



CROATIA FIELD GUIDE



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LIFE IN THE FIELD





The Center



Academic Foci

- The center is located on the island of Lošinj in the Croatian archipelagos of the Eastern Adriatic coast of the Mediterranean.
- The Adriatic Sea is a hotspot for biodiversity and one of the regions most affected by climate change.
- Blue World Institute, a partner of SFS, is the only non-profit dedicated to the research and conservation of marine megafauna operating in the Croatian Adriatic Sea. Their work directly contributes to the long-term viability of Croatian marine ecosystems and sustaining local livelihoods for future generations.

SEMESTER: SEA TURTLES AND MARINE MAMMALS OF THE ADRIATIC

Cetacean and sea turtle research and conservation methods. Veterinary diagnostics. Nature-based solutions to biodiversity loss and climate change impacts. Protected areas and threatened ecosystems. Regional conservation strategies.

SUMMER 1: 21ST CENTURY MARINE POLLUTANTS

Marine ecology and conservation. Bioacoustics. Marine litter and plastics pollution. Cetacean and sea turtle research methodologies. Marine Management.

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. All classes are taught in English.



Setting and Facilities

A student dorm in the village of Veli Lošinj.

RURAL ←—————●————→ URBAN

VELI LOŠINJ

5-minute walk

Population ~1,000

Bars, grocery store, artesian shops, and ATMs. Many shops close off-season.

MALI LOŠINJ

5-minute drive

Population ~8,000

Multiple shops, banks, pharmacies, and hospital.

ZAGREB

5-hour drive

Population ~805,000

Capital city. International airport.

HOUSING

Six rooms, 4 people per room in twin bunk beds. Shared closet, desk, and AC.

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

OTHER FACILITIES

Student lounge with games.

Classroom with library. Computer lab. Small student kitchen and dining room. Open-air terrace.

Two washing machines (detergent provided) and two dryers.



Campus Policies



CURFEW, SIGN-OUT LOG & BUDDY POLICY

Because center locations are often unfamiliar to students, policies including nightly curfew, sign-out logs, and a buddy system help keep students safe.



CHORES

Students are expected to take responsibility for their space. Students will help clean up after meals. Specific chore responsibilities and schedules will be shared during orientation.



DRUGS PROHIBITED

Consumption or possession of alcohol is limited on campus. Students who consume alcohol during non-program time need to do so in moderation and maintain respectful behavior toward others.

SFS does not allow possession or use of any medications or substances that are illegal in the U.S. or host country for the full duration of SFS programs including free time and weekends away. Check local laws before possessing, purchasing, or using e-cigarettes or vaping devices on program.



NO VISITORS

Students are obligated to stay at the center during program time. No non-SFS members are allowed on campus without center staff approval. If family or friends are planning on visiting have them do so during program breaks or coordinate with the center director for approval. Time off during program time to spend with guests is limited.



TIME OFF IS LIMITED

Students will have highly structured schedules on weekdays and Saturdays with Sundays generally free to spend at the center or in town. Attendance is required for all activities including multi-day trips that may fall on the weekends. Semester students will have a mid-semester break and two long weekends off. It can take a long time to get to and from the island, so students can only leave the island during these breaks.

Students are responsible for their own food and accommodations during the mid-semester break. Students are not allowed to stay at the center. See page 12 for estimated costs.



Community Interaction

Students live at a center, rather than a homestay, local apartment, or university dorm. This means they will not navigate the local culture, cuisine, or language every day. However, meaningful research is only possible with the input of local people, so community engagement and Directed Research projects vary each term to reflect the requests of our partners. Some examples of past outreach initiatives include planting trees, working in community gardens, and outreach at schools.



Food

SFS can support most dietary needs, but the variety of food will be extremely limited due to local availability and cost. SFS cannot accommodate life-threatening gluten allergies or strict Halal or Kosher diets. Meals are simple and repeat every week, so SFS always recommends bringing vitamins, protein bars, nuts, favorite snacks, etc.

Meals may consist of meat, fish, eggs, pasta, vegetables, and fruit. Snacks may include tea, coffee, granola bars, yogurt, fruit, and toast with spreads. Some staples such as flour and sugar are provided too.



Exercise

There is a basketball court, volleyball court, and small outdoor gym. In town, there are running, hiking, and cycling routes and a paid gym for approximately \$70 USD a month. Additional fees apply for use of the sauna and swimming pool.



Climate

December to February brings mild, rainy weather. Snowfall is rare but can happen. September to November and March to May will be mostly sunny with occasional rainstorms. Average temperatures in Veli Lošinj range from 45-75°F.



Considerations

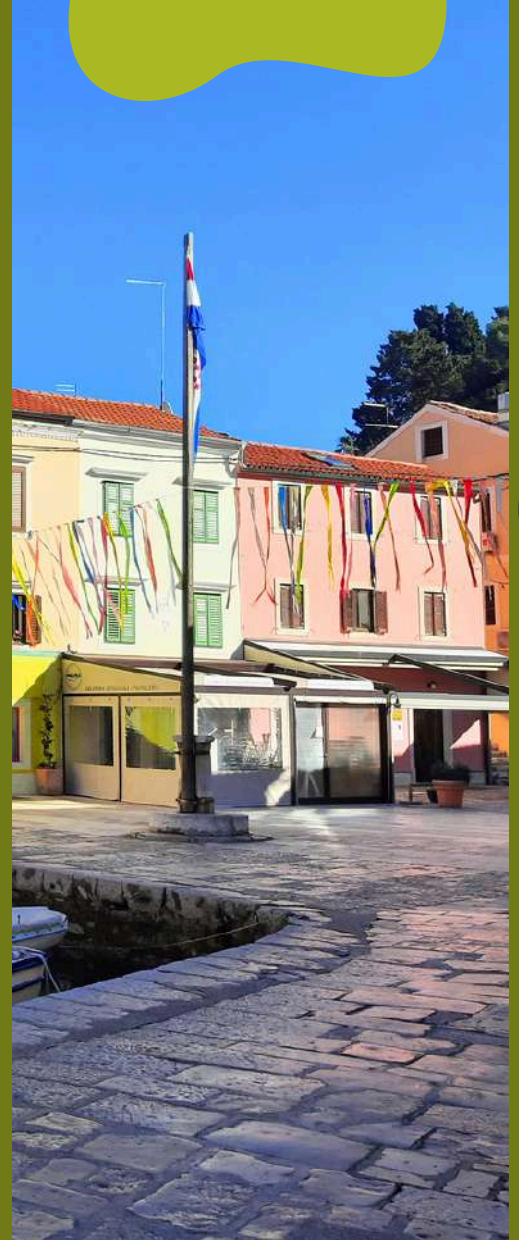
Language: Croatian is the official language. Locals have intermediate to advanced knowledge of English. Students without basic Croatian may find interactions with locals limited. Most of students' time will be spent with their cohort, so do not expect to practice the local language daily.

Culture and Diversity: 92% of Croatia identifies as Croatian, 3% as Serbian, and the remaining 5% is other European immigrants and racial minorities. 87% are Christians. Croatian is a gendered language.

Physical Readiness: Students must be able to walk/stand for up to 1 hour at a time and be comfortable being in a boat in the open ocean. Swim assessment required to not wear a lifejacket.

Hazards: Turtles, sharks, jellyfish, sea urchins, drowning, pollen, etc.

Travel: Students will frequently travel long distances by boat.



Money

The local currency is the Euro (EUR).

Both cash and debit/credit cards are widely accepted. 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.

There are extremely limited opportunities to exchange USD, however students will have access to ATMs in Veli Lošinj as needed. Students can also order Euros from their bank prior to program.



Electricity

The electrical voltage in Croatia is 230 (the U.S. uses 120). Check all electrical devices to see if a voltage converter is needed. Croatia uses plug type F (the U.S. uses A and B). All students should bring plug adaptors.



Internet

Wireless internet is available at the center, but it can be slow and sometimes unavailable. 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 must bring laptops with Microsoft Office (or the ability to open Microsoft files offline) and a USB port (or USB adapter). Electronic devices are subjected to a much harsher environment than normal, which may cause malfunction. Note, there are no nearby Apple stores. All devices can be difficult to repair or replace locally, so please take extra precautions.



Phones

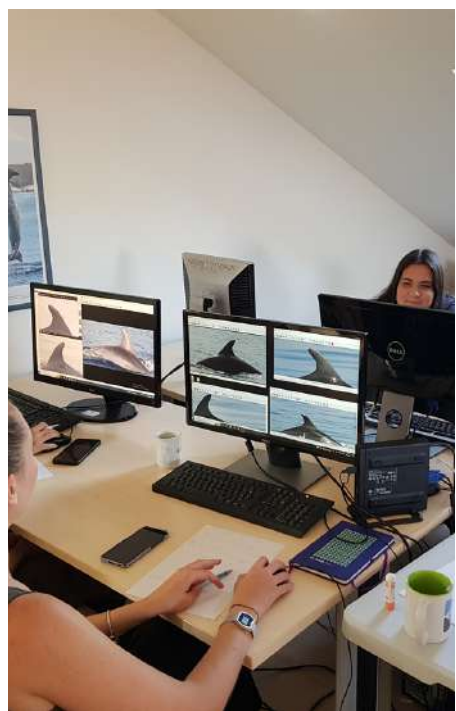
Students with unlocked phones can purchase local SIM cards for about \$6 USD per GB. Most students choose to rely solely on WIFI.



Mail

Please write "Gift" on all packages, or students will pay customs fees. Do not send any medications by mail. The average one-way travel time for mail from the U.S. to Croatia is 5-10 business days. Therefore, no mail can be sent during the last two weeks of programs, as students will not receive it! Mail will not be forwarded.

Address: Student Name, The School for Field Studies, Podjavori 27, 51551 Veli Lošinj, Croatia



Sample Schedule

This schedule is a sample; no week will follow it exactly. Programs typically begin with long classroom days and transition into more fieldwork later on. Final schedules are provided upon arrival and are subject to change, including the day-of, due to weather, availability, and factors outside of SFS' control. Flexibility is essential.

All events are mandatory. We respect religious and cultural observances, but because of our cohort-based field programs, accommodations (schedule changes, special meals, personal observance time, etc.) may be limited. Communicate any anticipated needs with SFS in advance to discuss any feasible arrangements.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8-10am Breakfast	7:30-8:40am Breakfast and Morning Meeting	7:30-8:40am Breakfast and Morning Meeting	7:30-8:40am Breakfast and Morning Meeting	7:30-8:40am Breakfast and Morning Meeting	7:30-8:40am Breakfast and Morning Meeting	7:30-8:40am Breakfast and Morning Meeting
10am-12pm Free time at the Center/In Town (Laundry, Homework, Relaxation).	9am-12:15pm Rescue and Rehabilitation: Marine Animals - Documentary	9am-12:15pm Marine Conservation Planning - Lecture	10am-12:15pm Croatian Language and Culture - Field Trip	9am-12:15pm Marine Conservation Planning - Lecture	9am-4pm Field Trip w/ Lunch in the Field	8:40am-12pm (Optional) Community Engagement
12-2pm Lunch	12:15-1pm Lunch	12:15-1pm Lunch	12:15-1pm Lunch	12:15-1pm Lunch		12-2pm Lunch
2-6pm Free time at the Center/In Town (Laundry, Homework, Relaxation).	2-4:15pm Rescue and Rehabilitation: Marine Animals - Discussion	2-5:30pm: Marine Megafauna Ecology Field Exercise	3:30pm-6pm (Optional) Community Engagement	2-5:30pm: Marine Megafauna Ecology Field Exercise	4-6pm Free time at the Center/ In Town	2-6pm Free time at the Center/In Town
	4:30-6pm Free time at the Center					
6-8pm Dinner	6:30-7:30pm Dinner	6:30-7:30pm Dinner	6:30-7:30pm Dinner	6:30-7:30pm Dinner	6:30-7:30pm Dinner	6-8pm Dinner
8-10pm Free time at the Center/In Town	7:30-10pm Free time at the Center/In Town	7:30-10pm Free time at the Center/In Town	7:30-10pm Free time at the Center/In Town	7:30-10pm Free time at the Center/In Town	7:30-10pm Free time at the Center/In Town	8pm-12am Free time at the Center/In Town
10pm Curfew	10pm Curfew	10pm Curfew	10pm Curfew	10pm Curfew	12am Curfew	12am Curfew

- Meals and Announcements
- Free Time
- Community Engagement
- Classroom Time
- Field Work
- Curfew



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.



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 an equivalent certification, and trained in sexual assault first response. They also counsel students on life abroad, conduct risk assessments, attend medical appointments, and help coordinate program logistics.



Orientation

Prior to departure, SFS requires attendance at a pre-departure orientation focused on essential aspects of the program. Students must also research the inherent risks associated with traveling abroad and cultural considerations themselves. Upon arrival to campus, students receive an additional orientation about the local community and culture, center operations, and relevant risks.



Medical Care

SFS maintains detailed risk assessment and management plans. If a medical care facility visit is needed, staff will accompany the student to the appointment. There may be times when medical care is delayed. Students are responsible for all medical costs and all incidental expenses related to injury, illness, or quarantine incurred by any party involved, including but not limited to transportation, accommodations, etc. Some medical conditions may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program. Final decisions on medical withdrawals are made by SFS. See the Health and Safety Guide for more information.



Mental Health Support

Adjusting to new environments while away from usual support systems is challenging. While abroad, there is decreased communication with home, limited privacy, and fewer opportunities for exercise. Many students find the rigorous schedule of SFS programs and the rare opportunities for alone time overwhelming.

SFS is partnered with Telus Health ([My SSP website](#)) to provide students with access to free, mental health and wellness support via WIFI. My SSP is a supplemental resource, and students should work with their mental health provider to create a primary support plan while abroad. See the Health and Safety Guide for more information.



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. Students should research how their identity might be perceived in a new context.

Studying abroad is a privilege, and it is not our students' place to change the host country's culture or values. SFS campuses are permanent fixtures and home to staff year-round. As representatives of SFS and students' own countries, behavior that is disrespectful, illegal, or contrary to cultural norms can degrade the relationship with the community.



Sexual Health & Wellness

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 without concern for being culturally inappropriate. They can report harassment or assault to any staff member.
- In the case of a sexual assault, SFS provides support to student including access to medical care and support systems and the option to report to law enforcement. However, local laws and limited availability of resources such as rape kits can complicate reports of sexual harassment or sexual assault in foreign countries.



LGBTQIA+

SFS welcomes all students at our centers, but recommends students know the following when traveling:

- Laws and social customs of other countries may criminalize same-sex relationships or certain gender expressions.
- Travelers may experience discrimination and harassment when traveling.
- Some cultural practices are based on traditional gender roles. As a result, when traveling, students might be misgendered.
- Some languages are gendered, resulting in a lack of terms that encompass non-binary and gender-neutral identities.
- In other countries, health services specific to transgender people may be limited or unavailable.
- In some situations, it is not possible to use preferred names or genders (visa paperwork, plane tickets, hotel reservations, and government sites). Gender X is not recognized worldwide, and students may need to provide binary sex information. See the LGBTQ+ Resource Guide for more information.



**PREPARING FOR
DEPARTURE**



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 their 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 and meals during program time, field excursions and cultural activities, official transcript processing, and evacuation and 24/7 support in case of emergencies.

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	\$22,700	\$7,000
Room & Board	\$7,250	\$2,500
BASIC PROGRAM COST	\$29,950	\$9,500
ADDITIONAL COSTS (ESTIMATED, ACTUAL COSTS MAY VARY)		
Airfare	\$1,000	\$1,000
Passport	\$200	\$200
Visa fees (if applicable)	\$100	\$0
Immunizations/Medications	\$200	\$200
Personal Expenses	\$1,000	\$600
Program Breaks - Accommodation & Food	\$1,000	N/A
ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL PROGRAM COSTS	\$3,500	\$2,000
TOTAL PROGRAM COSTS (BASIC + ADDITIONAL COSTS)		
ESTIMATED TOTAL PROGRAM COST	\$33,450	\$11,500



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 3 months after departure.



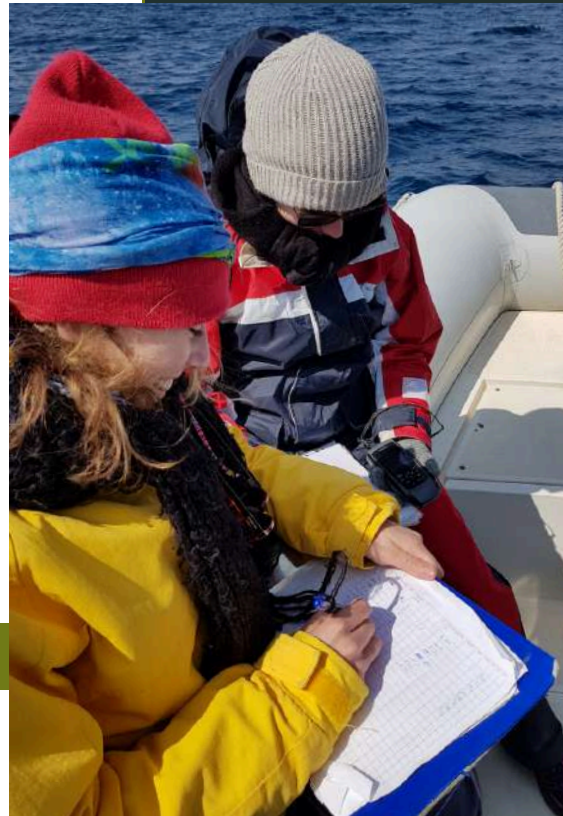
VISA

U.S. citizens do not need a visa for travel to Croatia under 90 days.

Semester students' visa waivers will be supplemented with a Temporary Residence Permit to cover students for the remainder of their program. Upon arrival, staff will assist semester students with applying for Temporary Residence Permits and pay their associated costs.

U.S. citizens traveling before and/or after the program within Croatia or other Schengen countries can do so using up to 60 days of their 90-day tourist visa waiver.

Non-U.S. citizens may require a different visa process and are responsible for applying for, obtaining, and paying for their own 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 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.





Medical Requirements



Medical Approval Process

Students are required to complete the SFS medical approval process. 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. See the Health & Safety Guide for more information.



Vaccinations & Medications

Required

- None

Recommended

- Centers for Disease Control, travel clinics, or medical providers can provide further recommendations.



International Health Insurance

Students are required to buy international health insurance. Students will receive international health insurance requirements upon acceptance to their program. Keep in mind most companies reimburse medical costs, so students need an emergency credit card/debit card with at least \$3,000 USD to pay for medical expenses upfront.

All students are enrolled in an emergency evacuation and repatriation insurance plan through American International Group, Inc. (AIG) for the duration of their program only. This is supplemental insurance to students' own comprehensive health insurance outlined above. See the Health & Safety Guide for more information.



Accommodating Disabilities

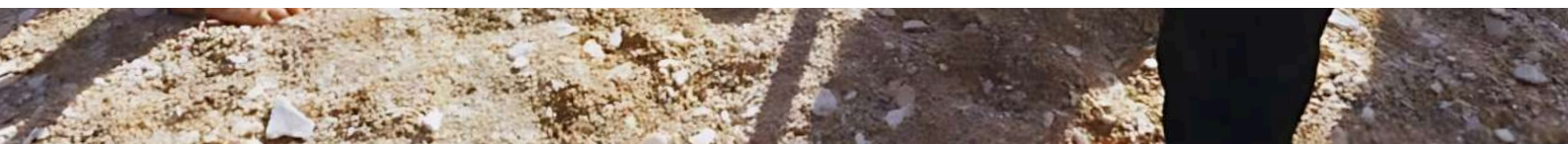
SFS works with students, schools, and physicians to determine required accommodations and whether they can be safely and reasonably maintained on program. We strive to meet students' needs, but due to the remote nature of programs, there are varying levels of accessibility. Questions regarding health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



PACKING GUIDE



Packing Considerations



Luggage

SFS does not have a specific policy regarding how much or what type of luggage students bring, however, students will be sharing a room, and there is limited space to store belongings. Bring only what can be maneuvered oneself and check with all airlines for luggage restrictions and fees.

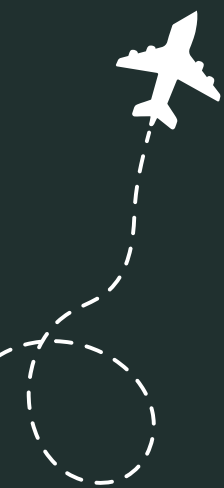


Culture & Climate

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!

Hair care products vary by region. Travelers with curls or hair that is easily damaged might consider packing preferred products in a quantity that will last for the entire program.

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

- **Pants** Lightweight blends that dry quickly. 2+ for field work and 2+ normal/flowy pants for day-to-day.
 - **Shorts** Runners may want a few pairs of athletic shorts.
 - **T-shirts and Tank tops** non-cotton best
 - **Long-sleeved shirts** 4+ for fieldwork. Non-cotton best
 - **Casual/nice clothes** for town. Nothing that can't be ruined.
 - **Lightweight jacket or sweatshirt and sweatpants**
 - **Waterproof jacket with a hood or Poncho** Water resistant is not sufficient.
 - **Rain pants**
 - **Swimsuit** 2+ sets suggested. For swim test and free time.
 - **Underwear and Socks** including light wool or synthetic (not cotton) hiking socks.
 - **Pajamas** appropriate for shared spaces.
 - **Sun hat and sunglasses** Hat should have brim, and it is recommended to use polarized sunglasses.
 - **Bandana, buff, or scarf**
 - **Waterproof shoes**
 - **Sneakers** or other casual shoes.
 - **Sandals** with heel straps.
 - **Flip flops** for showering and beaches.
- Sheets, towels, and a pillow will be provided at the center.
- **Toiletries** Basic items can be bought in town but plan to bring enough for at least a week. Preferably biodegradable.

- **Record of immunizations and Health history**
 - **Personal first-aid kit** Consider Anti-itch creams, Neosporin, Bacitracin, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Pepto Bismol, Band-Aids, Tape, Tweezers, Nail clippers, Antihistamines, Pro-biotics, Antidiarrheals, Vitamin C, Cold medicines, Immune boosters, Hydration salts/Liquid IV, etc.
 - **Prescriptions** Note that overseas prescriptions are not always accepted. Bring adequate supplies of prescription medications to last the duration of the program alongside doctor's prescription to avoid customs delays. Think about inhalers, allergy medication, contacts/glasses, etc.
 - **Motion sickness medication/ Dramamine/ Ginger chews** for motion sickness. Preferably non-drowsy.
 - **Period care** Students can buy basic period products in town. We encourage 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 or USB port adapter.
 - **Surge protector and Plug adaptors**
 - **Dry bag or Waterproof daypack cover** Consider several smaller dry bags or sturdy plastic bags. Gallon-sized Ziploc bags work well.
 - **Day pack** Suitable for taking gear into the field. 15-30L recommended.
 - **Notebooks and Pencils** Can buy locally.
 - **Water bottles** 2 bottles with at least 1L capacity each. Can buy locally.
 - **Sunscreen** 1+ bottles. Reef-safe.
 - **Insect Repellent** 1+ bottles.





Optional Packing

- **University ID card**
- **Hiking boots** Over-the-ankle recommended.
- **Waterproof Hat**
- **Purse/tote bag** for town.
- **Small clothing repair kit**
- **Umbrella** Can buy in town.
- **Pocketknife** Checked luggage only.
- **Hammock**
- **Tupperware and travel mugs** for packing snacks.
- **Waterproof notebook** DuraRite, 4x6 or 4x7.
- **Journal**
- **Games, Movies, and Books**
- **Beach towel** Can buy in town.
- **Snorkel kit** Can buy in town.
- **Water shoes**
- **Swimmer's ear drops**
- **Hair oil and/or detangling conditioner**
- **Tiger balm, and/or Lotion/aloe vera**

- **COVID-19 Tests and Masks** for personal use. Recommended as local supply may vary
- **Earplugs and Eye mask**
- **Baby wipes and Hand sanitizer** Can buy in town.
- **Snacks, Drink powders, and Dietary supplements** Any favorites.
- **Camera**
- **Headphones and/or Bluetooth speaker**
- **HDMI Adapter**
- **Waterproof cases for electronics and silicone packets** (or some water-absorbing equivalent).
- **Binoculars** Preferably 8 x 40 but anything in the 6 x 30 to 10 x 40 range is fine.
- **Extra batteries and External battery packs**
- **Wristwatch** Waterproof
- **Headlamp or Flashlight**
- **Mug** from home state/town or university as a contribution to the communal kitchen



Contact Us

Keep up with SFS Follow us on Instagram [@theSFS](#), 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, 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.