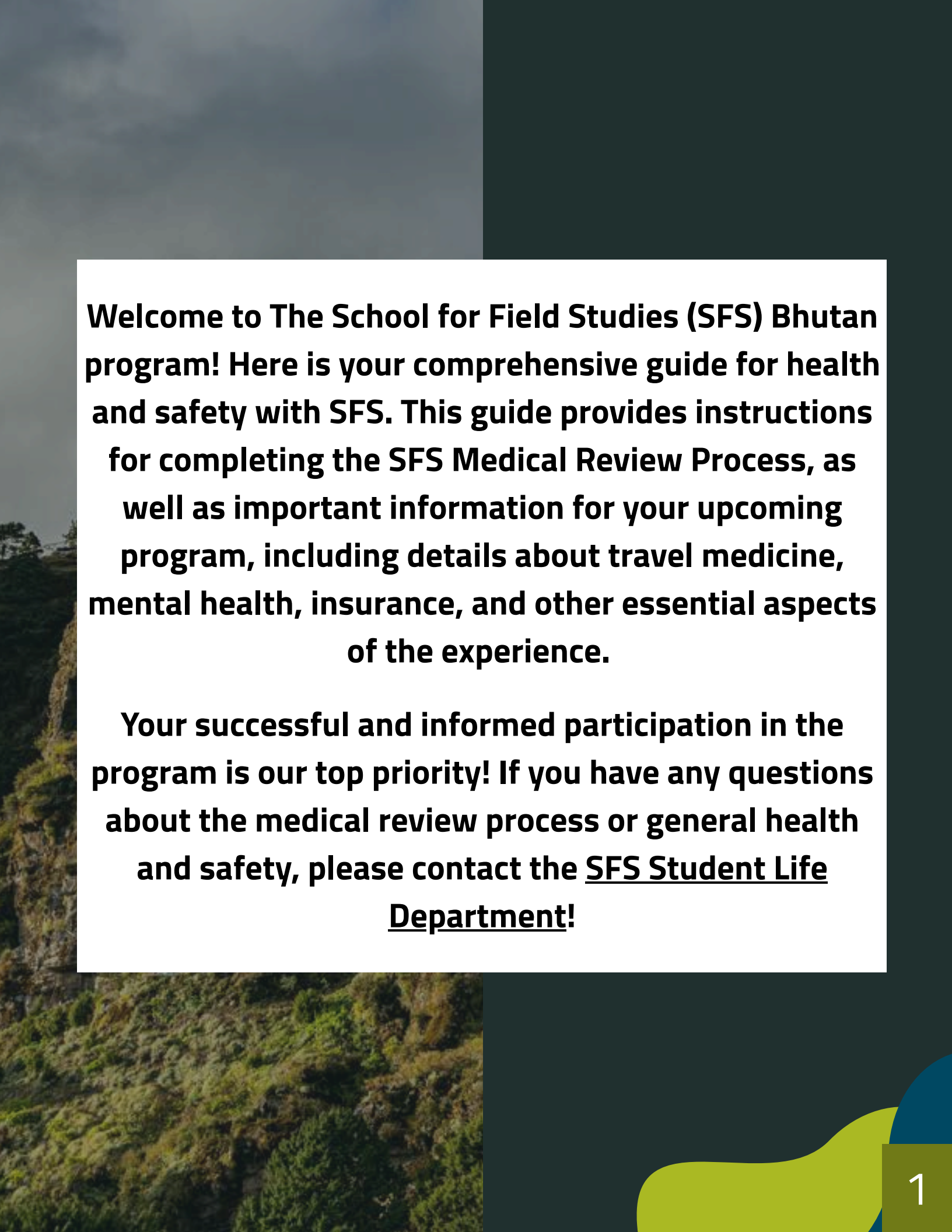




BHUTAN

HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE



Welcome to The School for Field Studies (SFS) Bhutan program! Here is your comprehensive guide for health and safety with SFS. This guide provides instructions for completing the SFS Medical Review Process, as well as important information for your upcoming program, including details about travel medicine, mental health, insurance, and other essential aspects of the experience.

Your successful and informed participation in the program is our top priority! If you have any questions about the medical review process or general health and safety, please contact the SFS Student Life Department!

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PRE-DEPARTURE MEDICAL REVIEW

WHAT IS MEDICAL REVIEW?

Once enrolled, all participants are required to complete the SFS Medical Review Process. This process helps our staff understand your medical and mental health needs, as well as any accommodations that may be needed. The review is not about exclusion; rather, it helps us provide the appropriate support and create a safe and supportive experience for all participants.

Our approach to your physical and mental well-being is one of open communication and collaboration. In turn, SFS may reach out to both you and your physicians and/or mental health providers as needed. **SFS reserves the right to decide if a participant cannot go on an SFS program from a health and safety standpoint.**

DEADLINE FOR MEDICAL PAPERWORK



FALL
JUNE 1



SPRING
NOVEMBER 1



SUMMER 1
APRIL 1



SUMMER 2
MAY 1

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

HEALTH HISTORY FORM

Self Disclosure form completed by participant

- Current & Past Diagnoses
- Current Medications
- Previous Hospitalizations/Surgeries
- Allergies & Asthma
- Mental Health History
- Physical and/or Academic Accommodations

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

SFS Medical Forms must have doctor's signature.

Must be completed **within 6 months of program start date.**

SUPPLEMENTAL PAPERWORK

Based on participant medical history

- Life Saving Medication Form
- Medical Specialist Form
- Mental Health Provider Evaluation
- Psychotropic Medication Form
 - More information on pg. 5

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

Include comprehensive coverage for basic medical care, including

- non-urgent illness or injury (i.e., gastrointestinal distress, ankle sprains, etc.)
- laboratory tests
- prescription medication

Valid in Bhutan & Thailand for the full duration of the program.

SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL PAPERWORK



Life Saving Medication

Required if you are prescribed any lifesaving medication (Epi-Pen, rescue inhaler, insulin, seizure medication, etc.). This form must be completed by the medical professional who manages this condition, such as an allergist or neurologist.



Psychotropic Medication

Required if you're prescribed psychotropic medication. If you're not sure if your medication is considered psychotropic, please consult with your prescribing physician.



Mental Health Provider Evaluation

Required if you have seen a mental health provider (i.e., counselor, therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc.) within the past two years.



Medical Specialist Form

Required if you have been treated by a medical specialist for any reason within the past two years. For example, if you're under the care of a neurologist or cardiologist; have epilepsy (or experience seizures), Crohn's disease, diabetes, etc.; have had orthopedic surgery within the past two years; or are under the care of a nutritionist or mental health provider for disordered eating.

You are not required to complete this form if under the care of a dentist, dermatologist, optometrist, or gynecologists.



MEDICAL REVIEW SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

To ensure a smooth and successful enrollment process, please carefully follow the instructions below when submitting your medical documents:

Complete All Forms Accurately & Fully

- Inaccurate or incomplete forms may result in restrictions on activities, dismissal from the program, or rescinded acceptance.

Submit Only SFS Medical Paperwork

- Do not submit any additional documents from doctors.
- All required SFS medical paperwork can be found in your SFS Student Portal.

Report Any Health Changes

- If your health status changes after submitting your medical forms, you must notify SFS immediately.

Medical Forms for Consecutive Programs

- If you are participating in two consecutive sessions in different locations (e.g., Summer 1 & Summer 2, or Summer 1 & Fall), you must submit separate medical documents for each location.
- However, the Health History Form only needs to be submitted once.

Medical Review Process

- A member of the SFS Student Life Team may contact you to discuss any information in your medical forms as part of the review process.

How to Submit:

1. **Complete all medical forms as instructed.**
2. **Double-check for missing information or errors.**
3. **Upload your completed forms to your SFS Portal.**





HEALTH INSURANCE



SFS does not enroll participants in international health insurance. Therefore, all participants are required to obtain a health insurance plan for their time abroad. This plan must:

1. Include comprehensive coverage for basic medical care, including non-urgent illness or injury (i.e., gastrointestinal distress, ankle sprains, etc.), laboratory tests, and prescription medication
2. Be valid in both Bhutan & Thailand for the full duration of the program

It is the participants' responsibility to ensure the international health insurance plan meets these requirements. SFS does not review individual insurance policies and does not provide recommendations for specific insurance providers.

Tips on Finding International Health Insurance

- Check with your study abroad office about automatic enrollment in an international health insurance policy.
- Check with your domestic insurance provider to see if your policy meets the requirements above for international coverage.
- Search for study abroad student insurance or ask study abroad office for guidance, as you may find policies that are priced and designed for participants.

Evacuation & Repatriation Insurance

All SFS participants are automatically enrolled in the *SFS Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance* plan through American International Group, Inc. (AIG). This insurance is valid for the duration of the program, but does not cover personal travel pre or post program. The plan covers relevant costs related to transportation, accommodation, and medical care associated with a medical or security evacuation (i.e. lifesaving support during transport in an air evacuation) when deemed necessary. Benefits include:

- \$350,000 for emergency medical evacuation;
- \$100,000 for emergency security evacuation;
- \$20,000 for repatriation of remains.

This plan does NOT provide health, medical, or dental insurance. You are required to have your own health insurance that is valid in the country (or countries) where your program is based.

Keep in mind that most insurance plans work on a reimbursement basis, as many public or private medical care facilities abroad do not accept insurance as payment. Therefore, participants should bring sufficient funds (i.e. a credit card with at least a \$3,000 limit to pay for medical expenses upfront, and then request reimbursement when you return home.

The AIG policy cannot insure individuals weighing over 350lbs due to restrictions on the type of air transportation used. In turn, participants who do not meet this requirement set forth by the AIG policy will not be able to participate in an SFS program due to a lack of necessary evacuation coverage.



GENERAL HEALTH

TRAVEL MEDICINE

NO REQUIRED VACCINATIONS

TRAVELERS HEALTH GUIDANCE

International public health organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Travel Health Network and Center (NaTHNaC), strongly recommend that all travelers be up-to-date with routine vaccinations (i.e. MMR, Hepatitis A and B, Polio, Chickenpox, Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis, Flu, etc.) and the COVID-19 vaccination in order to protect themselves and vulnerable populations in countries that may not have access to preventative vaccinations.

For more information, visit

- [CDC's Travelers' Health](#)
- [NaTHNaC](#)
- [Canada's Traveler's Health: Bhutan](#)

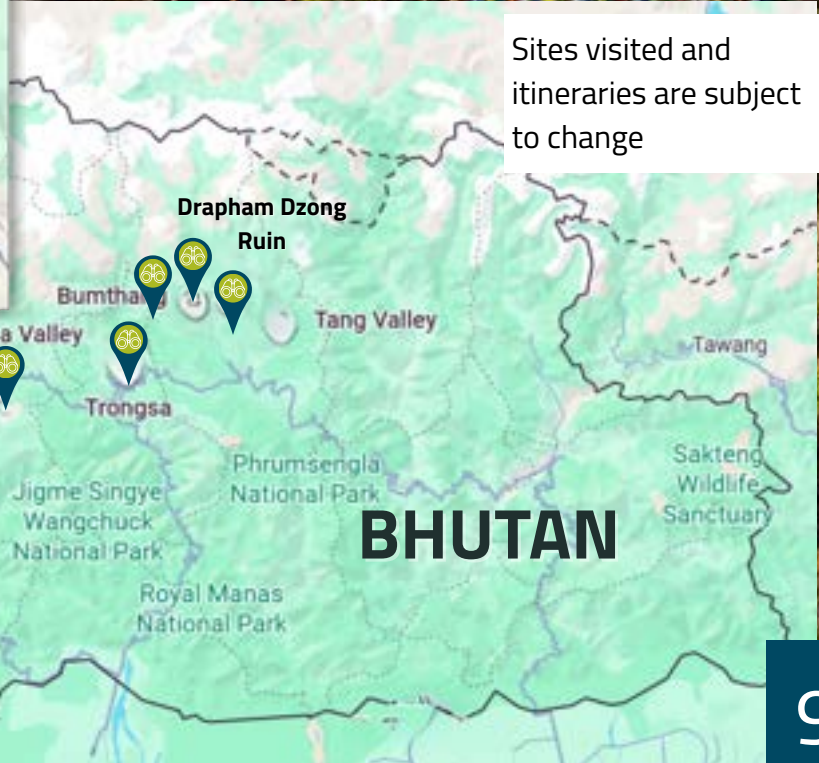
FIND A TRAVEL CLINIC IN YOUR AREA!

SFS does not require or collect details on participant vaccination status for SFS Bhutan.

SFS does not provide guidance on vaccinations and medications, and strongly recommends all participants visit a travel medicine professional before traveling abroad. These experts can provide vaccine and prophylactic medication recommendations based on your personal health history and program location. They can also offer insights into general health and safety concerns related to international travel.

- Visit [The International Society of Travel Medicine](#) (scroll down to "Global Travel Clinic Directory").
- Contact the health center on your campus to assist.

Please note the information provided here is based on departure from the U.S. There may be different recommendations for those whose point of origin is not the U.S. In this case, speak with a travel medicine professional in the country from which you will depart.



MANAGING CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS WHILE ABROAD

The rigorous nature of SFS programs and the challenges of international travel can trigger or worsen existing medical conditions (i.e., allergies, asthma, heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.), even if they are currently well-managed or in remission.

Routine Medical Care & Monitoring

SFS programs take place in remote locations where routine medical care is not available. **Routine doctor's appointments are not feasible while participating in an SFS program.** If you have a condition which has been newly diagnosed, significantly worsened or resurfaced within the past 6 months or your condition requires regular monitoring by a medical professional (daily, weekly, or monthly), SFS programs may not be suitable.

- **Mental Health services may be extremely limited or not be available at all while abroad, see pg. 11.**

Medical Disclosure & Planning

Once accepted, you must disclose all current medical conditions and ongoing care needs in your Health History Form and Student Life Survey.

This allows SFS to determine whether your program location can adequately support your health and safety needs.

If there are any changes to your medical history before departure, it is the participant's responsibility to update SFS.

Environmental Considerations

If you have a medical condition that could be affected by sun exposure, aridity, humidity, cold, or insect bites, consult with your doctor to develop a care plan suited to both your medical history and the program location.

Allergies & Asthma

Although your health may currently be well-maintained, it is possible that you react differently to new environmental allergens abroad.

Allergies: If you have allergies that result in anaphylaxis, bring two or more Epi-Pens with you. Always carry them with you, including during field trips to remote sites.

- Epi-pen prescription can be refilled at the local clinic with a valid prescription.

Asthma: Even if you have not recently needed to use medication, participants should bring your inhaler (and a back-up inhaler, as these can generally not be sourced in-country).



MENTAL WELLBEING

SFS participants live and learn in immersive, often remote environments while exploring complex global environmental issues. Daily life at the Center involves adjusting to new cultures, navigating group dynamics with peers from diverse backgrounds, and being far from familiar support systems—all of which can impact mental wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Supporting your mental wellbeing and resilience is an important part of preparing for the SFS experience and while abroad. Mental wellbeing can be influenced by unfamiliar environments, new routines, and separation from established support systems. These factors may impact how participants feel emotionally, socially, and mentally. SFS encourages all participants to reflect on their current self-care strategies and think about how those may need to shift while abroad. Taking proactive steps—such as building healthy habits, identifying sources of support, and planning for how to manage stress—can help ease the transition and support overall wellbeing in the field.



TELUS HEALTH STUDENT SUPPORT

SFS provides participants with access to TELUS Health Student Support (formerly known as MySSP), an app-based counseling service. It offers free and confidential emotional health and wellbeing support, available 24/7 when connected to Wi-Fi.

Please download the app and save the number prior to departure: My SSP. Keep in mind that internet connectivity is often limited and intermittent at SFS centers; so while this service is available, access to it will not be consistent.

SFS programs do not have onsite counselors, and access to local mental health services may be limited or unavailable. Participants should plan ahead to manage their mental wellbeing and create a realistic support plan prior to departure.

Before Departure:

- Meet with your current mental health provider(s) to review your support needs and create a care plan for your time abroad.
- Discuss whether your provider is able to offer continued support remotely (via phone, email, or video chat) while you are away.
- Explore virtual support platforms or apps that offer international access and align with your personal preferences.
- Factor in time zone differences and the likelihood of inconsistent Wi-Fi or cell service when planning to connect with support networks at home.
- Practice using self-care tools and coping strategies now that you can continue while abroad.

While Abroad:

- Focus on building resilience by embracing new experiences and challenges with curiosity and flexibility.
- Schedule time for rest and self-care, especially in a group living setting where personal space may be limited.
- Stay connected with trusted people in your life through pre-scheduled check-ins that align with your program's daily routine.
- Use grounding techniques, mindfulness practices, journaling, or other coping strategies to manage feelings of stress or isolation.
- If you need to connect with a mental health provider back home, speak with staff to request private space and access to service.





MEDICATION ACCESS & INT'L TRAVEL

Bringing medication abroad requires advance planning. Some medications that are legal in the United States are restricted or illegal in other countries.

Refilling prescriptions or finding equivalent medications abroad is often difficult or not possible. Participants should bring enough prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medication to last the entire program, including any personal travel before or after.

Students are responsible for researching the legal status of their medications in all countries they enter or transit through, as well as understanding applicable entry requirements. Students are strongly encouraged to consult a travel medicine professional well in advance of departure.

Controlled Substances & Prescription Medications

Some medications, including certain stimulants, steroids, and other controlled substances, may have additional restrictions abroad.

Before departure, confirm:

- Medication name and generic equivalent
- Legal status in your destination
- Approved dosage limits
- Documentation requirements
- Whether advance import permits are required

Important: SFS prohibits medical marijuana and THC and CBD products due to host-country laws and airline security regulations. If you currently use medical marijuana or self-regulate with THC products, consult your physician about alternative treatment options.

At Least 2 Months Before Departure

If you take **any** prescription medication and are planning to bring it with you abroad:

1. **Research** your country destination and review U.S. Department of State guidance for your destination to confirm whether your medication is legal in your host country. If needed, contact your insurance provider and/or the embassy or consulate of your host country for clarification on medication legality.
2. **Consult** your prescribing physician and/or international travel medicine professional to:
 - Identify comparable generic names
 - Document dosage and composition
 - Discuss alternative medications if needed

Do this early. If changes to your treatment plan are required, you need time to adjust safely before departure.

If Your Medication Is Restricted or Banned in Host Country

- Can you receive official approval to bring your medication?
- Is there a legal alternative medication that fits your medical needs?
- Will your insurance cover care overseas?

If you are unsure about the status of your medication, contact SFS Student Life for guidance.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WITH ADHD & PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

Certain medications commonly prescribed for ADHD (including amphetamine-based medications such as Adderall) and other psychotropic medications commonly used to treat various mental health conditions (ex. Sertraline, Fluoxetine, etc.), are banned or strictly regulated in parts of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. In some cases, these drugs are classified as narcotics.

In some countries, possession of restricted medications even with a valid U.S. prescription can result in detention or arrest. Do not assume that medications approved in the U.S. are legal in your host country.

BHUTAN

Bhutan maintains strict requirements on what medications can be carried into the country legally, banned substances, and medications that require approval.

- [Click here to learn more from the Bhutan Food & Drug Administration.](#)

THAILAND

Students clear customs and formally enter Thailand during program transit and must comply with Thai medication regulations.

- [Click here to learn more from the Thailand Food & Drug Administration.](#)

BEFORE SHIPPING MEDICATIONS ABROAD

Shipping prescription medications internationally carries significant legal risk. Medications may be delayed, confiscated, damaged, lost, or rejected due to customs restrictions. Always consult the destination country's embassy before shipment.

STORING MEDICATIONS AT SFS CENTER

- Refrigerated medications may be stored at the SFS Center in a communal refrigerator.
- If your medication must be administered by a healthcare professional, notify SFS in advance so we can help coordinate local care.

VACATION OVERRIDE LETTERS

Insurance providers often limit prescription supplies to 30 days for psychotropic medications and 90 days for other prescriptions.

If you will need a larger supply to cover your time abroad, request a "vacation override" well in advance of departure.

- [SFS Student Life](#) can assist with necessary documentation.

TIPS FOR TRAVELING WITH MEDICATIONS

- Keep medications in original containers with prescription labels.
- Ensure the label clearly identifies the prescribed individual.
- Carry medications in your carry-on luggage (never in checked baggage).
- Bring a copy of your prescription and a doctor's letter listing: *Medication name (brand and generic), Dosage, Medical necessity, Length of treatment*
- Do not mail restricted medications internationally.
 - Medications may be delayed, confiscated, damaged, lost, or rejected due to international customs restrictions
- If your medication requires refrigeration or exceeds 100mL, review airline and airport security regulations in advance.



BHUTAN HEALTH AND SAFETY

ENVIRONMENTAL READINESS

Mountain Town rooted in Religious & Cultural Traditions: Paro, Bhutan

WEATHER

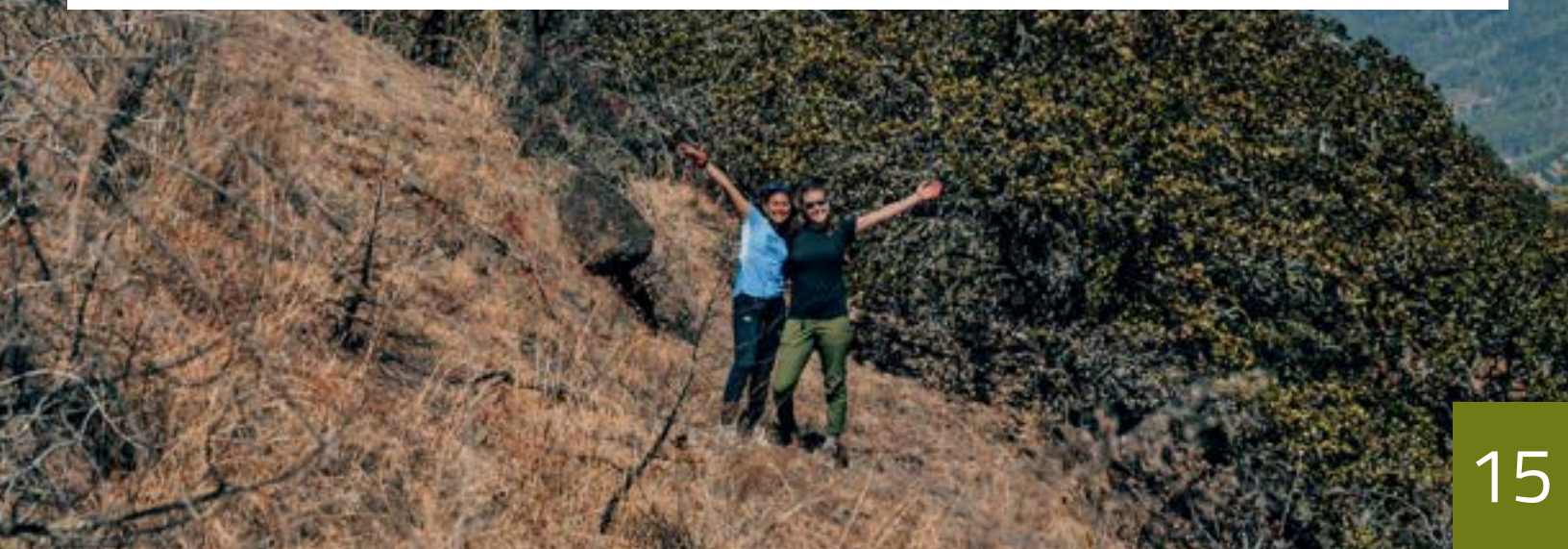
- Climate varies widely depending on elevation, so be prepared for both hotter and colder weather.
 - Participants may develop colds as temperatures change with elevation and the seasons
 - Recommended to bring your preferred cold medicine as US brands are not available locally
- All year round, sun exposure is more intense at altitude
- Autumn runs September - November; Spring runs April - June with increasing rainfall.
 - Both seasons have temperature ranges from 39-75°F.
- Winter runs December - March and brings light snow. Temperatures in Paro range from 20-54°F.
 - With a lack of centralized heating in Bhutan, it feels particularly colder during winter months.
Recommended to bring extra layers

STOMACH ADJUSTMENTS

- Upon arrival, participants commonly experience minor stomach issues (ie. irregular bowel movements or mild stomach aches) as the body adjusts to changes in diet, climate, bacteria, and exercise.
 - This is normal and usually resolves within a few days with eating balanced meals, adjusting to a new time zone, and avoiding street food
 - We recommend participants only consume water from the jugs of purified water SFS provides
 - Rice, spice, and a dairy heavy diet can often cause unforeseen bloating, constipation, and/or diarrhea
 - It is recommended for participants to bring laxatives if they have a history of constipation, as well as GasX or equivalent medicine if you have a history of heavy bloating.
 - If your stomach issues persist, check in with your on site Health and Wellness Manager for additional support!

ANIMALS

- Some animals, including stray dogs and cats, free roaming cattle, and horses, may carry fleas, mange, and sometimes rabies.
- SFS Bhutan maintains a strict NO animal touching rule as treatment for these pests can be difficult and expensive to acquire



Life at SFS Bhutan: What to Expect

At SFS Bhutan, you'll connect with fellow participants, staff, and community members who share your passion for environmental conservation and sustainability. Each cohort contributes valuable research, building upon the work of past participants and adding to the SFS legacy of scientific knowledge and positive impact.

As part of a tight-knit, community-based experience, participants from diverse backgrounds live, work, and study together in a collaborative setting. While this immersive environment is rewarding, it also means limited personal space and structured schedules. Participants must proactively carve out personal time and practice self-care to maintain balance between group activities and individual well-being.

Living & Working in Close Quarters

Living and working in close quarters with fellow participants is a core part of the SFS Bhutan experience. While this fosters a strong sense of community, it also presents challenges related to personal space, privacy, and group dynamics.

- **Shared Spaces:** You will share bedrooms with up to three other roommates and shared bathrooms.
- **Respecting Boundaries:** Understanding and respecting personal boundaries, as well as managing group dynamics, will be key to creating a positive living environment for everyone.
- **Flexibility & Adaptability:** You may need to adjust to others' living habits, personal preferences, and cultural differences to foster a supportive and inclusive community.
- **Conflict Resolution:** When conflicts arise—whether in group work, shared living spaces, or cultural misunderstandings—approach them with an open mind and a solution-oriented attitude.
- **Communicating with Staff:** The Health and Wellness Managers (HWMs) are available to support you in addressing any issues respectfully and effectively.
- **Mental Health & Stress Management:** Adjusting to a new environment, group living, and field-based learning may bring up feelings of stress, homesickness, or culture shock. Be proactive in using healthy self-care strategies and reaching out for support when needed.

Cultural Awareness & Respect

Bhutan has a rich cultural heritage influenced by Buddhist traditions. The local community, Paro, is warm and welcoming, but it's important to be mindful of customs, traditions, and social norms:

- **Respect for Local Traditions:** Approach cultural exchanges with curiosity and respect, especially when interacting with local residents.
- **Adaptability:** Be ready for unfamiliar environments and routines, including changes in diet, accommodations, homesickness, long days, and limited amenities.
- **Dress & Behavior:** While casual attire is common, modesty is expected. Dress appropriately when visiting local communities or religious services.
- **Homestays:** Required for all SFS Bhutan programs, either a brief local day or overnight stays.
 - The environment and living conditions may be austere and overwhelming to some – though past students report that the homestay is usually one of the most impactful experiences!

Independent Time & Self-Care

Field-based programs require extensive time spent with peers, so finding ways to recharge is essential. Consider how you cope with challenges, adapt to new settings, and maintain a positive attitude when faced with discomfort.



ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE



SFS maintains detailed risk assessment and management plans outlining risks and response protocols, including nearby medical facilities and their treatment capabilities. These plans ensure that staff are always aware of the best route for appropriate medical care. If a visit to a medical care facility is needed, an SFS staff member will accompany the student to the appointment.

Be aware that there may be times when access to medical care is delayed, such as on expedition. Participants are responsible for all medical costs and all incidental expenses including transportation, accommodations, etc., incurred by all parties involved. This may include costs related to COVID-19 quarantining. Some medical emergencies or conditions may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by SFS.

DISTANCES & TIMES AWAY

Access to medical care can be delayed up to 24 hours in a remote environment.

Basic Medical Care with 24/7 emergency room	5 minutes away by car from SFS Center in Paro
Advanced Medical Care	Thimpu, maximum 1.5 hours away by car from SFS center
At times, participants will be a minimum of 8 hours away from basic medical care.	
Participants must carry all life-saving medications and scheduled medications with them, including field trips.	



DIETARY NEEDS & PREFERENCES

At SFS, we do our best to support participants with food allergies and dietary needs, but it may not always be possible depending on the type of allergy, local food availability, and other factors. While we work closely with local vendors and staff to support specific needs, certain ingredients or alternatives may not be easily accessible in every location. Participants should communicate their needs in advance so SFS can help determine if the program location is a good fit.

TYPICAL DIET IN BHUTAN

- Meals commonly include rice, potatoes, legumes, meat, and steamed vegetables.
 - Local Fruits served for desert. Raw vegetables are not common.
- **Dairy and spicy chilies are common ingredients in Bhutanese cuisine!**
 - Lactaid is recommended for participants who are lactose intolerant.
- Meals are served family style and in a communal setting 3 times a day with the exception of Sundays, when there is brunch.
 - Snacks such as bread, cereal, tea, coffee, and cookies are available 24/7.
- Participants will not have access to a kitchen, but rather a shared refrigerator.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR MEDICALLY NECESSARY DIETS

- If you have a medically necessary diet or life-threatening food allergies, please contact the [Student Life Department](#) at to discuss your needs in advance.
- If you have a food allergy that requires no cross contamination, please describe your needs in as much detail as possible in your Health History Form. This information will help SFS determine if your allergen can be supported safely, and if so, how.

DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

- Vegetarians can be supported, but those with specialty diets (vegan, gluten-free, pescatarian, etc.) may struggle to find enough variety to meet their nutritional needs.
- SFS cannot guarantee that strict religious dietary practices, such as Halal or Kosher, will be accommodated.
- Bringing non-perishable snacks such as granola bars, protein bars, or trail mix is highly recommended! Many U.S. brands may not be available locally.



PHYSICAL READINESS

HIKING IN THE HIMALAYAS

Hiking in Bhutan offers an unparalleled adventure through some of the most incredible landscapes on Earth, but it also presents significant physical challenges. The rugged terrain, altitude, variable weather conditions, and long distances require a high level of fitness and endurance. Participants must be able to hike 4-7 hours at a time and carry own gear up to 20lbs.

This program is physically rigorous. Participants experience multi-day trips to remote field sites with rugged sleeping arrangements (camping conditions, platforms, bunk beds, etc.) and limited access to hot water and bathroom amenities. All participants must be cleared for full range of motion to complete required fieldwork. Please speak with your primary care doctor about potentially bringing braces if you have a history of ankle, knee, or wrist issues; sturdy braces can be more difficult to acquire locally.

Embracing the physical demands of hiking in Bhutan not only enhances personal resilience but also deepens the connection with this extraordinary environment. SFS recommends that you are reasonably fit to participate on this program. We do not require participants to be Olympic athletes, but consider that these programs require physical stamina, energy, and a positive attitude!

Participants must come ready for these hikes and should prepare well in advance for this experience. Even walking 2-3 miles a day for a few weeks with a backpack on leading up to your departure helps make the transition easier and prepares you for the field.

ALTITUDE

SFS Bhutan programs include travel to higher altitudes (generally above 8,000 feet).

- Discuss the following with your primary care doctor or a travel medicine specialist
 - physical preparedness
 - any implications considering your medical history (i.e. asthma, prior altitude-related illness, heart conditions, diabetes, etc.).
 - use of prophylactic medication
 - SFS does not make recommendations on use of prophylactic medication for altitude.
- The change in altitude throughout Bhutan can be intense! Normal physical routines will feel more challenging as your body acclimates upon arrival.
 - Staying hydrated is crucial! Dehydration can lead to dizziness, fatigue, and headaches, preventing your participation in daily activities
 - Always carry a water bottle and consider bringing electrolytes (ie. Liquid IV or Nuuns) for extra support!

MOTION SICKNESS

- Modes of transportation include cars, buses, and vans.
- Many roads in Bhutan are bumpy and winding.
- Participants are recommended to bring a personal supply of motion sickness medication.
 - Participants that experience severe motion sickness are recommended to speak with a medical professional for support and guidance pre-departure.

HIKING FAQ

HOW LONG ARE THE HIKING EXCURSIONS?

Daily field excursions can last anywhere from 4-8 hours. This includes meals, fieldwork, the hiking, and transportation.

HOW DIFFICULT IS THE HIKING?

Uneven and sometimes steep terrain, altitude, long distances, everchanging weather, and other physical elements definitely add to the difficulty of the hikes.

CAN I DO HIKING IN MY FREE TIME NEAR PARO?

On free days and the 3 day mid semester break (semester only), participants are encouraged to explore the natural wonders that aren't visited on the program.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL WE BE OUT IN THE FIELD?

Depends on the excursion whether it's overnight or multi day. Expect anywhere from 4-8 hours.

DO I NEED HIKING BOOTS?

You should wear what you are the most comfortable in and can withstand the weather. Bhutan weather varies, even over the course of a day, and it's essential to keep your feet warm and dry all day.

DO I NEED TREKKING POLES?

It's up to you! Hikes range in length and terrain, but most are manageable without.

WHAT'S A FOOT KIT?

Band-aids, athletic tape, baby powder, antibiotic cream, nail clippers, you name it! Whatever first aid materials you need in the field to treat hot spots and blisters.

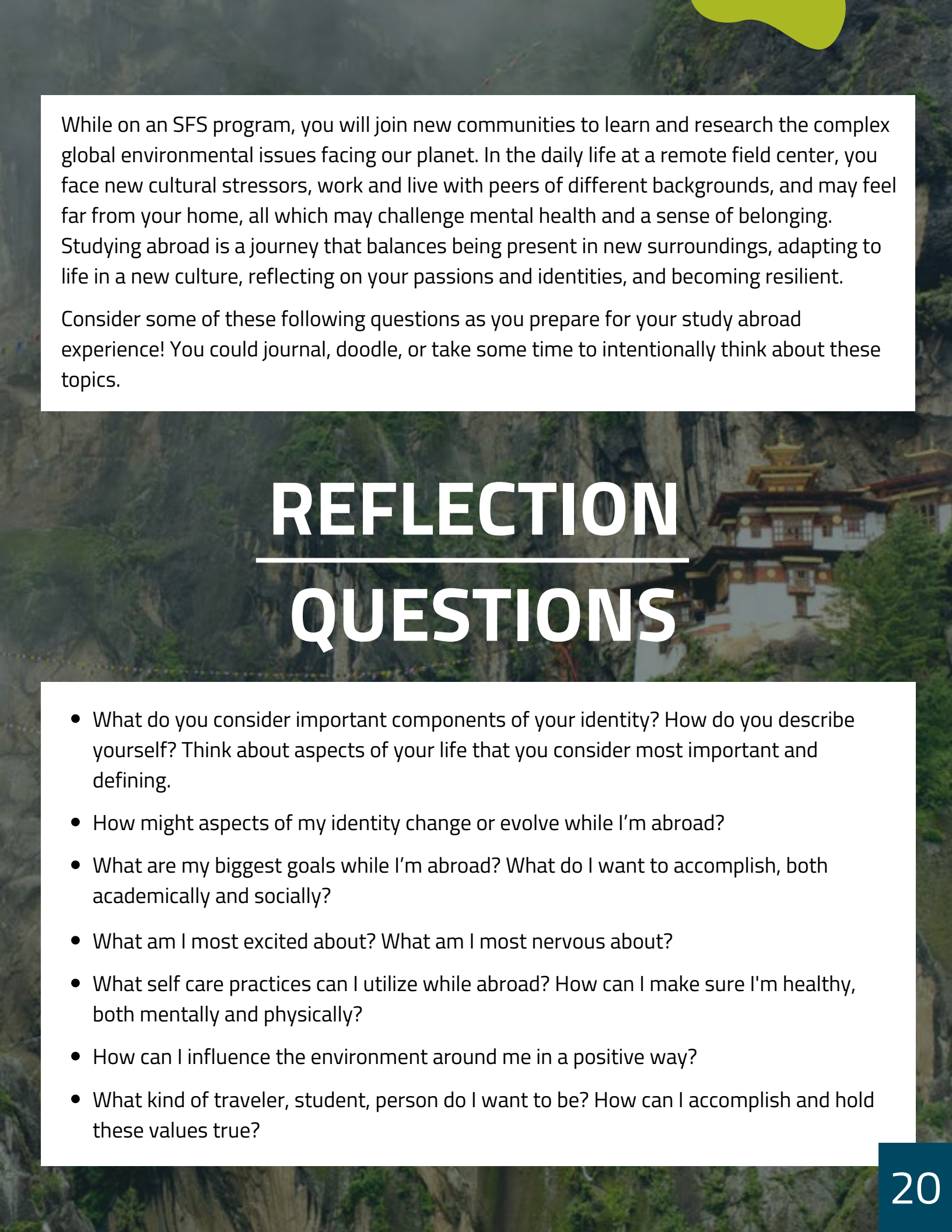
WHAT TYPE OF BACKPACK SHOULD I BRING?

Hip and chest straps and space for water are a must. Carrying 3 days worth of clothes and gear for academics will leave you at a 21-35L bag.



Participant Thoughts

- "Break in your shoes before you get there."
- "The hikes are stunning!"
- "I did, in fact, experience rain, snow, wind, and sunshine all in one day."
- "Layers...so many layers."
- "Rain covers are so worth it."
- "Trekking poles saved my knees."
- "Give yourself 30 minutes extra before the hike to tape up your feet."
- "Baby wipes are a god send."



While on an SFS program, you will join new communities to learn and research the complex global environmental issues facing our planet. In the daily life at a remote field center, you face new cultural stressors, work and live with peers of different backgrounds, and may feel far from your home, all which may challenge mental health and a sense of belonging. Studying abroad is a journey that balances being present in new surroundings, adapting to life in a new culture, reflecting on your passions and identities, and becoming resilient.

Consider some of these following questions as you prepare for your study abroad experience! You could journal, doodle, or take some time to intentionally think about these topics.

REFLECTION

QUESTIONS

- What do you consider important components of your identity? How do you describe yourself? Think about aspects of your life that you consider most important and defining.
- How might aspects of my identity change or evolve while I'm abroad?
- What are my biggest goals while I'm abroad? What do I want to accomplish, both academically and socially?
- What am I most excited about? What am I most nervous about?
- What self care practices can I utilize while abroad? How can I make sure I'm healthy, both mentally and physically?
- How can I influence the environment around me in a positive way?
- What kind of traveler, student, person do I want to be? How can I accomplish and hold these values true?



RESOURCE LIST

THROUGH SFS

- [Billing Information](#)
- [SFS LGBTQ+ Guide](#)
- [SFS Bhutan Homepage](#)
- Student Resource Folder
- [SFS Bhutan Field Guide](#)
 - Packing List + Financial Planner
- [SFS Academic Handbook \(2024\)](#)
- [SFS Policies & Procedures \(2023\)](#)

EXTERNAL LINKS

- [US State Department: Bhutan](#)
- [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)
- [Telus Health Student Support](#)
- [Center of Disease Control: Bhutan](#)



CONTACT SFS

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Questions about health and safety? StudentLife@fieldstudies.org

General Health & Safety, medical paperwork, immunizations, managing medical conditions, and dietary needs and preferences.

Questions about admissions or enrollment? Admissions@fieldstudies.org

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

Questions about billing? Billing@fieldstudies.org

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

Questions about academics? Academics@fieldstudies.org

Learning accommodations, syllabi, and directed research.