **Trekking poles**
- **Binoculars** preferably 8 x 40 but anything in the 6 x 30 to 10 x 40 range is fine.
- **Thermos**

- **Umbrella**
- **Earplugs and Eye mask**
- **Baby wipes and Hand sanitizer** Can purchase in town.
- **Lactaid** or similar medication for students with lactose intolerance. Not available locally.
- **Journal**
- **Games, Movies, Books, and Crafts.**
- **Snacks, Drink powders, and Dietary supplements** Any favorites.
- **Camera**
- **Voltage converter** if needed for electronics.
- **Headphones and/or Bluetooth speaker** Noise canceling recommended.
- **Waterproof cases for electronics and silicone packets** (or some water-absorbing equivalent).
- **Extra batteries and External battery packs**
- **Wristwatch Preferably water-resistant or waterproof.**



Contact Us

Keep up with SFS Follow us on Instagram [@theSFS/@theSFS_bhutan_la](#), read [news from the field](#), and find the [full list of the SFS team bios here!](#)

Questions about billing? Billing@fieldstudies.org

Deposit payments, invoices, billing deadlines, financial aid packages, and loan paperwork.

Questions about health and safety? StudentLife@fieldstudies.org

Medical paperwork, Immunizations, managing medical conditions on program, and dietary needs and preferences.

Questions about academics? Academics@fieldstudies.org

Learning accommodations, syllabi, and directed research.

Questions about admissions or enrollment? Admissions@fieldstudies.org

Which program is the best fit, application materials, and travel and visa logistics.