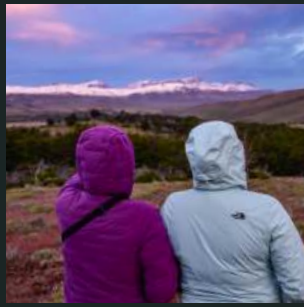
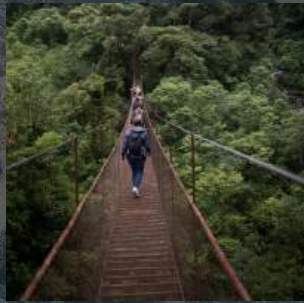






# LGBTQIA+ GUIDE





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The School for Field Studies strives to create an inclusive environment for all its students. Additionally, SFS recognizes that LGBTQIA+ travelers have unique needs to stay safe and healthy when traveling. We have created a set of tips to help you travel with confidence, from preparing for a trip to responding in an emergency. We invite students to reflect on their aspirations in traveling while balancing the needs for community.



**BEFORE  
DEPARTURE**

## PLAN AHEAD

LGBTQIA+ travelers can experience additional scrutiny at airports, customs checkpoints, hospitals, and/or public places. They may also face harassment and discrimination at hotels, independent rentals, on public transportation, and when using rideshare services. Taking extra steps to review your travel documents and medications and carefully choosing accommodations and transportation can give you greater peace of mind. Speak with your healthcare providing team about receiving or continuing LGBTQIA+ sensitive or gender-affirming care.



## STAY SAFE

Travel confidently and know how to respond in a dangerous situation or an emergency. Stay aware when you travel, remove yourself from potentially dangerous situations, know how to get help, and advocate for yourself if you need to seek medical treatment.

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

- Laws and social customs may differ from your home country. In many countries, only heterosexual partnerships between cisgender people are recognized as legal and/or accepted within the culture.



- **Local laws may be enforced inconsistently. Countries that criminalize same-sex partnerships may also use the law to criminalize gender identities and gender expressions that differ from the norm.**
  - SFS' services cannot supersede local laws
  - SFS can connect students with other mental health services to support students after encounters with local authorities.
- **Even if there are no legal concerns, cultural practices may not support freedom of expression, and travelers may experience discrimination and harassment. Attitudes may vary, even within the same country.**
- **LGBTQIA+ sensitivities and gender-affirming medical care may be unavailable depending on your destination.**

## BE PREPARED

Thoroughly research your destination by seeking information from official sources, travel experts, and anecdotal reports. Remember to always consider your gender identity, form of gender expression, official travel documentation, sexual orientation, and any LGBTQIA+ paraphernalia on your belongings while preparing for travel.

Every country is shaped by its history, and therefore attitudes towards gender identity, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and religion can differ greatly. It is important to consider how different aspects of your identity might be perceived in a new cultural context. At times, what seems like discrimination may simply be curiosity, especially when working with local community members where knowledge of the English language is limited and/or in locations where the culture is different from what you are used to.

Researching the country that you will be living in can help you prepare yourself. In specific, you may want to research:

- Current and past political and societal issues
- Racial, ethnic, and religious composition
- Cultural norms and local laws

In addition, while many SFS students anticipate encountering distinctions between themselves and their host country, it's equally important to recognize that significant differences may also arise within their own student group and staff. Engaging in thoughtful reflection on your own culture and identity before embarking on a study abroad journey can greatly enhance your ability to navigate and make the most of your experience abroad. You may also wish to discuss your expectations with SFS prior to engaging in a semester abroad.



# SFS CENTER ACCOMMODATIONS AND BATHROOMS

SFS is committed to making each of its centers an inclusive environment, respecting and accommodating the needs of its diverse student cohorts and abiding by cultural norms. Before traveling abroad, students who wish to request gender-inclusive housing can indicate their preference on the Student Life Survey. We best fulfil these requests while considering the cohort size, rooming availability, and abiding by cultural norms. In some countries where SFS operates, it is prohibited to have gender-inclusive housing, and students will be given rooms based on sex assigned at birth. Furthermore, many SFS center accommodations offer little to no privacy. Non-binary or genderqueer students should consider housing options before selecting an SFS program.



The top image is from our Panama center. The bottom image is from our Cambodia center.



Upon arrival, students participate in cohort community meetings to determine which facilities, particularly bathrooms, will be designated as gender-inclusive (i.e., male, female, non-binary, genderqueer, etc.). Our rooming spaces can house anywhere from 2 to 9 students (centre-specific information is found in each country profile). SFS does not offer single-room accommodations at any location. If you have specific questions about your housing needs, please get in touch with [studentlife@fieldstudies.org](mailto:studentlife@fieldstudies.org).

# TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS AND PUBLIC BATHROOMS

As part of the program, SFS students may have several overnight trips away from the SFS Center. During field excursions, students may be housed alongside other students, sometimes in mixed-gender accommodations depending on the hosts at various off-site locations. Most excursions on SFS programs travel to remote places, working with local community members who may hold conservative attitudes.

While away from the center, most bathroom facilities, especially in rural areas, are not gendered and typically consist of single toilets or holes in the ground. In urban areas, bathrooms are usually designated for male or female use. Students will have pre-departure meetings before traveling away from the center to inform students of LGBTQIA+ specifics related to housing and bathrooms.



## LANGUAGE



Some languages are gendered, resulting in there being a lack of terms that encompass non-binary and gender-neutral expression. Furthermore, some cultural practices are based on traditional gender roles and gender expression. As a result, individuals whose gender expression does not resemble expected local norms may be misgendered or mis-pronounced.

Some Latinx communities have adopted the utilization of the letter "e" as a gender-neutral alternative. For example, the term "amigues" is gaining prominence as an inclusive reference for friends, encompassing individuals of all genders. The adoption of the "e" is considered a judicious linguistic choice within the Spanish language, aligning seamlessly with contemporary perspectives on gender.

However, the use of the gender-inclusive "e" is not commonly practiced in smaller communities, including locations where SFS operates in Central and South America, and it is important to be aware that most locals do not use this term when interacting with visitors.

It is typical for most locals to use gendered language and greetings as a form of respect- including kisses on cheeks, handshakes, or gendered titles such as “ma’am” or “sir”.



## LEGAL NAME AND PASSPORT INFORMATION



While traveling on an SFS program, various documents such as visa paperwork, plane tickets, hotel reservations, and tours at historical sites typically require the use of your legal name and sex as it corresponds to your passport information. In some cases, preferred names and gender identities cannot be used, especially in countries that do not legally acknowledge Gender X on passports.

When registering at hotels and in some cases, when making travel arrangements, passports are utilized, and local staff may verify guest information based on passport details. Consequently, there may be instances where locals (such as hotel staff, airport staff, or site visit hosts) inadvertently read or call out a student's deadname. SFS understands that this experience can be very upsetting, and if such a mistake occurs, we will make every effort to work with you and the staff to address their concerns.



## HEALTHCARE AND LGBTQIA+ SENSITIVITY



Program participants may visit regions where LGBTQIA+ sensitivity training in healthcare is limited and/or unavailable. It's advisable for students to consult with their healthcare providers regarding the accessibility of gender-affirming care and treatment options prior to international travel. Healthcare facilities abroad might request travelers to provide binary sex information related to health requirements. Please be mindful of these considerations.

# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- What do you consider important components of your identity? How do you describe yourself? Think about the aspects of your life that you consider most important and defining.
- How might aspects of your identity change or evolve while you're abroad? What might become more or less important, more or less defining, in the context of a new country and culture?
- What are the attitudes toward someone with your identity in the country you plan to travel to?
- All countries and communities have cultural values and societal norms woven into the fabric of their collective identities. These norms and values are important to these communities, whether we agree with them or not. If an aspect of your identity is not accepted in the culture you plan to spend time in, are you okay with that? How will you adjust and cope?
- What resources will I have access to abroad to support my transition to a place that is not welcoming to the LGBTQIA+ community?
- Does the local host country enforce civil rights laws and protections for LGBTQIA+ community members?
- How will you fare with limited access to gender affirming care or LGBTQIA+ sensitive trained healthcare workers while abroad?



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ+ TRAVELERS



U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT

INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY,  
BISEXUAL, TRANS, AND INTERSEX  
ASSOCIATION

AIG LBGTQ TRAVEL SAFETY

EQUALDEX (LGBTQ+ KNOWLEDGE  
DATABASE FOR ALL COUNTRIES)

DESTINATION PRIDE

If you have questions about dress, languages, culture, housing options, or additional topics related to LGBTQIA+ identities abroad, feel free to reach out to [studentlife@fieldstudies.org](mailto:studentlife@fieldstudies.org).



**COUNTRY  
SPECIFIC  
INFORMATION**



## COUNTRY PROFILE

Australia, like the US, is predominantly Westernized and shares similarities in LGBTQIA+ history, discourse, and community engagement. Urban areas tend to be more accepting of LGBTQIA+ individuals compared to rural regions. However, instances of media, daily rhetoric, harassment, and violence persist, echoing sentiments from religious and conservative groups opposing LGBTQIA+ rights.

In terms of legal freedoms, Australia protects same-sex marriage and relationships, with some regions recognizing nonbinary gender identities inconsistently. Australia recognizes foreign passports with a gender X marker. LGBTQIA+ events are unrestricted, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is illegal. Positive portrayals of sexuality in pop culture and public education on LGBTQIA+ history and issues contribute to social and political integration. Certain Aboriginal cultures, like Torres Strait communities, acknowledge diverse gender identities beyond the traditional binary. Through an affirmative lens, LGBTQIA+ families are colloquially referred to as "rainbow families" across Australia.

Despite this social and political progress, traditional Western gender roles and forms of expression are commonly observed in Australian society. Deviations from these norms, such as men with painted nails or women in ties, are sometimes met with stares or intolerant attitudes. Furthermore, rainbows commonly appear as a motif to represent life or water; students should not mistake these cultural symbols as LGBTQIA+ intersectionality.

## SFS CENTER LOCATION INFORMATION

SFS Australia warmly welcomes students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The SFS Australia Center is situated in the rural Atherton Tablelands of Queensland, where the demographic tends to skew older and may be less informed and exposed to LGBTQIA+ issues. In small towns visited during field excursions, there is typically less visibility, and negative stereotypes or a lack of understanding toward LGBTQIA+ individuals can manifest in everyday conversation through microaggressions. However, Cairns, the nearest city to the SFS Australia Center and where students frequent on days off, has a longstanding LGBTQIA+ community and generally accepting attitudes. Public displays of affection between same-sex couples, respecting individual pronouns, and open discussions about LGBTQIA+ topics with locals are common in Cairns but may be less frequent nearer to the SFS center.

Additionally, Aboriginal groups in the Queensland region, with whom SFS engages, uphold traditional perspectives on gender identity, gender expression, and queer relationships. In Australian history and Aboriginal spirituality, rainbows frequently symbolize life or water. However, it's essential to distinguish this symbolism from the intersectionality between LGBTQIA+ advocacy and Aboriginal cultures.

## SFS CENTER & HOUSING INFORMATION

The SFS Australia Center has 4 cabins that house 7-9 students per cabin; these cabins offer very little privacy. One cabin is traditionally used as a gender-inclusive cabin, designated by a housing preference on the Student Life Survey. The two bathroom blocks located on the property each consist of 4 toilets and 2 showers. There is one single-stall shower and bathroom available on a first-come, first serve basis. Upon arrival, students participate in cohort community meetings to determine which facilities, particularly bathrooms, will be designated as co-ed, sex assigned at birth, or by gender identity.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

In most cases, gender-inclusive housing and bathrooms can be arranged during field trips. It's important to note that there are limited gender-inclusive public bathrooms in the country; therefore, students should be prepared to use gendered bathrooms while away from the center.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender-affirming healthcare services are available in Australia, with the nearest facility to the SFS center located in Cairns, approximately a one-hour drive away. In recent years, many general practitioners (GPs) have received training in LGBTQIA+ language and care. However, patients seeking gender-affirming treatments may be asked about their medical history by GPs. Local clinics also offer testing for STIs and HIV.





## COUNTRY PROFILE

Indonesia is characterized by its rich diversity of religious and ethnic backgrounds among its citizens. This diversity intersects with historical influences of religion, colonialism, and modernization, shaping various aspects of the LGBTQIA+-friendly atmosphere in Bali to the marginalized lifestyle, discriminatory laws, and negatively stigmatizing rhetoric and visibility against the LGBTQIA+ community in the rest of the country. Discussing LGBTQIA+ topics and disclosing one's identity both remain taboo subjects in the country and is not recommended.

While same-sex relationships are legal nationwide (except in the Aceh Province), foreign same-sex unions or domestic marriages are not recognized throughout Indonesia. Civil rights laws intended to safeguard citizens based on social identities do not extend protections to LGBTQIA+ individuals. Indonesia does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. Instances of police violence and societal discrimination against individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity have been documented. Some prevailing nationalist attitudes suggest that being LGBTQIA+ is incompatible with being Indonesian. Notably, the Aceh province operates under Sharia Law, imposing stringent regulations and severe penalties against LGBTQIA+ individuals.

In Indonesia, subcultures like the Waria and Bugi recognize diverse sexes and gender identities beyond the traditional binary. Despite their historical significance, modern-day LGBTQIA+ individuals in Indonesia, both locals and foreigners, face challenges such as negative media portrayals, marginalization, lack of civil rights and protections, and the threat of harassment and violence.

Overall, Indonesia maintains traditional and conservative views on gender identity, roles, expression, and same-sex relationships, particularly in rural villages. Men and women adhere to traditional gender roles and conservative attire, especially for formal occasions and cultural ceremonies. Dress codes for temple visits are strictly followed, with women wearing white kebayas and men donning batik with a saput overlay, sash, and Udeng headdress, along with sarongs for both genders. Deviating from these gender norms, such as men wearing skirts or dresses or women wearing ties, may lead to stares, microaggressions, or harassment from both locals and tourists.

## SFS CENTER LOCATION INFORMATION

Students will be primarily based in Ubud, an urban, vibrant city of Bali. In Ubud, there is generally more acceptance of diverse gender identities and same-sex relationships due to the modernized atmosphere. LGBTQIA+-friendly spaces can be found in Seminyak. Organizations such as the Gaya Dewata Foundation advocate for LGBTQIA+ individuals locally, focusing on sexual health improvement and community education. Nevertheless, public displays of affection in LGBTQIA+ couples, gender expression beyond one's perceived gender through dress (ie. men painting fingernails or women wearing ties), or decorating one's belongings with LGBTQIA+ supportive paraphernalia are generally discouraged due to cultural conservatism.



Students will be assigned rooming based on their housing preferences indicated on the Student Life Survey. Students will be housed with 1-3 other students; each room at the Ubud housing accommodation is equipped with an ensuite bathroom and shower.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

In most locations, especially at field trip destinations, restrooms primarily consist of single stalls, some of which may be squat toilets. While many places have gendered restrooms, students are advised to choose the facility that aligns most closely with their gender presentation, particularly in rural areas.

## HEALTHCARE

In Bali, gender-affirming care services are unavailable. However, local clinics offer testing for STIs and HIV. While LGBTQIA+ sensitivity training in healthcare is uncommon, doctors generally support patients based on their perceived gender or sexuality.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

In Bhutan, due to its religious background, older ideas surrounding LGBTQIA+ relationships, identities, and expressions linked to Buddhism prevail. While same-sex relationships were legalized in 2021, same-sex marriage isn't recognized. Additionally, there are no legal protections for non-binary or transgender individuals. Bhutan does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. Despite the decriminalization of same-sex relationships and LGBTQIA+ grassroots advocacy, such as Queer Voices of Bhutan, LGBTQIA+ news and visibility are emerging in Thimpu, and queer individuals are tolerated, although it remains a taboo topic for daily conversation, and societal discrimination persists.

While same-sex relationships are relatively accepted, transgender students may face more challenges. Public displays of affection by queer couples may draw attention. Despite increasing visibility, the average citizen may lack understanding of how to treat LGBTQIA+ and transgender individuals. Gay men may face social judgment, particularly regarding traditional family dynamics, and while some bullying or staring may occur, Bhutan generally provides a safe, tolerant space for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Dzongkha, the national language, lacks gendered pronouns, leading to uncommon usage of gender-neutral pronouns by local communities and staff, even when speaking English. Misgendering may occur, with locals using perceived gender-binary pronouns for students. Non-traditional gender expressions through clothing may attract stares due to limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Although there is a vast written and oral tradition on the religious and historical significance of the phallus-symbol, for most Bhutanese today it merely means a sign of good luck and an instrument to ward off evil spirits.

## SFS CENTER LOCATION INFORMATION

In Paro and rural Bhutan, where SFS operates, there is generally less knowledge and openness about LGBTQIA+ topics, and acceptance of queer individuals is limited by traditional religious beliefs surrounding gender identity, expression, and sexuality.

Rural villages adhere to traditional gender roles and conservative values, with men and women typically dressing conservatively.



While everyday attire in Bhutan has modernized, formalwear remains gendered. For instance, when visiting or working in government buildings, men are expected to wear traditional dress (gho), while women wear the kira. Deviating from these norms, such as men wearing skirts or dresses, may attract stares or microaggressions due to limited exposure to non-traditional gender expressions.

## SFS CENTER & HOUSING INFORMATION

SFS warmly welcomes students of all sexual orientations and gender identities to the SFS Bhutan Center. However, gender-inclusive housing is unavailable according to cultural prohibitions against different sexes sharing the same room. Therefore, transgender students are assigned rooms based on the sex indicated on their passports. Each student room accommodates 2-4 students and includes an en suite bathroom with one sink, toilet, and shower, exclusively for the occupants of that room.

At the center, there is one gender-inclusive communal bathroom featuring two sinks and a stalled toilet. Another communal bathroom, located in the dining hall, can be utilized as either gender-inclusive or gender-specific. This bathroom is equipped with two western-style toilets (in separate stalls), two sinks in the middle, and stall urinals on the other side.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Before any field trip, students are equipped with essential information to ensure their safety in the local community and are briefed on cultural customs of which to be mindful. During field trips, students will be assigned rooms according to the sex assigned at birth, resulting in same-gender room assignments. Gender-neutral bathrooms are not widespread; while some are single-stalled and thus inclusive, they are typically gendered. Squat toilets are extremely common in public and private accommodations. On field trips, bathrooms are often connected to the assigned rooms and intended for use by the students staying in that room.

Passports are utilized when registering at hotels and, in some cases, when making travel arrangements, and local staff may verify guest information based on passport details. Consequently, there may be instances where locals (such as hotel staff, airport staff, or site visit hosts) inadvertently read or call out a student's dead name. SFS understands that this experience can be very upsetting, and if such a mistake occurs, we will make every effort to work with the individual in question to address their concern.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender-affirming care is not typically available in country. Bhutanese healthcare workers are sometimes trained in gender sensitivities and LGBTQ+ issues. Former students whose gender is different than their sex assigned at birth have not reported concerns about visiting a hospital. STI and HIV testing and treatment is available at local medical facilities.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

Cambodia has a complex history regarding sexual orientation, identity, and gender expression. Buddhism, the predominant religion in Cambodia, does not inherently discriminate against LGBTQIA+ individuals. However, despite a historically higher level of acceptance and understanding compared to some regions, the recent legacy of the Khmer Rouge era (1970s) has left scars on the LGBTQIA+ community. During this time, LGBTQIA+ members endured significant gender-based and sexual violence, with much of their history erased.

Despite the decriminalization of same-sex relationships, same-sex marriage is not recognized in any province. Civil rights laws specifically protecting LGBTQIA+ individuals are still absent. Furthermore, Cambodia does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. Nevertheless, there is a growing advocacy movement for LGBTQIA+ rights, healthcare access, and reducing social stigma, such as the work of Rainbow Community Kampuchea (ROCK). LGBTQIA+ news and visibility are emerging across Cambodia, yet queer individuals are only tolerated. LGBTQIA+ issues remain a taboo topic for daily conversation, and societal discrimination persists. Many Cambodians fear that supporting LGBTQIA+ rights or disclosing one's identity can result in being excluded from family or friends circles by shame.

Cambodia's conservative gender norms expect adherence to traditional dress codes, with deviations sometimes met with social discomfort or discrimination. While there's recognition of a third gender, "kteuy," individuals within this group still face marginalization and derogatory treatment. Public displays of affection by LGBTQIA+ couples may draw negative attention such as feeling unwelcomed, stares, or microaggressions. Overall, despite its recent progress, Cambodia grapples with cultural norms and historical legacies that impede LGBTQIA+ acceptance and recognition.

During the Khmer Rouge era, a secret language, "pia saa Sor," emerged for LGBTQIA+ communication, but it's not officially recognized. Khmer, the national language, lacks gender-neutral pronouns. Gender-neutral pronouns are not yet widely adopted, reflecting evolving language and limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics. Staff may be more familiar with gender-binary pronouns; this linguistic difference does not necessarily indicate negative attitudes toward queer individuals but highlights ongoing shifts in language usage and exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues.





## SFS CENTER LOCATION & HOUSING INFORMATION

SFS warmly welcomes students of all genders to the SFS Cambodia Center in Siem Reap. Urban areas, such as Siem Reap, have LGBTQIA+-friendly establishments, but rural regions often consider LGBTQIA+ topics taboo. Each room at the center accommodates 4-6 people with a shared en suite bathroom exclusively for the occupants of that room. Students are assigned rooms according to housing preferences listed on the Student Life Survey, cohort size, and room availability. Additionally, there are two gender-neutral bathroom stalls available.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

As part of the program, SFS students will have several overnight trips away from the SFS Center. Before any field trip, students are equipped with essential information to ensure their safety in the local community and are briefed on cultural customs of which to be mindful. During field excursions, students may be housed alongside other students, sometimes in mixed-gender accommodations depending on the hosts at various off-site locations. While away from the center, most bathroom facilities, especially in rural areas, are not gendered and typically consist of single toilets or holes in the ground. In urban areas, bathrooms are usually designated for male or female use. Gender-inclusive lodging and bathrooms with host families or at field trip sites can generally be accommodated.

## HEALTHCARE

Local clinics generally lack experience in providing gender-affirming healthcare; laws lacking to protect LGBTQIA+ rights extend into healthcare. However, STI and HIV testing and treatment services are available at nearby medical facilities. For gender-affirming care, students may need to seek services at medical facilities in Bangkok, Thailand, or Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Please note that access to medical facilities in Bangkok or Phnom Penh are limited to emergencies only due to the center's location in Siem Reap.



# THAILAND | SUMMER 1 CAMBODIA



## COUNTRY PROFILE

A blend of traditional Buddhist values and modern societal attitudes shapes Thailand's cultural landscape. While historic Buddhist teachings don't inherently discriminate against LGBTQIA+ individuals, contemporary influences have led to varying acceptance levels across different communities. Urban areas like Bangkok showcase a more visible LGBTQIA+ culture with numerous LGBTQIA+-friendly establishments, but rural regions where SFS operates may uphold more conservative norms.

Thailand's lower house of Parliament passed a landmark marriage equality bill in March 2024 with strong support, paving the way for the country to become the first in Southeast Asia to legalize equal marriage rights for partners of any gender; however, Thailand does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. Currently, Thailand does not restrict organizing LGBTQIA+ events, and efforts to integrate LGBTQIA+ topics into mainstream education demonstrate progress. While public displays of affection may draw negative attention (i.e. stares) due to conservative gender norms, overall attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals can be somewhat tolerant, particularly within specific social confines.

In rural Thailand, where SFS operates, traditional gender norms still strongly influence societal views. Dressing conservatively is customary, and deviating from cultural gender norms may result in stares or microaggressions. Individuals perceived as male are advised against painting fingernails and painting clothing while on rural field excursions. While there's a mix of acceptance and conservatism in rural communities, discussions about LGBTQIA+-related topics are often considered taboo due to concerns about family honor.

## PROGRAM SPECIFIC HOUSING AND PUBLIC

### ACCOMMODATIONS

In Thailand, students will be accommodated with host families, typically with 3-5 students per household along with an accompanying SFS staff member. Bathroom facilities will be shared among student cohort members, separate from the host family. Student rooms will typically accommodate 2-3 students each.

Additionally, students may stay at guest houses, where rooms typically accommodate 2-3 students, with shared communal bathroom facilities. During travel, bathroom amenities are often gendered, and students are encouraged to use facilities that align with their gender identity.

## HEALTHCARE

Thailand offers gender-affirming care services, along with HIV and STD testing at local clinics. However, the country is still in the early stages of providing LGBTQIA+ sensitivity training for healthcare workers.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

Due to colonial and religious influences in Chile and Argentina, older notions related to LGBTQIA+ relationships, often tied to Catholicism, persist. However, there is a growing LGBTQIA+ presence in both countries, with increasing attitudes of respect and acceptance. Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2021, and since 2018, citizens aged 14 and above can change their name and gender on legal documents to align with their gender identity. Both Chile and Argentina recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker.

Across both Chile and Argentina, public displays of affection among LGBTQIA+ couples may attract mixed attention, such as stares, whispers, microaggressions, or no attention at all. Greetings in these countries are often gendered, with men typically shaking hands and women or mixed-gender pairs exchanging kisses on the cheek. However, a handshake is always a respectful alternative for those wishing to avoid gendered greetings.

While everyday attire has modernized, formalwear remains gendered, and deviation from gender norms may provoke stares or microaggressions, particularly for individuals perceived as male wearing traditionally feminine clothing.

In Latin America, including Chile and Argentina, gender-neutral pronouns are not yet widely adopted, reflecting evolving language and limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics. Staff may be more familiar with gender-binary pronouns, which transgender students may find more commonly used. This linguistic difference does not necessarily indicate negative attitudes toward queer individuals but highlights ongoing shifts in language usage and exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues.

## SFS CENTER LOCATION INFORMATION

In Puerto Natales and Tierra del Fuego, attitudes toward the LGBTQIA+ community vary, with a mix of knowledge and respect alongside conservative Catholic beliefs, contrasting with Santiago de Chile, where LGBTQIA+ advocacy and community are more prevalent. Limited exposure to transgender individuals is common in smaller, rural towns like Puerto Natales, where LGBTQIA+ topics are not frequently discussed.

Additionally, the Patagonian indigenous group, the Mapuche, which SFS solely studies, has a history of co-gendered shamans that follow spirituality and gender identity, not sex assigned at birth. However, travelers may encounter members of this group in Puerto Natales that now uphold traditional perspectives on gender identity, gender expression, and queer relationships, and SFS does not recommend discussing LGBTQIA+ topics with this group.

## SFS CENTER & HOUSING INFORMATION

Each room at the center accommodates 4-6 people with a shared en suite bathroom exclusively for the occupants of that room. Additionally, there are two gender-neutral bathroom stalls available. Students are assigned rooms according to housing preferences listed on the Student Life Survey, cohort size, and room availability.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Before any field trip, students are equipped with essential information to ensure their safety in the local community and are briefed on cultural customs of which to be mindful. In most cases, gender-inclusive housing can be arranged during field trips. It's important to note that there are limited to no public gender-inclusive public bathrooms in the country; therefore, students should be prepared to use gendered bathrooms while away from the center.

## HEALTHCARE

While there is growing acceptance and education surrounding LGBTQIA+ sensitivity in Chilean and Argentine health care, there are no gender-affirming medical facilities available in Puerto Natales. STI and HIV testing and treatment is available at local medical facilities.





## COUNTRY PROFILE

In Costa Rica, a blend of colonial and religious influences has shaped prevailing ideas surrounding LGBTQIA+ relationships and identities, often intertwined with Catholicism. Despite this historical backdrop, Costa Rica has been actively implementing policies to support and safeguard the civil rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. There are no legal restrictions on same-sex relations, and same-sex marriage is recognized by law. LGBTQIA+ events are permitted, with younger generations exhibiting greater openness and acceptance, particularly in the metropolitan area centered around the capital, San José. Costa Rica recognizes foreign passports with a gender X marker.

Across Costa Rica, public displays of affection among LGBTQIA+ couples may attract mixed attention, such as stares, whispers, microaggressions, or no attention at all. Greetings in these countries are often gendered, with men typically shaking hands and women or mixed-gender pairs exchanging kisses on the cheek. However, a handshake is always a respectful alternative for those wishing to avoid gendered greetings.

While everyday attire in Costa Rica has evolved, formalwear typically adheres to gender norms, and deviations may provoke stares or microaggressions, especially for those perceived as male wearing traditionally feminine clothing or painting their nails.

In Latin America, including Costa Rica, gender-neutral pronouns are not yet widely adopted, reflecting evolving language and limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics. Staff may be more familiar with gender-binary pronouns, which transgender students may find more commonly used. This linguistic difference does not necessarily indicate negative attitudes toward queer individuals but highlights ongoing shifts in language usage and exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues. Transgender students may find that staff are more accustomed to using gender-binary pronouns than gender-neutral ones.

## SFS PROGRAM LOCATION INFORMATION

In rural communities, like Atenas and where SFS operates, there is less open-mindedness and understanding of diversity of sexuality and gender identity; furthermore, there are very few LGBTQIA+ organizations. While there is more widespread respect and acceptance of this community, it is not a commonly discussed topic in everyday life.

## SFS CENTER & HOUSING INFORMATION

tudents are assigned rooms according to housing preferences indicated on the Student Life Survey, cohort size, and room availability.



Students are assigned rooms according to housing preferences indicated on the Student Life Survey, cohort size, and room availability. SFS will endeavor to accommodate all requests at the Costa Rica Center. Each room at the center accommodates 4-6 people with minimal privacy. While there are two main bathrooms within the main building designated as male or female, students are generally permitted to use the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity. Additionally, there is a single-stall shower and toilet available on a first-come, first-served basis. Several single-stall bathrooms are also available in and around the center for students' convenience.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Before any field trip, students are equipped with essential information to ensure their safety in the local community and are briefed on cultural customs of which to be mindful. In most cases, gender-inclusive housing can be arranged during field trips. It's important to note that there are limited to no public gender-inclusive public bathrooms in the country; therefore, students should be prepared to use gendered bathrooms while away from the center.

## HEALTHCARE

While there is growing acceptance and education surrounding LGBTQIA+ sensitivity in Costa Rican health care, there are no gender-affirming medical facilities available in Atenas. Gender affirming healthcare is only available at the major hospitals within the metropolitan area in and around San José. STI and HIV testing and treatment is available at local medical facilities.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

Croatia's religious background tied to Catholicism has historically influenced perceptions of LGBTQIA+ relationships. However, in the last 30 years, Croatia has transitioned into a liberal, westernized country, akin to the United States in LGBTQIA+ topics and communities. Various laws protect the civil rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, including legal provisions against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and recognition of same-sex unions (although marriage is still prohibited). While updating gender identity on legal paperwork is permitted, nonbinary gender is not legally recognized. Croatia imposes no restrictions on organizing or participating in LGBTQIA+ events, with LGBTQIA+-friendly neighborhoods prevalent in urban centers like Zagreb and Dubrovnik.

Overall, societal acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community has increased. Public displays of affection between LGBTQIA+ couples may draw attention, and gendered greetings are customary. Men typically greet each other with a handshake, while greetings between men and women, or two women, involve a kiss on the cheek. Opting for a handshake offers a respectful alternative for those who prefer to avoid gendered greetings.

## SFS PROGRAM LOCATION INFORMATION

In rural locations like Veli Lošinj, where SFS operates, attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community vary. While some individuals are knowledgeable and respectful, others maintain conservative views. While federal laws protect LGBTQIA+ rights and visibility increases, discussions about LGBTQIA+ topics remain uncommon in daily conversation.

Traditional gender norms are upheld in Croatia, with gender identity closely tied to expression. Deviations from these norms are rare locally, and individuals who dress outside gender norms may face stares or microaggressions, particularly those perceived as male wearing traditionally feminine attire. Misgendering of transgender or non-binary individuals is not uncommon, and the use of gender-neutral pronouns in daily conversation is infrequent. The island may have limited LGBTQ+ specific resources or support networks. Larger cities in Croatia, like Rijeka or Zagreb, offer more LGBTQ+ specific resources and support networks if needed.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

During field trips, students will be assigned rooms based on the gender assigned at birth, leading to same-gender room assignments. Gender-neutral bathrooms are not common; although some are single-stalled and inclusive, they are usually gendered. Bathrooms on field trips are often connected to the assigned rooms and intended for use by the students staying in those rooms.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender affirming care is limited in country. STI and HIV testing and treatment is available at local medical facilities.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

Italy, with its religious background rooted in Catholicism, has traditionally held prevalent ideas regarding LGBTQIA+ relationships and identities. However, recent years have seen a shift towards greater knowledge and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the country. Same-sex civil unions have been legally recognized since 2016, and discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity is prohibited nationwide. Italy does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. Pope Francis's vocal stance on LGBTQIA+ inclusion within the Catholic Church reflects evolving attitudes.

Public displays of affection between LGBTQIA+ couples may attract attention, and gendered greetings (ie. kisses on cheeks for those perceived as females and handshakes for those perceived as males) are common in social settings. However, opting for a handshake is always a respectful alternative.

Similar to Spanish, Italian is a gendered language. Gender-neutral pronouns are not yet widely adopted, reflecting evolving language and limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics. As LGBTQIA+ awareness continues to spread around the country, many younger generations are beginning to look at adopting gender-neutral pronouns into daily conversation; however, this conversation is in its infancy and would not commonly be recognized in rural areas. Staff may be more familiar with gender-binary pronouns, which transgender students may find more commonly used. This linguistic difference does not necessarily indicate negative attitudes toward queer individuals but highlights ongoing shifts in language usage and exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues. Students who use she/her or he/him pronouns, including transgender students, may find that it is easier for locals to use their pronouns than students who use gender neutral pronouns.

## SFS PROGRAM LOCATION INFORMATION

In urban areas like Milan, Venice, Florence, Sicily, and Rome, students are less likely to encounter negative attitudes towards expressions of gender identity or non-conformity to Italian norms. Younger generations and urban populations tend to be more supportive, while older and more rural populations might hold more conservative views. Florence, in particular, has been progressive in protecting LGBTQIA+ rights, with ample support and resources available. Despite progress, LGBTQ+ individuals in Florence may still face discrimination or prejudice in certain contexts. This can include verbal harassment or more subtle forms of exclusion.

In rural areas, like Greve in Chianti, where the SFS program is based outside Florence, students may interact with people who hold more conservative views. Public displays of affection between same-sex couples might attract attention or curiosity. Locals may exhibit limited knowledge and conservative attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals, potentially leading to stares or harassment.

## SFS CENTER & HOUSING INFORMATION

The availability of gender-inclusive housing is contingent upon the size of the cohort and what students request on the Student Life Survey. Students will be housed in apartment-style living, with some of the accommodations consisting of three separate bedrooms and two shared bathrooms. Most housing accommodations consist of two people per room with private bathrooms available. Near the classroom, there is one bathroom designated for all genders.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

In most cases, gender-inclusive housing can be arranged during field trips. However, it's essential to recognize that there are limited to no public gender-inclusive bathrooms in the country. Therefore, students should be prepared to use gendered bathrooms while away from the center.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender-affirming care is available in Italy, with the closest facilities located in Florence, just 40 minutes away from the center. Italian doctors are increasingly trained to support LGBTQIA+ patients, providing comprehensive care. Additionally, local medical facilities offer STI and HIV testing and treatment services.





## COUNTRY PROFILE

Policies, attitudes, and customs toward the LGBTQIA+ community in Kenya have been significantly influenced by religious and colonial legacies. In pre-colonial Swahili culture, the term "Mashoga" was used to embrace a diverse spectrum of gender identities and expressions, particularly those born male but adopting feminine norms. However, modern usage of "Shoga" has turned derogatory towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. Rural tribal communities across Kenya, with whom SFS interacts, have adopted the prevailing negative stigma towards the LGBTQIA+ community by shunning or harassing anyone who identifies as LGBTQIA+ or even deviates from gender norms. Across Kenya, violence, civil restrictions, and slurs/hate speech prevail, affecting both urban and rural areas, with little legal protection against violence or discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

Kenya's national laws deem same-sex relationships and partnerships illegal, often leading to imprisonment; moreover, attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community remain highly stigmatized. Discussing LGBTQIA+ topics with locals is generally discouraged due to widespread opposition. Visibility and advocacy for the LGBTQIA+ community often operate underground, with limited government acknowledgement or support from mainstream resources.

Kenya upholds conservative gender norms, recognizing only binary genders with distinct roles and expectations. Gender expression (ie. accessories or dress) beyond these norms may lead to social scrutiny or discrimination. Additionally, Kenya neither legally nor culturally acknowledges non-binary gender markers on legal documentation, leading to challenges for individuals whose identities fall outside traditional norms. Some travel advisories recommend deleting social media content related to LGBTQIA+ saliency and support if personal devices are acquired while traveling through customs.

## SFS CENTER INFORMATION AND ACCOMMODATIONS

SFS warmly welcomes students of all sexual and gender identities to the SFS Kenya Center. While the center's staff members are primarily local and may have limited exposure to diverse gender expressions and pronouns, they are dedicated to creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable. Students are encouraged to be respectful of cultural norms when interacting with local staff.

Students are assigned to housing based on housing preferences (indicated on the Student Life Survey), cohort size, and room availability. Students are housed in cabins called "bandas" with 2-4 other students, maintaining minimal privacy. There is a curtain down the middle of the banda that allows for extra personal space. Restroom blocks with warm water showers and western-style toilets are a short walk from cabins; students assign gender to these bathrooms during the in-country orientation as a community cohort.



## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Before any field trip, students are equipped with essential information to ensure their safety in the local community and are briefed on cultural customs to be mindful of. During field trips, students will be assigned rooms or tents according to the sex assigned at birth, resulting in same-sex housing assignments. There are no public gender-inclusive bathrooms in the entire country of Kenya. Therefore, students should be prepared to use gendered bathrooms while away from the center.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender-affirming medical facilities are not available. However, STI and HIV testing and treatment services can be accessed at local medical facilities. Foreigners may encounter challenges in obtaining HIV medication without a prescription.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

In Rwanda, policies, attitudes, and customs towards the LGBTQIA+ community have been shaped by religious and colonial influences. Same-sex unions are not recognized legally, but being gay or queer is not considered illegal. Local law enforcement inconsistently follows laws protecting LGBTQIA+ members, leading to arbitrary arrest for someone's perceived LGBTQIA+ identity, social advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights, or not responding to violent acts inflicted on LGBTQIA+ members. Furthermore, societal discrimination and stigma persist, with public displays of affection within LGBTQIA+ couples and outward social commentary for LGBTQIA+-related topics often met with shunning, microaggressions, or harassment.

Gender nonbinary markers are not recognized in legal documentation, even for foreigners. Moreover, travelers are advised to delete social media content related to LGBTQIA+ saliency and support if personal devices are acquired while traveling through customs. This caution underscores the societal stigma against the LGBTQIA+ community despite the absence of formal legal prohibitions. Rwanda upholds conservative gender norms, recognizing only binary genders with distinct roles and expectations to align with a patriarchal society. Gender expression beyond these norms, women wearing ties or men painting their fingernails, may lead to social scrutiny or discrimination. Transgender students may face more scrutiny due to higher visibility.

In summary, while Rwanda does not explicitly criminalize LGBTQIA+ identities, the absence of legal protections and the presence of societal discrimination reinforce challenges for the community, necessitating greater awareness and advocacy.

## HOUSING INFORMATION & PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Before any field trip, students are equipped with essential information to ensure their safety in the local community and are briefed on cultural customs of which to be mindful. In Rwanda, hotels generally do not have policies prohibiting students of opposite sexes from sharing a room, but such arrangements may lead to assumptions that they are a couple if they are of opposite sex. Consequently, students are often assigned rooms based on the gender they identify with, resulting in the majority of students residing in same-gender accommodations.

Gender-neutral bathrooms are not available in Rwanda. While some single-stalled bathrooms are inclusive, they are typically designated by gender. During field trips, bathrooms are often connected to the assigned rooms and intended for the use of students occupying those rooms.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender-affirming care is illegal across all Rwanda. Furthermore, healthcare services are not specifically tailored to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals in this country. However, local medical facilities offer testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. Foreigners may encounter challenges in obtaining HIV medication without a prescription.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

In Panama, the intersection of colonial history and religious influence shapes prevalent ideas surrounding LGBTQIA+ relationships and identities, particularly tied to Catholicism. Compared to other Latin American countries, Panama notably lacks legal protections for the civil rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, contributing to a significant stigma and lack of understanding, especially toward transgender people. Despite constitutional prohibitions against discrimination, loopholes exist, enabling societal prejudice and discrimination from locals and police based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Same-sex marriages are neither conducted nor recognized, and Panama does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. LGBTQIA+ topics in daily conversation are still taboo, and disclosing one's identity is discouraged; not following these could lead to harassment or violence.

However, there is a growing presence of LGBTQIA+ advocacy in Panama, marked by organized events in Panama City and Bocas del Toro to celebrate International Pride Month in June. Urban centers, such as Panama City, and cosmopolitan towns, such as Bocas del Toro, house more attitudes of acceptance toward the LGBTQIA+ community versus rural areas and Indigenous communities.

Public displays of affection among LGBTQIA+ couples may draw negative attention, ranging from stares to harassment. Greetings in these countries are often gendered, with men typically shaking hands and women or mixed-gender pairs exchanging kisses on the cheek. However, a handshake is always a respectful alternative for those wishing to avoid gendered greetings.

In Latin America, including Panama, gender-neutral pronouns are not yet widely adopted, reflecting evolving language and limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics. Staff may be more familiar with gender-binary pronouns, which transgender students may find more commonly used. This linguistic difference does not necessarily indicate negative attitudes toward queer individuals but highlights ongoing shifts in language usage and exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues. Transgender students may find that staff are more accustomed to using gender-binary pronouns than gender-neutral ones.

## SFS CENTER LOCATION INFORMATION

SFS warmly welcomes students of all genders to the SFS Panama Center. While some staff members are local to Bocas and may have limited exposure to diverse gender expressions and pronouns, they are dedicated to creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable. Students are encouraged to respect cultural norms when interacting with local staff.

Bocas del Toro is home to a diverse mix of individuals, including Panamanians, expats, and tourists. While some are knowledgeable and respectful toward LGBTQIA+ community members, others hold conservative Catholic attitudes. Panama's conservative, traditional ideas surrounding gender norms, identity, and expression, influenced by religious beliefs and machismo culture, persist in the region.

Although everyday wear has evolved in Bocas del Toro, formal attire remains gendered. Dressing outside of gender norms, especially for individuals perceived as male wearing traditionally feminine clothing or painting their nails, may lead to stares or microaggressions. Additionally, individuals may experience misgendering in public settings. SFS understands that this experience can be very upsetting, and if such a mistake occurs, we will make every effort to work with the individual in question to address their concerns.

## SFS CENTER & HOUSING INFORMATION

Students are assigned to housing based on housing preferences (indicated on the Student Life Survey), cohort size, and room availability. Accommodations consist of cabins shared with 4-5 other students, each equipped with a private en suite bathroom designated for the cabin occupants. There is very little privacy within the cabins. Additionally, one single-stall toilet is available for all staff and students near the classroom.

## FIELD & TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

During field trips, students will be assigned rooms by SFS staff. Public bathrooms are separated by gender. Therefore, students should be prepared to use gendered bathrooms while away from the center.

The SFS Panama program frequents the water for field research, having students enter the water to collect data, study marine life, or complete coral restoration. Students with visible scars from gender-affirming care may receive stares in rural, public swimming spaces. All students, regardless of gender, are highly encouraged to wear rash guards and whatever swimwear makes them comfortable when snorkeling for field research or swimming in public places.

## HEALTHCARE

Gender-affirming medical facilities are not available. However, STI and HIV testing and treatment services can be accessed at local medical facilities. Foreigners may encounter challenges in obtaining HIV medication without a prescription.



## COUNTRY PROFILE

In Peru, the influence of colonialism and Catholicism has deeply shaped attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ relationships and identities. Before colonization, Incan culture worshipped a dual-gendered god called "chuqui chinchay," with ceremonies led by androgynous quariwarmi shamans, symbolizing a fluidity between masculine and feminine realms. Despite the visibility of Incan customs, widespread acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community remains elusive.

Although same-sex relations are no longer criminalized and discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity is outlawed, same-sex marriage remains illegal for Peruvian nationals, though recognized for foreign couples. Peru does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. LGBTQIA+ events are not restricted, but discussing LGBTQIA+ topics remains taboo in daily conversations, contributing to discrimination and harassment, particularly against transgender women. While larger cities like Cuzco and Lima may exhibit more visibility and advocacy for the LGBTQIA+ community, this is less common in regions like Tarapoto and the Amazonian area, where violence against the queer community was prevalent during the Shining Path insurgency in the 1980s.

Peruvian society upholds conservative gender norms rooted in religious and machismo ideals. While everyday attire has modernized, formalwear remains gendered, often resulting in stares or microaggressions for individuals deviating from traditional gender roles, especially men wearing clothing typically associated with women. Public displays of affection among LGBTQIA+ couples may draw negative attention, varying from stares to harassment. Social greetings are often gendered, with men typically exchanging handshakes and men and women, or two women, greeting each other with a kiss on the cheek. Students can opt for a handshake to avoid gendered greetings if desired.

While traveling in Peru, particularly in Cuzco, students may encounter a rainbow-colored flag representing the movement for Indigenous rights, not necessarily LGBTQIA+ support. It's important for students to remain vigilant and informed about public displays of affection, attire choices, and adherence to social customs.



In Latin America, including Peru, gender-neutral pronouns are not yet widely adopted, reflecting evolving language and limited exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics. Staff may be more familiar with gender-binary pronouns, which transgender students may find more commonly used. This linguistic difference does not necessarily indicate negative attitudes toward queer individuals but highlights ongoing shifts in language usage and exposure to LGBTQIA+ issues. Transgender students may find that staff are more accustomed to using gender-binary pronouns than gender-neutral ones.

## SFS CENTER ACCOMMODATIONS

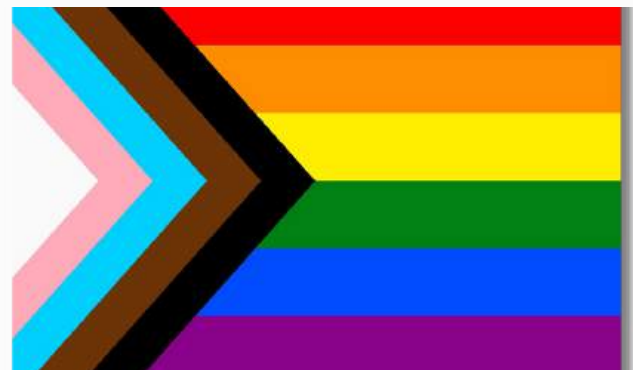
Students are assigned to housing based on housing preferences (indicated on the Student Life Survey), cohort size, and room availability. Students will be assigned to rooms accommodating 4-6 students, each furnished with 4-6 twin beds and a shared en suite bathroom for occupants.

## PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Gender-neutral bathrooms are typically not available in Peru. While some single-stalled bathrooms are inclusive, they are typically designated by gender. During field trips, bathrooms are often connected to the assigned rooms and intended for the use of students occupying those rooms. Students may request gender-inclusive housing on field trips. SFS will strive to honor the request, subject to cohort size.

## HEALTHCARE

Access to gender-affirming healthcare in Peru is predominantly available in major cities, with limited availability elsewhere. While gender-affirming care exists, it remains scarce. Local clinics offer HIV and STD testing services. However, Peru is in its nascent stages regarding training healthcare workers in LGBTQIA+ sensitivity.



**(Left)** Indigenous Rights Flag found in Cuzco, seven stripes with Incan symbol  
**(Right)** LGBTQIA+ flag found in United States, six rainbow stripes with new stripes



## COUNTRY PROFILE

Religious and colonial legacies have significantly influenced policies, attitudes, and customs toward the LGBTQIA+ community. In pre-colonial Swahili culture, the term "Mashoga" encompassed a diverse spectrum of gender identities and relationships, particularly those involving individuals born male who adopted feminine gender norms. While some areas near the coast still accept this group, major cities and inland communities generally marginalize them within the broader negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community. Modern usage of "Shoga" is often used derogatorily against LGBTQIA+ individuals. Rural tribal communities across Tanzania, with whom SFS interacts, have adopted the prevailing negative stigma towards the LGBTQIA+ community by shunning or harassing any identifying or perceived LGBTQIA+ member or outward ally.

Violence, civil restrictions, and slurs/hate speech prevail, affecting both urban and rural areas, with little legal protection against violence or discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. National laws criminalize same-sex relationships and partnerships, leading to potential imprisonment. Reports indicate that LGBTQIA+ individuals have been arrested or charged with unrelated offences by local authorities due to cultural biases against LGBTQIA+ issues or support. Furthermore, Tanzania does not formally recognize gender non-binary markers on legal documentation.

Visibility and advocacy, whether paraphernalia, discussing LGBTQIA+ topics, or participation in LGBTQIA+ events, may be met with crackdowns from authorities and discrimination from the public. As a result, disclosing one's gender identity or sexual orientation to locals is strongly discouraged. Travelers are advised to remove social media content related to LGBTQIA+ issues or support from personal devices when passing through customs.

Traditional gender norms in Tanzania adhere strictly to the gender binary, with distinct roles and expectations for men and women. Gender identity is closely linked to gender expression, with deviation from traditional norms often resulting in stares, microaggressions, or outright discrimination. Women wearing ties or men painting their fingernails may lead to social scrutiny or discrimination. Transgender students may face more scrutiny due to higher visibility. Overall, conservative and gender-distinct attire is customary in Tanzanian society.

## SFS CENTER HOUSING

SFS warmly welcomes students of all genders to the SFS Tanzania Center. While the center's staff members are primarily local and may have limited exposure to diverse gender expressions and pronouns, they are dedicated to creating a supportive environment where all students feel comfortable. Students are encouraged to be respectful of cultural norms when interacting with local staff.

Students are assigned to housing based on housing preferences (indicated on the Student Life Survey), cohort size, and room availability. Students reside in "bandas". These rooms are designed for four people, with twin bunk beds provided. Each room also features shared desk and shelving units, along with an en-suite bathroom equipped with a shower (providing hot water) and a western-style toilet. Gender-inclusive bathrooms are accessible on campus.

## PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

During field trips, gender-inclusive housing and bathrooms may be available, depending on the facilities visited. However, most locations outside of the SFS center typically have designated bathrooms for males and females. In such cases, students are encouraged to utilize the accommodations that best align with the gender they present as.

## HEALTHCARE

Healthcare services in Tanzania are not specifically tailored to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals. However, healthcare centers offer services to all individuals regardless of gender. Local clinics provide HIV and STD testing. Foreigners may encounter challenges in obtaining HIV medication without a prescription.





## COUNTRY PROFILE

In South Caicos, a small and remote community within the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), conservative ideas about LGBTQIA+ relationships and gender identities prevail, influenced by colonial and religious backgrounds, particularly Christianity. While discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation is illegal, same-sex marriage is only recognized for couples visiting the islands. Turks and Caicos does not recognize foreign passports with a gender X marker. Notably, there are no LGBTQIA+ community organizations in the Turks and Caicos Islands, leading to slow progress in advocacy efforts and low cultural visibility for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Generational differences exist regarding acceptance and knowledge of LGBTQIA+ issues, with younger generations generally more accepting than older ones, though still less so than in Western countries. Despite this, there have been no reported instances of aggression or violence towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. However, discussions about LGBTQIA+ rights, romantic partnerships, and diverse gender identities remain taboo topics.

Locals in South Caicos typically adhere to conservative dress and local gender norms, with formalwear often gendered. Gender identity and expression are closely linked to attire, and deviation from these norms may result in misgendering or stares in public.

Unlike Western English-speaking countries, the use of gender-neutral pronouns is uncommon in South Caicos, reflecting a lack of exposure and understanding of diverse gender identities and sexualities. Pronouns are typically assigned according to perceived gender norms, especially towards transgender and non-binary individuals. While South Caicos locals generally welcome newcomers with respect, their attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ members tend to be conservative and tolerant.

## ON-CAMPUS HOUSING & PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Students are assigned to housing based on housing preferences (indicated on the Student Life Survey), cohort size, and room availability. Gender-inclusive housing options are available, with ensuite bathrooms in each room. There are no communal restrooms. Additionally, on campus, there are two outdoor saltwater showers that students can use while wearing a bathing suit, as they are not private or enclosed. There is also one stalled saltwater shower located outside of the main center, a short walk away.

Away from the center, most places have single-stall bathrooms, which are available to people of any gender. When local establishments have multiple stalls, they are not considered gender-inclusive. It is culturally expected that you go to the bathroom of the student's gender expression.

The SFS TCI program frequents the water for field research, having students enter the water to collect data, study marine life, or complete coral restoration. Students with visible scars from gender-affirming care may receive stares in rural, public swimming spaces. All students, regardless of gender, are highly encouraged to wear rash guards and whatever swimwear makes them comfortable when snorkeling for field research or swimming in public places.

## HEALTHCARE

Healthcare services on South Caicos are limited overall, with no specific provisions tailored to the needs of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Gender-affirming services like hormone therapy or LGBTQIA+-affirming mental healthcare are unavailable. While it's possible to bring medications that require a doctor's administration and request the clinic to administer them, it's important to note that clinic staff members may be religiously conservative. It is unknown if their values impact their medical care and whether they prioritize medical duty over personal beliefs. HIV and STD testing are available at local clinics.

