

THE SCHOOL FOR FIELD STUDIES



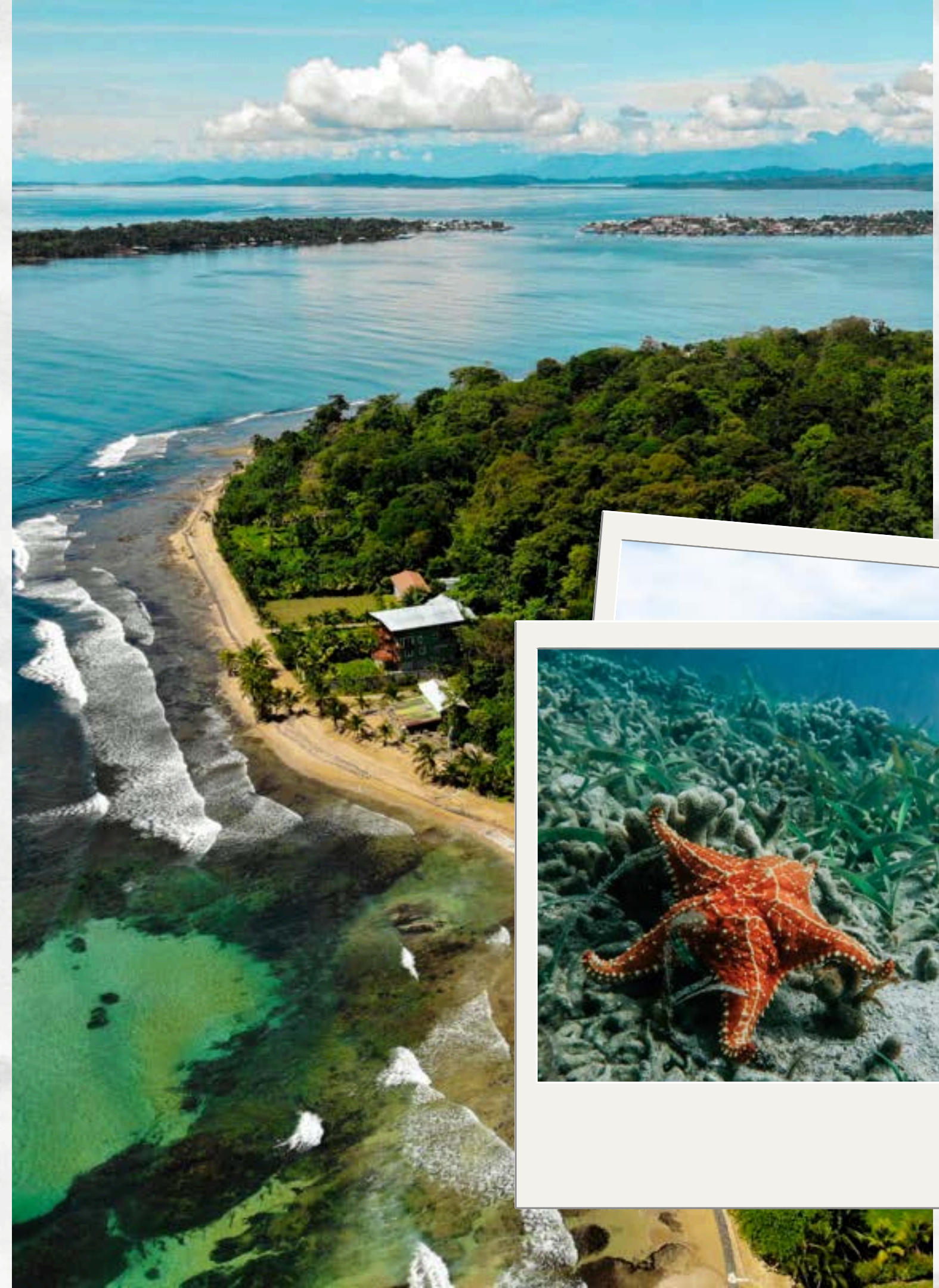
PANAMA

A GUIDE TO PREPARE FOR YOUR
SFS PROGRAM

ADMISSIONS
DEPARTMENT

AGENDA

- INFORMATION ABOUT PANAMA
- LIFE ON PROGRAM
- PACKING
- HEALTH & SAFETY
- TRAVEL & NEXT STEPS
- CONTACT US





PANAMA

LOCAL CULTURE

LANGUAGE

Spanish is official language
13+ other languages spoken

RELIGION

Christian (94%) Largest Jewish population in
Central America

LGBTQIA+

Same-sex relationships legal
Bocas is largely accepting of different identities
Panama as a whole may be discriminatory
Gendered language



AN OPEN MIND IS KEY

- You chose to study abroad and embrace a new culture, both for its positives and negatives.
- You may feel frustration, but it is important to keep a positive mindset.
- You are not here to judge or change, but rather to learn and experience.



The background image shows a coastal village with several multi-story houses built on stilts over the water. The houses have colorful roofs, including red, yellow, and blue. A small boat with a red and white hull is visible in the water in the foreground. The sky is blue with some clouds, and the water is a deep blue with gentle ripples.

LIFE ON PROGRAM

HOUSING, SCHEDULE & FOOD

FIELD STATION

CAMPUS

- Based on Isla Colon, this compact campus across from the ocean is just 2.5 miles from town.

HOUSING

- 5 rooms. 4-6 students per room in twin-sized bunk beds. En suite bathrooms. AC unit/fan in each room.
- Laundry washed once a week.

AMENITIES + MORE

- Outdoor areas for lounging or studying, a pool, paddleboards, kayaks and the ocean!

COMMUNITY LIVING

- Community living requires compromise and teamwork. You will work, eat, and relax together; personal time is extremely limited. Chore rotations will be assigned once on program.

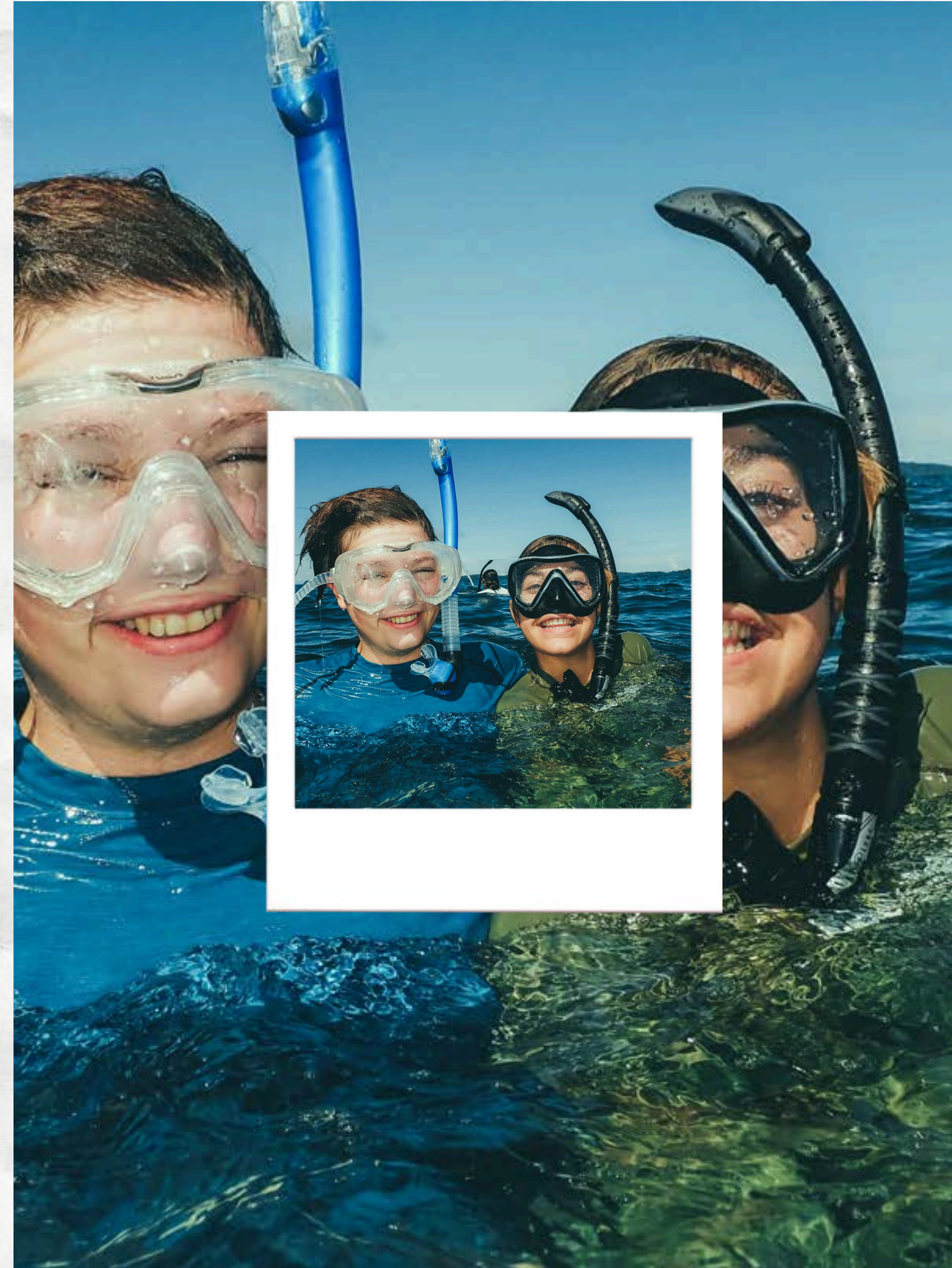
THE CENTER FOR TROPICAL ISLAND BIODIVERSITY STUDIES



CLASSROOM STANDARD

- Not an "easy A"
- Our coursework and research impact the community
- Grades must be earned

Schedule is high-intensity. Manage your time efficiently and use your days off to recharge. Use the utmost level of respect in your interactions with staff.



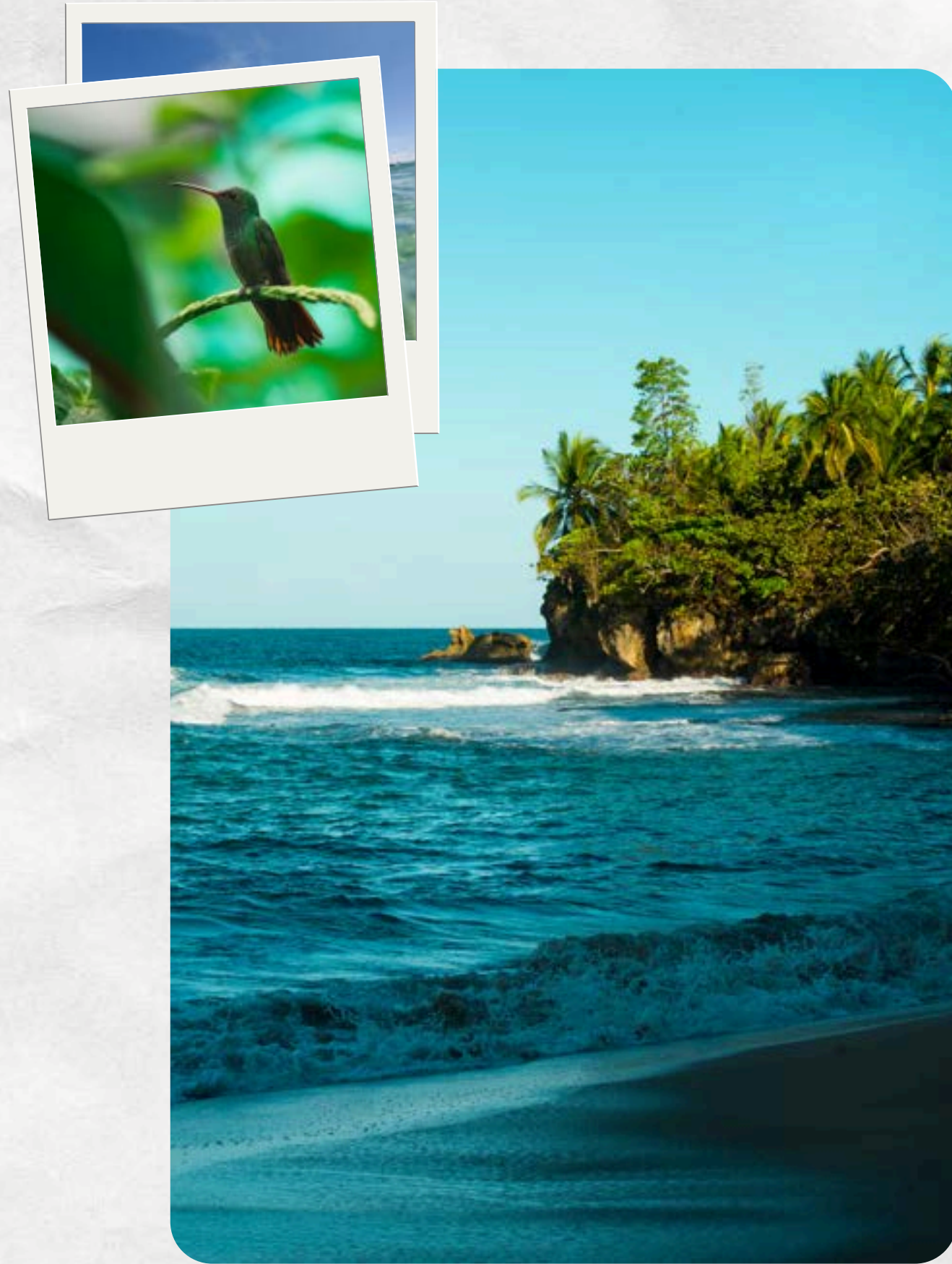
DAY IN THE LIFE



- Days are **highly structured**
- Typically, 7am - 6:30pm, with free time in the evening
- Some days are 100% in the field, while others are 100% classroom time
- Expect over half of your program time to be spent covering classroom-based theory
- All activities are mandatory- including group meals!
- We work around our partners, weather, and other circumstances, so you should expect the schedule to always be changing. It's important to have flexibility and a positive mindset!

PROGRAM POLICIES

- ✓ **Curfew enforced**
- ✓ **No smoking on campus (no e-cig)**
- ✓ **No non-SFS guests without staff approval**
- ✓ **Sign out and buddy system**
- ✓ **No cannabis products (*)**

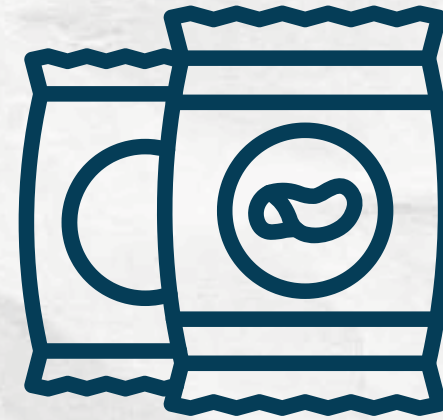


(*) This includes medical marijuana and some types of CBD oil - contact Student Life before bringing any CBD products

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?



MEALS



SNACKS



FRESH WATER

Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner Example: Rice, beans, vegetables, plantains, fruit, and meat

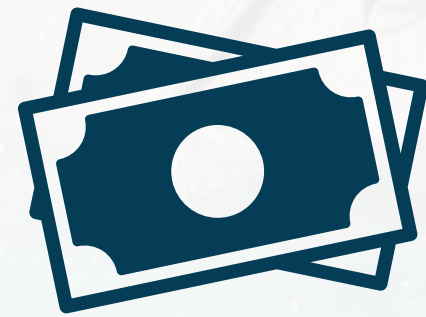
On Sundays, students can choose to cook in the student kitchen or eat out in town

SFS can support most dietary needs, but the variety of food will be extremely limited based on local availability and cost



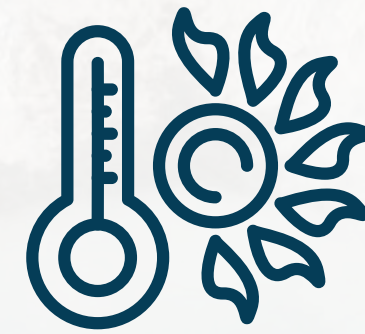
PACKING

WHAT SHOULD YOU BRING



CURRENCY

- US dollars (USD) or Panamanian Balboa (PAB)
- Cash widely used (small bills!)
- ATM access + Credit Card
- Notify your bank



CLIMATE

- Tropical and humid year round
- Average temp: 75° - 90°F
- Rainy seasons: June–August and December–February (rain can still occur during the dry season)

WHAT YOU SHOULD **BRING**

Please do read your **field guide** for an itemized look!



CLOTHING

TOILETRIES + MEDICATION



FIELD GEAR



ROOM NECESSITIES

FOR CLASSROOM



PACKING CONSIDERATIONS

COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

Please refrain from using
crop-tops or
shorts/skirts/dresses with
less than a 3-inch inseam.

You may also wish to bring
hair care products to
protect your hair during
ocean activities.

TECHNOLOGY

Laptop with USB port
MS Office (or equivalent).

Electronics Protection
110V (no converter needed)
Bring a 3-prong-to-2-prong
adapter.

Unreliable Internet
Download podcasts, music,
movies, + more.

LUGGAGE

SFS has no luggage
limitations, although your
airline(s) might!

You will be responsible for
transporting your own
luggage.

A tropical beach scene with turquoise water, a sandy shore, and a dense line of palm trees under a blue sky with white clouds.

HEALTH & SAFETY

MEDICAL CARE & MEDICAL REVIEW



ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

- ✓ Sunburn, dehydration, etc.
- ✓ Snakes, jelly fish, monkeys, sea urchins, etc.
- ✓ Drowning and other water hazards
- ✓ Infections and Insect borne diseases
- ✓ Stray dogs

MEDICAL CARE IN COUNTRY

BASIC MEDICAL

Center is 15 minutes away from clinic in Bocas del Toro.

ADVANCED MEDICAL

Advanced medical care is 2 hours away by water taxi and car in Changuinola; more advanced care is 4 hours away in David.

ROUTINE VISITS

Routine medical visits are not feasible while on program.

MENTAL HEALTH

Scheduled telehealth appointments with mental health providers may not be feasible.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES & OUTBREAKS

SFS follows CDC and host-country **health guidelines**. Entry and pre-departure health requirements vary by country and may change based on current outbreaks. Students should review current travel and health guidance before departure, and SFS will notify students of any major updates.

Students who test positive for, or develop symptoms of, communicable illnesses may need to isolate. Close contacts may be asked to test or monitor for symptoms. Because supplies may be limited locally, students are encouraged to bring rapid tests and high-quality masks.

Students **are responsible** for any medical or isolation-related costs incurred abroad and should confirm, before traveling, that their international health insurance covers communicable diseases.



MEDICAL REVIEW



Complete your medical paperwork within 6 months of departure & before the due date



Schedule medical appointments in advance. SFS recommends consulting with a travel clinic in addition to your primary care physician



No student is permitted to participate on an SFS program until medical review has been completed



Obtain prescription medication prior to your departure



A photograph of three people, two women and one man, standing in a lush green forest. They are all wearing bright red raincoats with hoods pulled up over their heads. They are smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees. The overall mood is cheerful and adventurous.

NEXT STEPS

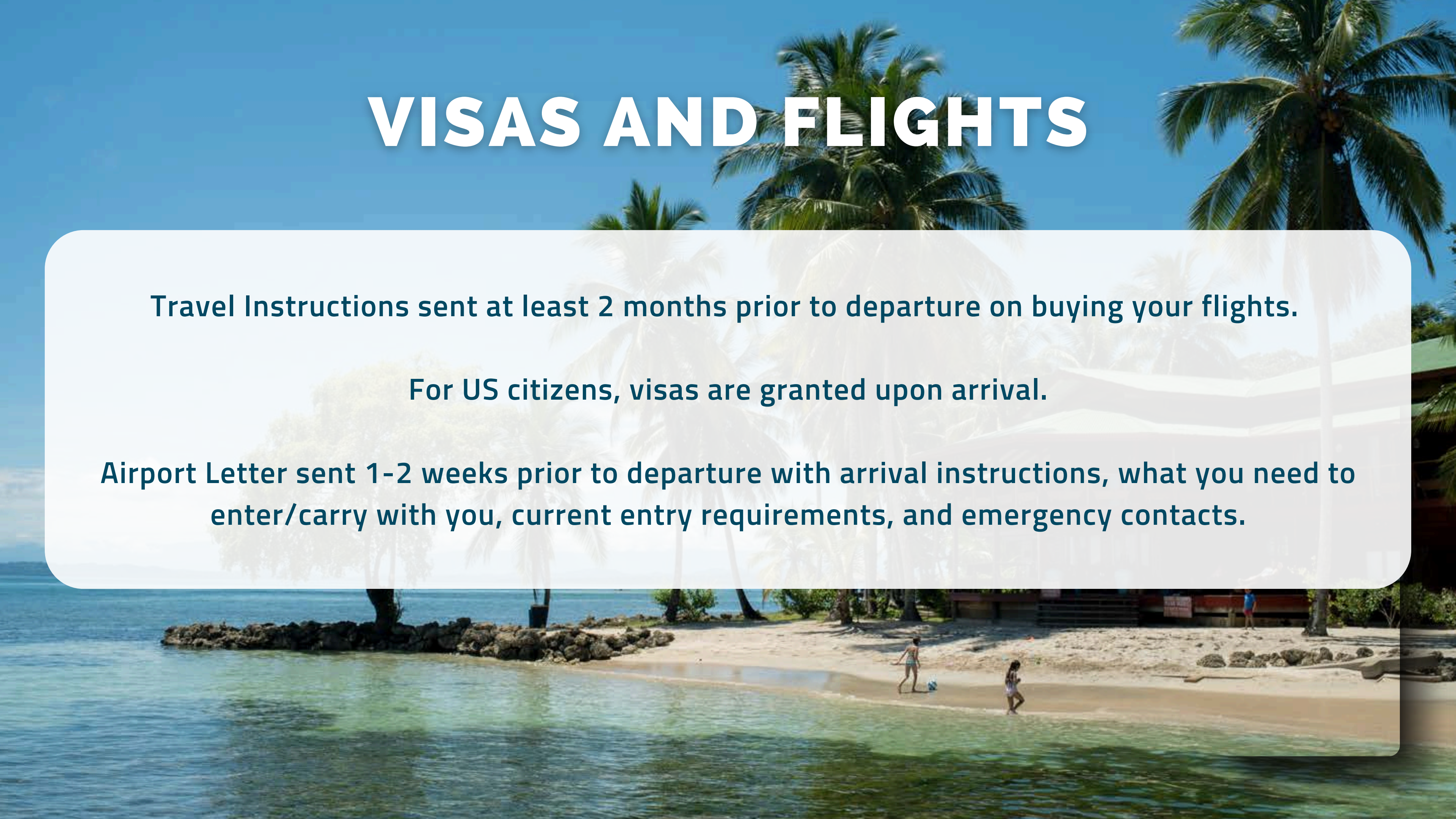
VISAS, FLIGHTS, & PAPERWORK

VISAS AND FLIGHTS

Travel Instructions sent at least 2 months prior to departure on buying your flights.

For US citizens, visas are granted upon arrival.

Airport Letter sent 1-2 weeks prior to departure with arrival instructions, what you need to enter/carry with you, current entry requirements, and emergency contacts.



AT THE AIRPORT



CUSTOMS & IMMIGRATION

Have your passport ready!

LUGGAGE

Afterwards, collect your luggage and leave the security area.

FINDING SFS

Find the designated meeting spot and look for SFS signs!

WAITING FOR OTHERS

You will need to wait for the rest of your cohort to arrive before heading to the center.

NEXT STEPS

TRAVEL

- Apply for or renew your passport (must be valid for 3 months after arrival to Panama or entire stay, whichever is longer)
- Book your flight

SET EXPECTATIONS

- Review the SFS field guide, financial planner, syllabus, and policies
- Talk with your family and friends about a realistic communication plan while you're in the field

MEDICAL

- Schedule all medical appointments
- Make a plan with specialists and/or mental health providers (if needed)
- Obtain prescription medication for the entirety of your program (if needed)
- See travel clinic (if desired)
- Schedule vaccinations (if needed)

FINANCES

- Pay for your program
- Apply for financial aid (if desired)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIALS



@THESFS
@THESFS_PANAMA

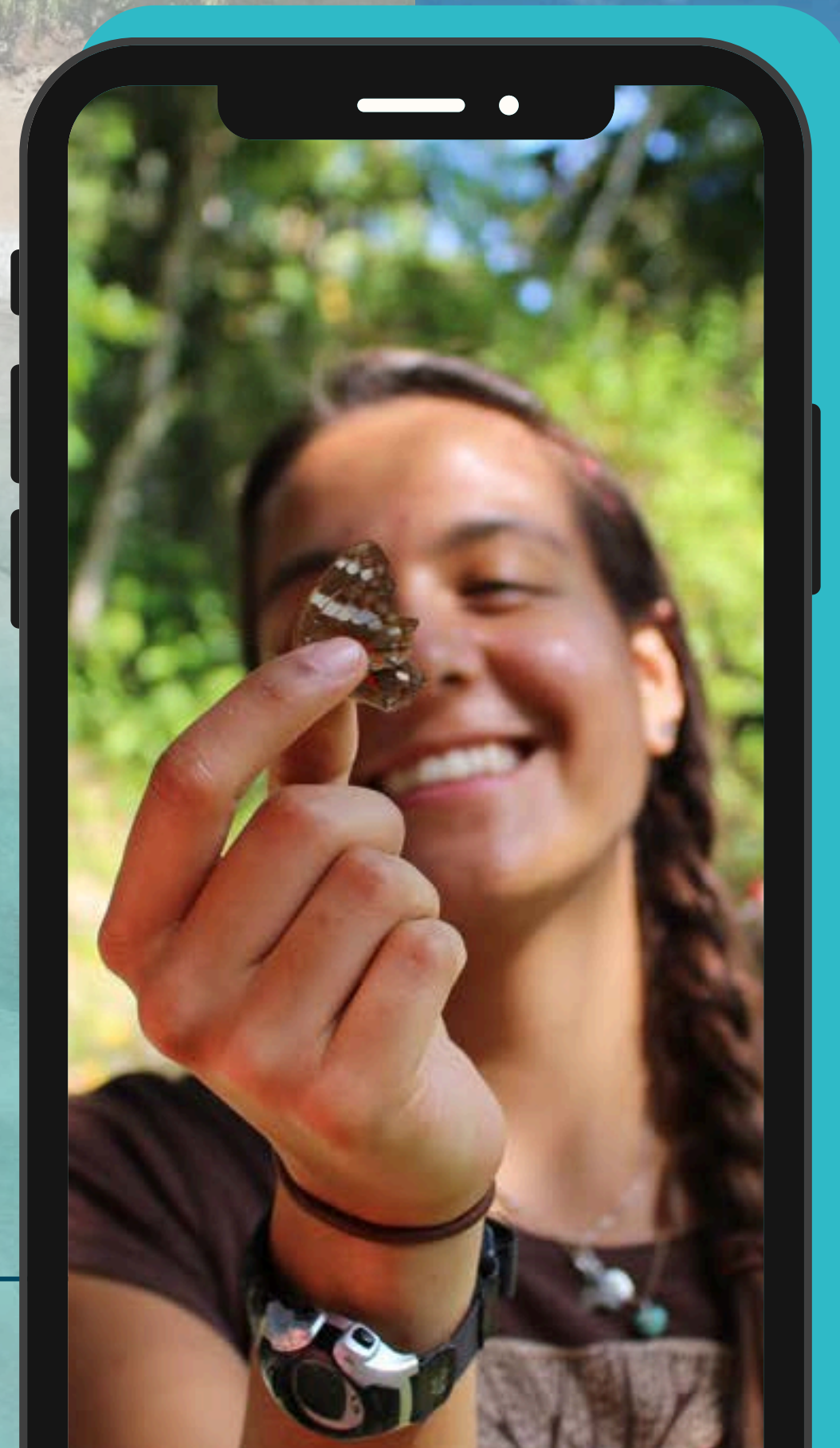
*Tag us in your
posts @thesfs!*



THE SCHOOL FOR FIELD STUDIES



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QUESTIONS?

Here is how you can get in touch:

MEDICAL + SAFETY

studentlife@fieldstudies.org

BILLING + FINANCIAL AID

billing@fieldstudies.org

ACADEMICS

academics@fieldstudies.org

GENERAL QUESTIONS

admissions@fieldstudies.org