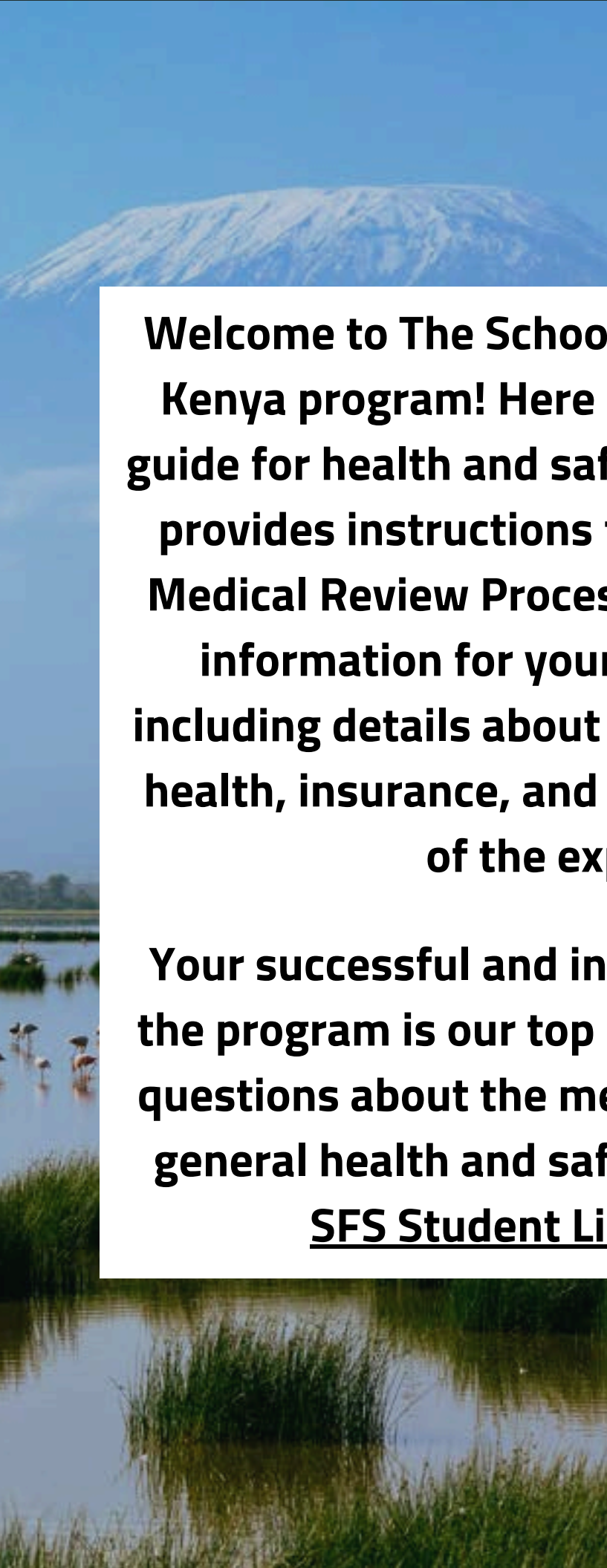




# KENYA

## HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDE



**Welcome to The School for Field Studies (SFS) Kenya 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 Kenya for the full duration of the program.

# SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL PAPERWORK



## Life Saving Medication

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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

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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

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



## Medical Specialist Form

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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 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**

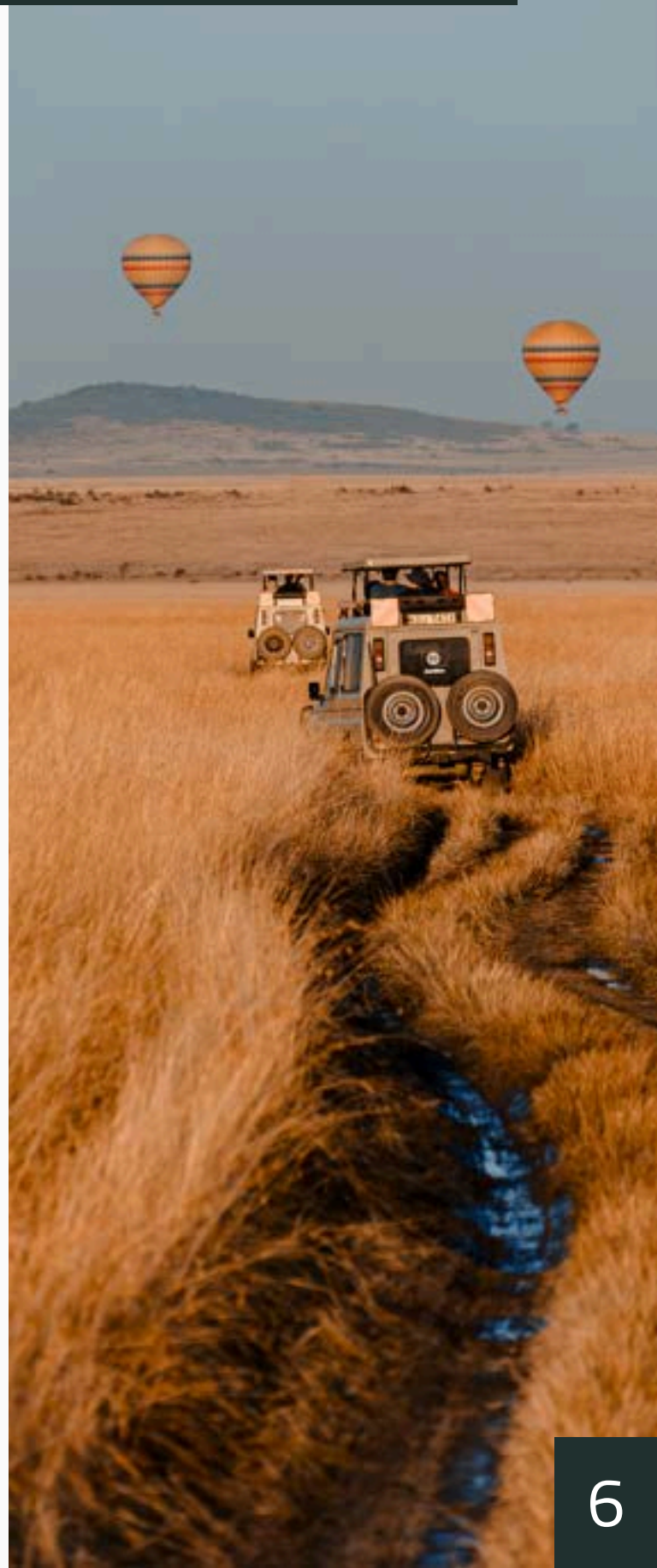
- If you are participating in two consecutive sessions in different locations (e.g., Summer 1 & Summer 2, or Summer 1 & Fall), you must submit separate medical documents for each location.
- However, the Health History Form only needs to be submitted once.

## **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.**





**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 the country (or countries) where your SFS program is based
3. Be valid 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 - \$5,000 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

## REQUIRED: Yellow Fever Vaccination & Malaria Prophylaxis

### RECOMMENDED 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: Kenya](#)
- [CDC Traveler's Health: Rwanda](#)
- [NaTHNaC: Kenya](#)
- [NaTHNaC: Rwanda](#)
- [Canada Traveler's Health: Kenya](#)
- [Canada Traveler's Health: Rwanda](#)

**SFS does not provide guidance on additional vaccinations and medications, and strongly recommends all participants visit a travel medicine professional before traveling abroad.** These specialists 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.

### FIND A TRAVEL CLINIC IN YOUR AREA

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

*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.*

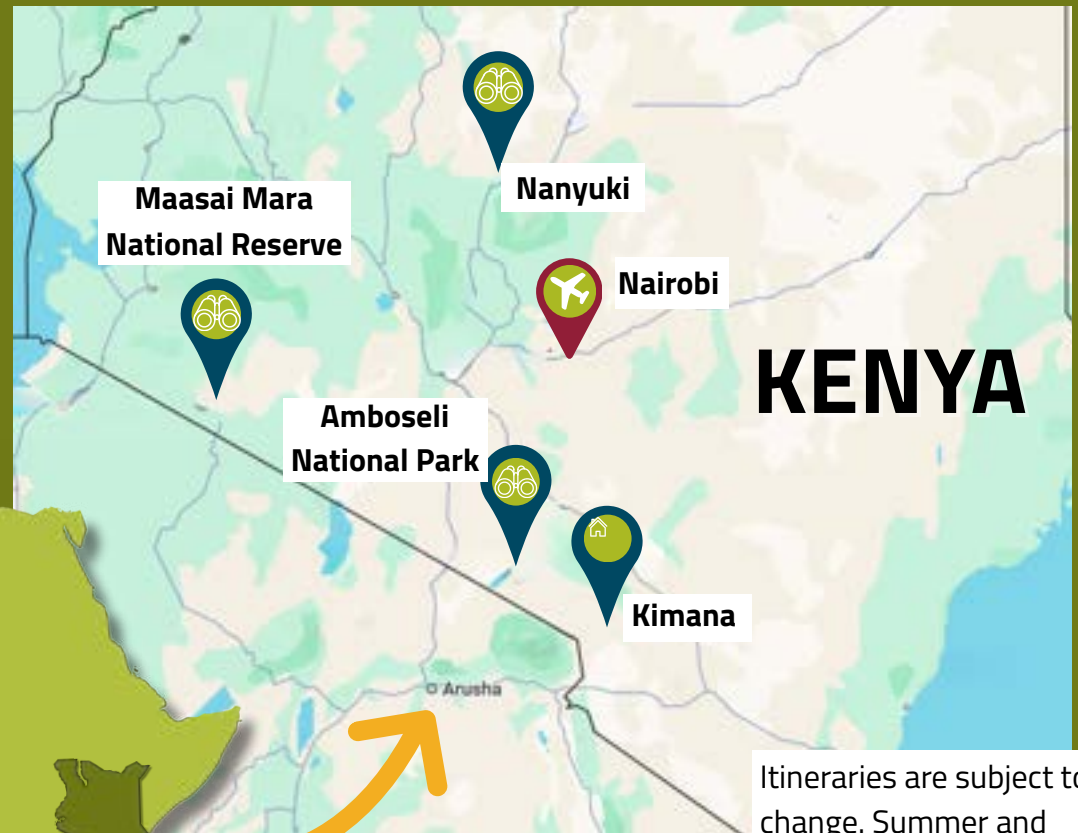
### MALARIA PROPHYLAXIS

- Participants are responsible for obtaining a prescription for malaria prophylaxis before departure for the entire duration of the program. It may not be possible to obtain this medication once abroad.
- There are different types of malaria prophylaxis, and one may be recommended for certain locations over another. For additional questions, SFS recommends all participants consult with a medical professional.
- Malaria prophylaxis typically requires a certain number of doses before, during, and after potential exposure.

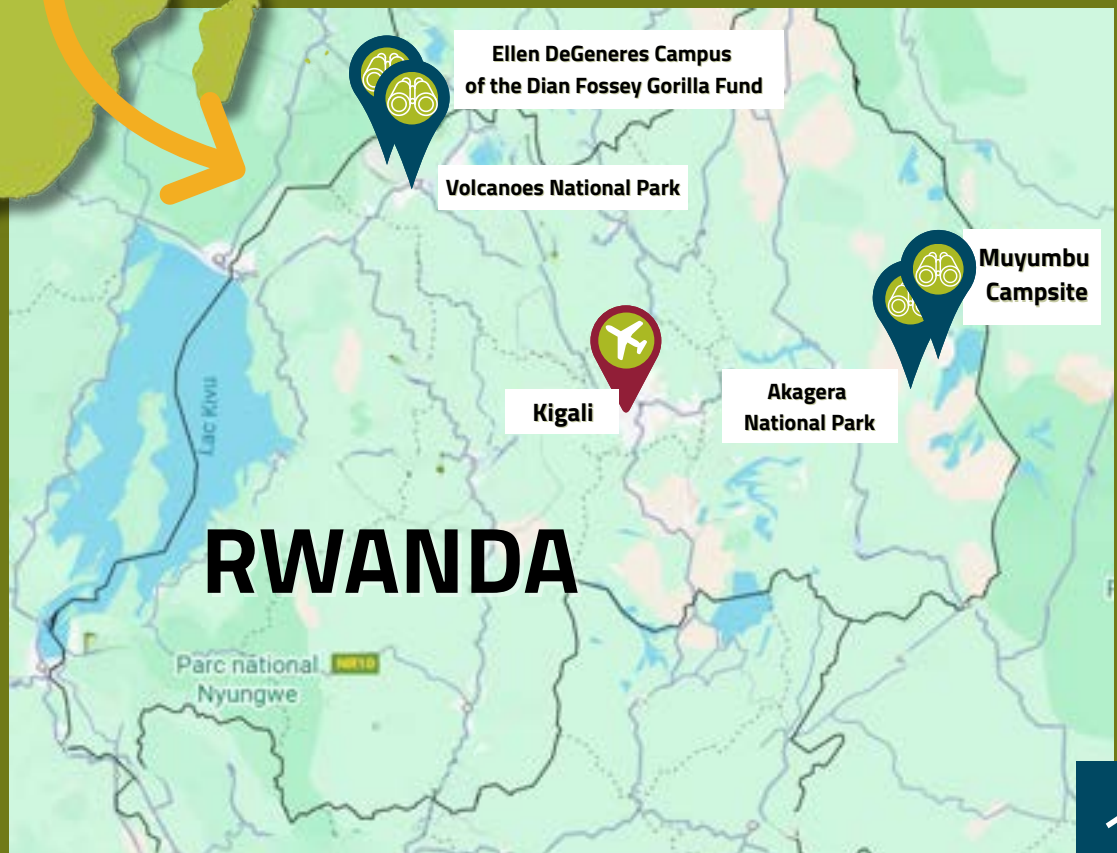
### YELLOW FEVER VACCINE

- Participants must have received the Yellow Fever vaccine at minimum of 10 days before travel to a region where yellow fever is present or required to achieve full immunity against the virus.
- If you have a medical condition or take a prescription medication that prevents you from receiving the vaccine, you may seek a medical exemption for the SFS requirement.
  - Please reach out to The [Student Life Department](#) while applying.

# TRAVEL MEDICINE: MAPS



Itineraries are subject to change. Summer and semester itineraries differ in site visits.



# 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.

## 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.

### While 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.
- **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).
  - Participants with any history of moderate to severe sensitivities to dust should inform SFS of your needs in as much detail as possible. Dusty conditions are prevalent in Tanzania and are an inherent part of fieldwork and expeditions. While dust cannot be avoided, individuals can employ self-coping strategies to manage and mitigate their impact. Participants with severe allergies to dust may find this environment challenging.



# 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 ACCESSIBILITY ABROAD

Participants are recommended to bring enough over the counter (OTC) and prescription medication (including any prophylactic medication recommended by your doctors) to last the entire duration of the program. This also applies to any personal travel that may be done before or after the program. Filling existing prescriptions or finding replacement medication - including common OTC medication - is often not possible abroad.

## Changes in Medications?

- List all medications in your Health History Form and alert SFS to any changes, including dosage, as early as possible.
- Consult with your doctor(s) and/or insurance company to confirm your medications' availability while abroad.
- It is recommended to adjust medications 4-6 weeks before the program start date, should your medication(s) not be available in country.

## Before Mailing Medications...

- Conduct thorough research and seek official guidance to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. (Mobility International USA).
  - Shipping prescription medications internationally is fraught with legal challenges and potential risks.
- If you must, consult with the embassy or consulate of the destination country before attempting to ship prescription medications. They can provide the most accurate and up-to-date information regarding the legality and any restrictions on such shipments.
- **Be wary as it may be delayed, damaged, or lost.**

## Vacation Override Letters

- Insurance companies do not typically dispense more than a one-month supply of psychotropic medication or a three-month supply of other medication.
- Work **early** with your prescribing physician and insurance provider to request a "Vacation Override" for prescriptions of more than 100 days.
- Insurance companies may request a letter to verify the program and time abroad. Please contact the [Student Life Department](#) for assistance.

## Traveling with Medications?

- Medications that need to be refrigerated or larger than 100mL: Review [Transportation Security Administration: Traveling with Medications](#)
- Keep all medications in the original container with prescription information and in carry-on luggage to avoid issues with customs when entering the host country.
  - Additionally, it is advisable to travel with a doctor's letter stating your medications and the duration of your program.

## Controlled Substances

- Controlled substances and steroid medication may have additional restrictions in your host country.
  - Recommendation: Speak with the prescribing physicians and insurance provider **early** to check:
    - name and availability abroad
    - prescribed quantities/dosages
    - if it requires tests or prescription from a local specialist.
- SFS prohibits Medical Marijuana and some types of Cannabidiol (CBD) oil due to host-country laws and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Transport Security Administration (TSA) restrictions.
  - If you currently use medical marijuana, discuss alternative options with your physician.

## Refrigerated Medications?

- Medications that need refrigeration can be stored at the SFS Center in a communal fridge.
- If you have a medication that needs to be administered by a medical professional, contact SFS to get these appointments scheduled while abroad!



## KENYA HEALTH AND SAFETY

# ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

## WEATHER

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- Located in Southern Kenya, participants will be exposed to high heat, an arid climate, and dust.
- Average temperatures vary from 50-80°F
  - Prepare for cooler weather than expected by packing lots of layers!
  - With long exposed periods in the sun, sunscreen is SUPER important! Past participants have experienced sun burn more easily.
  - Southern Kenya is VERY dusty. See Physical Readiness page for more information

### Tips for adjusting to the climate:

- Stay hydrated! Potable water always provided.
- Wear proper gear to protect you from long exposed periods of rain, dust, and sun.
  - Light, loose-fitting clothes made from breathable fabrics like cotton, hats and sunscreen!
  - Wear protective gear like N95 masks, bandanas, or hats. Keep baby wipes on hand to wipe off dust at camp

## BIOLOGICAL RISKS

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### Regional Illness:

- Potential exposure to regional illnesses such as malaria and yellow fever
  - See Travel Medicine Page for more information

### Wildlife in Kimana & SFS Center:

- Biting and stinging plants, mosquitos, snakes, spiders, rats, insects, scorpions, etc.
  - Mosquito nets are provided at the center and at most accommodations during, but while camping, we do not have them in the tents.
  - **Participants with any fear of spiders, snakes, or bugs should speak with SFS Student Life before applying**
- Lions, cheetahs, hippos, rhinos, and many other mammals are frequently seen from the Safari Jeep on expedition.
  - Hyenas, zebras, elephants, lions, gazelles, and wildebeest can come near campus; **therefore, SFS Kenya maintains a 6:30PM curfew on campus**
- Environmental exposure to animals and plants can bring unwanted skin or physical reactions (such as burning or stinging sensation).
- Consider bringing sleeping aids like an eye mask or earplugs to adjust!
  - Immersion into nature can lead to the exposure of high levels of noise from animals and insects, a potential sensory overload from the diverse ecosystem!

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Bites from local fauna can be extremely dangerous and life-threatening. Participants are advised to inform a staff member and seek immediate medical attention.
- Always wear long sleeves, pants, and sturdy footwear to minimize skin exposure.
- Avoid brushing up against unfamiliar vegetation and stay on established trails.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET, especially dawn and dusk when Tanzanian wildlife is most active
- Inspect your surroundings before sitting or lying down.
- Avoid walking in tall grass or dense vegetation, and wear protective footwear.
- Never handle wildlife, as toxins released from bristle-like hairs or skin can be harmful.
- Always wash hands thoroughly after exposure!

# Life at SFS Kenya: What to Expect

While on program, 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 Kenya 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 five other roommates and communal 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

Kenya and Rwanda have rich cultural heritages influenced by diverse communities and African, Arab, and European traditions. The local community 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 Kenya programs, either involving 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 | 30 minutes away by car from SFS Center |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------|

|                       |                                                       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Advanced Medical Care | Nairobi, Kenya<br>4 hours away by car from SFS Center |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|

At times, participants will be a minimum of 6 hours away from basic medical care.

Participants must carry all life-saving medications and scheduled medications with them, including field trips.\*

\*All applicable to Rwanda excursion on semester program



## RWANDA EXCURSION

|                    |                                          |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Basic Medical Care | 20 minutes away from Dian Fossey Campus. |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------|

At times, participants will be a minimum of 4 hours away from medical care.

Severe or critical medical emergencies may require an air evacuation to Kigali, Rwanda.

At times, participants will be a minimum of 4 hours away from medical care.



# 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 KENYA

- Meals commonly include rice, chapatti (unleavened bread), ugali (corn flour dough), pasta, protein, raw and/or roasted vegetables, and local fruit.
  - Local cuisine is heavy with carbohydrates, meat (goat and lamb), and oil.
  - Ingredient substitutes for peanuts, maize, and various spices may be limited.
- Meals are served family style and in a communal setting 3 times a day.

## RWANDA EXCURSION

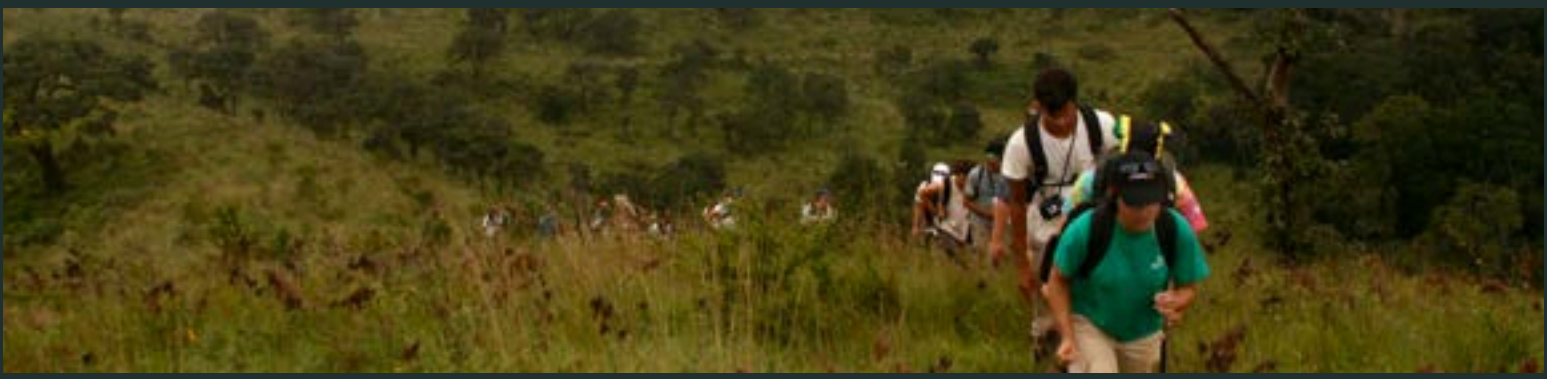
- Local cuisine is very heavy in carbohydrates (ie. Cassava and corn flour) and oil.
- Rwandese food often includes milk and/or peanut paste.
  - Cross-contamination allergies can be hard to monitor when eating off-campus.
- Participants have access to kitchenette to brew coffee or tea, but will not be able to make their own meals

## DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

- Vegetarians can be supported; additional specialty diets (vegan, gluten free, pescatarian, etc.), may find it difficult to have variety to meet nutritional needs
- SFS cannot guarantee that strict religious dietary practices, such as Halal or Kosher, will be accommodated.
- Participants do not have access to a kitchen, but rather a shared refrigerator, microwave and toaster.
- Grocery stores in Kimana sell a limited variety of US products and/or alternative snacks at an elevated price.
  - Bringing non-perishable snacks such as granola bars, protein bars, or trail mix is highly recommended!

## 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.



# PHYSICAL READINESS

## FIELD WORK

- Fieldwork activities include wildlife tracking, game drives, short walks and hikes on uneven terrain, and remote field research.
  - Many campsites are rustic and lack standard amenities like running water or electricity.
- During directed research, participants are on their feet anywhere between 5-6 hours per day for 3-5 days in a row, participating in household surveys or transects.
- Any previous or current condition or injury, specifically to the neck, spine and lower extremities, may find riding around in the safari vehicles to be extremely uncomfortable.

## MANAGING THE DUST

- Dry seasons from May to October and December to March
  - During the dry seasons (May to October and again December to March), dust is extremely common, making the air feel dry and hazy.
  - The rainy seasons, short lived and typically occurring from March-April and again from October-November, bring some relief, but the dust can still persist.
  - Dust can easily get into your face while driving through the countryside
    - If you're allergic to dust or pollen, be aware that the dust is unavoidable and accumulates quickly on clothes and personal belongings in the field
      - Make sure to bring any necessary medications, like antihistamines, to manage your symptoms.

## RWANDA (Semester): HIKING AND ALTITUDE

- Participants go on gorilla tracking through uncharted terrain to higher altitudes (up to 13,000 ft.)
  - Discuss use of prophylactic medication, as SFS does not make recommendations on use of these medications
- It is highly recommended that participants come in with a baseline of physical fitness and can hike for 3 hours without stopping. Accessibility for those with mobility impairments may be limited.
  - Review any implications considering your personal health profile (i.e. asthma, prior altitude-related illness, heart conditions, diabetes, etc.), with your primary care doctor or a travel medicine specialist.

## MOTION SICKNESS

- Travel in safari jeeps and many roads in Kenya is 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.

# CAMPING FAQ

## How long will I be camping for on program?

- **Semester:** Approximately 20-24 days
  - For about 14 days, Students will be camping in tents, with laundry facilities available at the campsites.
- **Summer:** 6-9 days.
  - Note: this is subject to change based on logistics).

## What are the amenities like at the camping sites?

- Students will be camping in tents, with laundry facilities available at the campsites.
- Western Style Toilets are available at campsites
- Showers will be accessible throughout the trip, although hot water may not always be guaranteed.
- There may be electricity at the campsites. Bring a power bank and a headlamp or flashlight.
- While some campsites may offer WiFi, it is not guaranteed. If available, the connection may be slow, so students should be prepared to spend more time offline than usual.

## Should students bring snacks from camp?

- The cooking staff from the SFS Kenya center will join the cohort when traveling away from center. All meals will be included on expedition unless there is a day off
- Protein and power bars are handy; other snacks can be purchased at supermarkets during stops.

## Are the campsites located in a national park?\*

- No, but they are close to some study sites.

## How much cash should I bring?

- This depends on personal spending habits. Generally, have cash for about 5 days of activities, souvenirs, and potential hospital visits. Keep at least a \$100 note for the second part of the expedition.

## Pro Tips from Students and Staff

- Ensure you have all necessary gear according to the packing list, as you will be traveling for roughly 23 days.
- The weather varies at each site, so pack extra layers for colder temperatures and lighter clothing for warmer days. An additional blanket is also recommended for camping!
- Invest in a sleeping pad for comfort and a sleeping bag to keep you warm.
- Students travel on land cruisers with their day pack, bring what you need for the day!
  - Always be prepared for inclement weather!
- Consider bringing a smaller duffel bag!
- Maintaining good hand hygiene throughout the trip and consuming thoroughly cooked food while avoiding raw vegetables and fresh juices at every stop will help reduce the risk of stomach issues.
- Recommended dishware-A travel mug and a metallic tupperware container with compartments for easy cleaning, but availability in the U.S. may vary.
- Bring two insulated water bottles. It gets hot in the middle of the national park where you cannot get out of the car to refill your water bottles. Refilling water is carried in big jerrycans behind the cars!

# RWANDA 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?

Gorilla trekking involves hiking in a tropical forest with no trails, uneven terrain, high altitude, mud and long distances exposed to sun or rain. The presence of stinging nettle makes it difficult to navigate. The physical elements can be just as trying as the actual hiking itself. Having the right gear and attitude makes a whole lot of difference.

## CAN I DO HIKING IN MY FREE TIME?

On free days, 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?

Some field exercises, hikes including gorilla trekking, will require you to have comfortable waterproof hiking boots. You will also need knee-length gaiters.

## DO I NEED TREKKING POLES?

Hikes range in length and terrain, but most are manageable without. The only hike you might need is during Gorilla trekking but they are provided at the beginning of each hike for a fee.

## WHAT'S A FOOT KIT?

Bandaids, 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

- *"Having broken-in hiking boots with good water resistance will make your life easier"*
- *"While some of the hikes can be challenging at times, the SFS staff is very supportive and dedicates time breaks"*
- *"You will enjoy the hikes more if you have the ability to do some cardio or strength training the month leading up to the program"*
- *"The hikes are the highlight of this program!"*

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

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

## EXTERNAL LINKS

- US State Department
  - [Kenya & Rwanda](#)
- [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)
- [Telus Health Student Support](#)
- US Embassy Websites
  - [Kenya & Rwanda](#)
- Center of Disease Control
  - [Kenya & Rwanda](#)



# CONTACT SFS

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

**Questions about health and safety?** [StudentLife@fieldstudies.org](mailto: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](mailto:Admissions@fieldstudies.org)

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

**Questions about billing?** [Billing@fieldstudies.org](mailto:Billing@fieldstudies.org)

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

**Questions about academics?** [Academics@fieldstudies.org](mailto:Academics@fieldstudies.org)

Learning accommodations, syllabi, and directed research.