

Student Field Preparation Guide
** Preliminary Version **

Bhutan



THE SCHOOL FOR FIELD STUDIES
STUDENT FIELD PREPARATION GUIDE 2010
BHUTAN

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INTRODUCTION

This Student Field Preparation Guide is an important tool which includes everything you need to know to prepare for your international education experience! Use it from the time you are accepted to the program, when you are getting ready to leave, while you are in the field and even after you return home.

We begin with a reminder list of the vital tasks you need to accomplish, including what you need to send to SFS and when. There is information about plane tickets, travel documents and insurance, and some helpful safety tips. Next, you will find information about the particular country where you will be spending a semester or summer. Along with some background on these places, we have included a packing list and some suggestions concerning finances to help guide you in planning what to bring with you. There is also information about what life is like on a day-to-day basis and what to expect as far as living conditions. Finally, we have included some resources on safety and traveling abroad, and details on our school-wide policies. **Please be sure to read through the entire Guide** and don't hesitate to contact your Admissions Counselor with any questions.

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Paperwork and Fees to Send to SFS

All required forms should be sent to SFS:

**The School for Field Studies
10 Federal Street, Suite 24
Salem, MA 01970**

- Nonrefundable deposit of \$450 (summer). Due 10 business days after acceptance.
- SFS Financial Aid Application (if applicable). Due 10 business days after acceptance.
- SFS Online Medical Review Form. Due 10 business days after acceptance.
- SFS Physical Examination & Authorization Form. Due 10 business days after acceptance.

No student may enter the field until a current SFS Medical Review Form and Physical Examination & Authorization Form have been reviewed and approved by SFS personnel. Inaccurate, incomplete or fraudulent information on your SFS Medical Review Form could jeopardize your safety and the safety of other students and staff during the program. This may be grounds for not admitting you, recalling you from the program, or restricting your participation in certain activities which may affect the quality of your experience and/or your academic credit.

- SFS Terms and Regulations Contract due 10 business days after acceptance.
- Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form due 10 business days after acceptance

- Final tuition payment. Due 60 days prior to start of program.
- Updated SFS Medical Review Form and Physical Examination & Authorization Form if there are *any* changes to the information before you depart.

Other Preparation To Do's

- Contact SFS alumni on campus or as provided by SFS to learn more about what to expect.
- Obtain passport/Check to make sure your passport is valid.
- Obtain visa for entry into country if necessary. See Passport and Visa section of this Field Guide for more information.
- If you are a permanent resident of the U.S. or an international student returning to school in the U.S after the program, please be sure to have the necessary documentation for re-entry into the United States.
- Obtain required clothing and equipment (see packing list later in this document).
- Make travel arrangements that meet the schedule outlined by the group flight departure and arrival times. (If traveling independently, have itinerary approved by, and submitted to, SFS).
- Prepare with your doctor and a Travel Specialist to cover all your travel plans in the countries where you plan to go. Be sure to review:
 - Your immunization history and requirements for every region in which you plan to travel (some information in the Safety section of this Guide)
 - Your fitness level
 - Medications and prescriptions in sufficient quantities and in their original containers. Check with your insurance company on how to fill prescriptions for several months in advance as you may not be able to find the medicine you need in-country.
 - Any changes in treatment programs
 - Understand what the risks are for each place where you'll be going.
- Make sure you have health insurance (required). You will have to fill this in on your SFS Medical Review Form. Check with your provider to make certain that your policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the places where you're going. The evacuation and repatriation insurance that you receive from SFS is **not** medical or dental insurance.
- Make arrangements to have student housing/registration/summer employment taken care of before departure.
- Leave Center Address (can be found later in this document) for friends and family to contact you.
- Make two clear copies of your plane ticket and your passport. Take one copy of each with you and leave one copy with a friend or family member.
- Read this Guide carefully in its entirety, including the sections later in this document on life at your particular Center, traveling and living abroad, safety in the country where you'll be going, and SFS policies.**

Optional

- Obtain personal property insurance (e.g. for your laptop computer) if you so desire; SFS does not provide this.
- Purchase travel /course cancellation insurance if you wish. You may want to check with your home university if you are unable to locate a provider on your own. This is different from evacuation and repatriation insurance, which is provided by SFS.

INSURANCE

Health insurance

Students are required to carry health insurance valid in the country or countries of program operation, while enrolled in SFS programs. You will not be allowed to join an SFS program without identifying such coverage. Some insurance carriers do not cover out-of-country medical expenses. Therefore, you should ensure that your medical insurance policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the country where the program is being held. Those insurance companies that do provide international coverage often do so on a reimbursable basis. Public or private hospitals and clinics in Australia and New Zealand will not accept insurance for payment. In most cases, you will need to secure a payment with a credit card deposit. This means that you will need to have a valid credit card to pay for your medical expenses up front and then request reimbursement when you return home. If your current policy does not provide coverage outside the U.S., the SFS Admissions staff can provide information on affordable short-term insurance options.

In the event that you require medical attention during a program, a staff member will accompany you on the visit(s) to a medical facility. You will be liable for all these incidental expenses, including travel, meals, etc, incurred by all parties involved during these visits. You must pay in full for these expenses prior to your departure from the program.

Property insurance

SFS insurance does not cover the personal property of students, staff and visitors. You may wish to check on your current policies or purchase some.

Travel Insurance

SFS insurance does not cover travel or course cancellation. You may wish to purchase some, so check with Advantage Travel or your travel agent for more information on your options.

Evacuation And Repatriation Insurance

Most insurance companies do not cover medical evacuation costs. SFS provides students with emergency medical evacuation and repatriation insurance through Seabury & Smith. This insurance is effective for the duration of the program and for seven days immediately following the program. You will receive an insurance card during the orientation at the Center. Note: this is **not** the same as health/medical or dental insurance!

Benefits include:

- Unlimited coverage for emergency evacuation.
- \$20,000 for repatriation of mortal remains.
- Assistance services (see below for details)

The travel assistance benefits are provided by American International Assistance Services, Inc., (AIAS), with assistance centers located throughout the world and staffed 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Some of the services which can be accessed through AIAS include:

- Worldwide, 24-hour medical care location services
- Medical transportation arrangements
- Medical case monitoring, arranging of communications between patient, family, physicians, consulate, etc.
- Arranging medical transportation home after treatment

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Please do NOT make any travel arrangements prior to speaking with your Admissions Counselor

You are required to work with Advantage Travel Agency to book a seat on the group flight arranged by SFS. You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements by contacting Advantage Travel and for paying your travel to and from the program.

All students will be on a group flight from the US to Bangkok, Thailand, to Paro, Bhutan, accompanied by the Program Manager. The Program Manager will meet the group flight upon arrival in Bangkok. There is only ONE airline carrier that flies into the ONE airport in Paro, Bhutan. This flight will be arranged by our contacts Bhutan, separate of the flight arranged by Advantage Travel Agency.

More travel information (cost, schedules, airlines, etc) for this program will become available after students have been accepted into the program.

Advantage travel and group flights

- You can take advantage of group ticket rates.
- Your itinerary is guaranteed to meet the group pickup/drop off program schedule.
- Advantage Travel has some influence with airlines to make ticket adjustments in the event of last-minute program date changes or cancellation, lost tickets, or other unforeseen circumstances.
- This travel agent is familiar with SFS programs.
- This will be one-stop shopping for your travel plans, both to and from the program and for other trips if you plan to travel during a break or pre/post-program.
- It will be fun to begin your travels with your fellow SFS students!

PASSPORT AND VISA

You must have a passport to enter all of the countries where our programs take place. Make certain that your passport is valid until six months after the program ends.

Your visa to enter and travel in Bhutan will be arranged through SFS. We will ask for your passport information to forward to the agent in Bhutan. Tourist visitors to Bhutan are required to pay a daily tariff fee, but this is waived for SFS students. You do not have to pay this daily tariff during the program.

If you plan to remain in Bhutan after the program you will be required to pay the daily tariff, as will anyone who plans to travel with you during that period. You and your companions may make tourism arrangements through a Bhutanese travel agent with whom we work should you wish. Please note that you should make these arrangements as early as possible, and at least two months in advance.

ABOUT BHUTAN

Bhutan is known as 'Druk Yul,' the land of the Thunder Dragon, where red chilies pepper most meals, the Gross National Happiness is more important the Gross National Product, Buddhism is inscribed within the land, and most importantly, Bhutan is known as a critically important area regarding global biological diversity. The country is landlocked and encompasses about 46,500 sq km, sharing borders with China to the north and India to the west, east and south. It is said to be about half the size of the state of Indiana and is divided into three major geographic regions: the high Himalaya of the north, the hills and valleys of the inner Himalaya, and the foothills and plains of the south.

Bhutan's altitude is formidable and challenging to some. The maximum elevation that you can reach is 3140m (11,187.6 ft) in the west and 3750m (12,303ft) in the east.

The Bhutanese people are diverse, many communities having been quite isolated until recently due to the challenging topography in the country. According to the 2005 Census, the current population of Bhutan is 672,425, and from this there are about 19 languages spoken. Buddhism is the state religion, with Hindu being dominant in the southern communities. Elements of Bon, animism and shamanism are found throughout the country as well. The people of Bhutan are known for their warmth and kindness.

The majority of the Bhutanese population lives in central Bhutan, depending on agriculture of crops, and livestock breeding. The main crops grown are buckwheat, rice, potatoes, barley, and of course, chilies.

The ancient history behind Bhutan stems from Buddhist folklore and mythology, though the country's medieval and modern history is better documented. Many of the important events in the country's early history involved saints and religious leaders, which were captured through scriptures. Many of the original documents were lost in a fire and later in a devastating earthquake in 1897. Therefore most of the early history of Bhutan relies on reports from British explorers, legend and folklore, and some of few manuscripts that were spared in the disasters. Archaeological evidence suggests Bhutan was inhabited as early as the 1500-2000 BC by nomadic herders. Geographically, the valleys that sweep the entire landscape in a north-south

orientation have made travel very difficult. There is one main road that traverses the country west to east, which provides an important link among regions in the country.

All throughout history there have been many rulers and civil wars. Though, most recently, the nation has dramatically transformed in regards to government. In 2005 Bhutan's well-liked fourth King Wangchuk announced that he would abdicate in 2008 in favor of the crown prince, and set about drawing up the country's first ever constitution to prepare for the democratic elections of 2008. The King transformed Bhutan from one of the world's most reclusive poor countries to one of its more enlightened. The economy has grown at an average annual rate of 7% over the past 25 years, largely thanks to exports of hydro-electricity to India. With huge investments in public healthcare, life expectancy has risen from 40 to 66 in 30 years. During the 1990s the primary school enrolment rate increased from 25 to 72%. At the same time, the King maintained strict control over the population—in particular, through decrees preserving the environment and the Buddhist culture of the majority. It also ensured the protection of a precious ecosystem; under Bhutan's constitution, approved by parliament, at least 60% of the country must be forested.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Bhutan is the same latitude as Miami and Cairo. The climate varies widely depending on the elevation and the area. In the southern border areas it is tropical, but in the high Himalaya regions, it is continuously snowing!

Summer, from June to August, is the Monsoon season. Our program will operate in the Central Bhutan region, in the district of Bumthang. According to meteorological data collected in Bumthang over the past eight years, the average daily temperatures in June were a high of 70°F and low of 55°F; and in July a high of 72°F and a low of 58°F. An eight year average rainfall in June was 28 inches, and July was 30 inches. Although Bhutan has regions in the subtropical zone and high altitude glacier regions, we will not be visiting them.

The program will operate at altitudes between 7000ft and 13,000ft. The field center where we will spend the majority of our time is at 9000ft. The capital, where we will spend the first week of the program is at about 7500ft.

Summer is STILL a great time to visit ... the markets are bursting with FRESH vegetables and the lighting is incredible for photography! Bring your rain gear, wellies, and, of course, a CAMERA! (More details of what to bring below).

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The eastern Himalayan region is characterized by extensive and numerous mountains and valleys, hosting the world's highest peaks and a diversity of vegetation types ranging from subtropical broadleaf forests through subalpine conifer and alpine shrub and meadows. The country boasts a 70% forest cover and 26% of land area under formal conservation protection.

Bhutan has been identified as one of the 10 biodiversity hot spots in the world and is home to an estimated 770 species of birds and an astonishing variety of medicinal plants and orchids. Takin, snow leopard, golden langur, blue sheep, tiger, water buffalo and elephant are among

Bhutan's diverse wildlife. Six vegetation zones are found in the country, ranging from subtropical broadleaf forests in the south, through broadleaf forests, subalpine conifer forests, alpine shrub and meadows. The highest elevations comprise rock and ice. In the temperate forests, trees are related to the North American conifer and broadleaf taxa, including pines, firs, maples, and birches. Students from the temperate regions of the U.S. will feel right at home in these forests.

A unique aspect of Bhutan is that progress is not purely defined by economic achievements as in most countries, but also based on the level of cultural and environmental preservation and development. In the Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan, people have developed rich cultural traditions and social and political institutions that reflect Buddhist principles of The Middle Path, integrating people and nature, traditional knowledge and Western science. Sustainable management of natural resources, including soil, water, species and minerals, is critical for this country whose economy is largely based on these resources.

In early 2008, Bhutan's government shifted from a monarchy to a constitutional democracy, opening the door for devolution of authority over natural resources to regional governments and communities. Since the majority of the population resides in rural areas, sustainable management of natural resources is critical for achieving the dual goals of poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation in this country where limited transportation routes and communication lines limit access to markets.

Defining baselines for biodiversity and ecosystem function is critical and, coupled with training in field research methodologies and communication in science, scientists and environmental authorities will be more effective at achieving development and conservation goals.

In this interdisciplinary, field-based course, students will get to know a country in a region that is recognized worldwide for its dramatic mountain landscapes and rich flora and fauna. In Bhutan we will learn about culture, Buddhist philosophy, and environmental issues. Trekking across valleys and ridges and through villages students will gain an intimate knowledge of the local environments and rural livelihoods. Students will develop skills in assessing environmental problems, defining research questions, conducting field research, and communicating results. They will gain an appreciation of the complexity of identifying and addressing conservation issues in a rapidly developing region.

SFS is partnering with the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment, an international research and training facility in Bhutan. SFS students and faculty will help the Institute advance its research agenda in several priority areas, including community and private forest management, the role of non-timber forest products in rural livelihood, human-wildlife conflict in agricultural areas, and pollution of fields and waterways.

WHAT TO BRING

SFS's packing list includes all items that are essential for this program. You must bring these items with you to Bhutan. There will be few opportunities to shop during the program. Make sure all equipment is in good shape before leaving: check for leaks, broken straps, jamming zippers, etc. In addition, any equipment or shoes that have dried dirt on them need to be washed off prior to packing or you may be delayed when passing through Customs and Immigration in Bhutan.

SFS strongly advises packing in your carry-on bag: two changes of clothes, basic toiletries, one warm garment, rain coat, your binoculars and camera, and any other essential items that would be needed to survive for three days after arrival; luggage is frequently misplaced for that long.

Druk Air, the only airline serving Bhutan, has a luggage weight limit of 44lbs. We strongly recommend that you test-pack your belongings to make sure you meet baggage requirements. Generally one is limited to two checked items and one carry-on bag. Additionally, make sure that you can carry all of your belongings without assistance – and leave some space for souvenirs!

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

The voltage in Bhutan is the same as India: 230V, 50 cycles, AC. Bhutan uses the standard Indian round pin sockets. See packing list for information on where to buy multi-adapters/travel sockets.

REQUIRED CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS

Bhutan is a formal country – citizens are required to use the traditional dress in workplaces and businesses. While we will not be using the elaborate kira (for women) or gho (for men) we will respect Bhutanese custom. Therefore, we will be looking sharp for class, during visits to villages and monasteries, and for research presentations. You will need a set of nice clothes for the city, town and classroom, and a second set of field clothes for the trek and field work.

Students should be prepared for the possibility of extended cold and damp weather: bring warm clothes. The temperatures can range from 50°F to 70°F; nights are chilly. There is no heat in the buildings, and nights can be cold. Bring multiple layers of warm clothes, including a hat, scarf and light mittens.

Please keep in mind that this packing list has SUGGESTED amounts listed; please pack according to your own needs.

Check	Item	Quantity, quality
	Underwear and socks, including three pairs of wool or synthetic (not cotton) hiking socks	2 week's worth (min.)
	Pants: Cotton/synthetic blends are best - they dry quickly, including two rugged pairs for trek and field work.	4-5. At least two nice pairs and two field pairs.
	T-shirts, base layer: some cotton for that good feel of home, some wool or synthetic for chilly nights and field days	10 shirts (runners may want to bring more)
	Long-sleeved shirts: Light fabric for working in the field and in the sun, and heavier ones for warmth and protection. (Capilene or wool is a good)	5
	Formal top (jacket, shawl)	1 at least
	Light wool or fleece sweater: you will likely use this layer every single day	2

	Heavy wool or fleece sweater	2
	Waterproof, hooded jacket for wind and rain	1
	Social clothes: for town and social occasions	1 set
	Water resistant pants	1-2
	Swimsuit, just in case, but unlikely to use in Bhutan	1
	Gumboots: fairly light, shin-high, water-repellant with good tread	1
	Hiking boots ¹ , preferably waterproof	1
	Casual shoes and/or sneakers	1
	Slippers or toeless flip flops for dormitory use (remember, chilly mornings, chilly nights)	1
	Sun hat - baseball or wide-brimmed (at 9000' the sun is intense)	1
	Light wool or fleece hat, scarf and mittens	1
	Sunglasses	2

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Items for the dorms

- [TBC²] One twin fitted sheet and a pillow case (twin/standard dorm bed size). You will use your sleeping bag for a blanket.
- Towels: one shower towel, one face towel (a quick dry towel for face will be good on the trek)
- Warm sleeping bag [20°F rating]
- Headlamp is most useful, although a hand-held flashlight will do. Mini-flashlights not acceptable. You should plan to purchase spare batteries in Bhutan
- Toiletries. Due to luggage weight limits, we recommend that you purchase heavy items such as soap and shampoo once you arrive to the country. This will also be a nice contribution to the local economy. Prices are comparable to the U.S. Do bring special items if you need them.
- Wristwatch - preferably water-resistant
- Small Repair Kit - needle, thread, safety pins, etc [optional, but handy]
- Personal First-Aid Kit - with plenty of anti-itch creams, Neosporin, Bacitracin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, Band-Aids, tape, tweezers, anti-histamines, etc. You will find this to be useful.
- Travel alarm clock unless your watch has an alarm
- ***Any necessary over-the-counter medications or prescriptions***.

Items for the field and classroom

- Notebooks, pens and pencils (bring, or you can purchase in Bhutan).
- Daypack - small backpack suitable for taking gear into the field (water, snacks, clothing layers, field equipment such as measuring tapes, notebook, camera)
- A small, packable umbrella [or purchase in Bhutan]

¹ Definitely break these in well before June 2010. They do not have to be the heavy leather boots, fabric is okay, but they must be comfortable, with a good tread, and steal shank in the sole will be nice.

² TBC = To be confirmed

- Sleeping pad (Therma-rest or cell foam pad for camping on trek)
- Ziplock bags (gallon size is best) or waterproof stuff sacks - for waterproof storage
- Tupperware/Rubbermaid container - one for packing lunches
- Two water bottles -1 liter capacity each
- Flash drives/ USB memory sticks. Recommend at least 1 GB. You will use these to share work and to take your work and photos home with you at the end of the program (there tend to be a lot of pictures to take home).
- Computer. Students are strongly recommended to bring their own personal laptops. As a general recommendation, this should be an IBM or Mac compatible laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2000 or later software, or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents.
- USB flash drive. To easily transfer your work in the group, please bring a USB flash drive (also known as a USB keychain drive, USB micro drive, USB thumb drive), with a capacity of at least 1 Gigabyte. You will want to have a laptop carrying case and a security cable or lock.

Note: SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either on site or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance.

OPTIONAL CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

- Camera equipment: digital or film – we will have wonderful vistas of the Himalayas.
- Binoculars if you are a birder – preferably 8 x 40 but anything in the 6 x 30 to 10 x 40 range is fine. If you are interested in birding, we recommend that you pay the extra amount to procure good quality binoculars. Make sure they are properly aligned before you leave.
- Lightweight blanket (please do not steal the airline blanket, though) (**AND A SLEEPING BAG**)
- Pocketknife (Do NOT carry this in your carry-on luggage)
- A small botanical hand lens (10 x magnifications) is recommended for those interested in plants and invertebrates.
- MP3 player - please bring earphones so others can have quiet time, especially if you have MINI speakers
- Journal
- Games to play during free time on rainy days
- Laundry bag (with draw string – we will be sending our laundry out)

Prohibited items

Plants and animals, dead or alive, are prohibited upon arriving at the airport in Bhutan. As are packaged meats, soil, and that peanut butter and jelly sandwich that dad packed you for the flight. More information can be found at the website for Bhutan Quarantine and Inspection Service.

FINANCES

Listed below is a partial cost estimate for the SFS program in Bhutan. The total amount will vary significantly with each individual's consumer tendencies (cookies, souvenirs, necessities) and their pre- and post-program travel plans, among other things.

Bhutan still operates with cash. There are zero to possibly a few ATMs in Bhutan, and very few businesses accept credit cards. It is true. You will want to bring all that you need in traveler's checks in U.S. dollars, which will require a visit to your bank. Be sure to sign each check once before leaving the bank. You will counter-sign it at the bank in Bhutan. If you fail to do this, and someone takes your checks, they get free money and you lose all yours.

A few of the tourist shops do welcome credit cards (MasterCard), even one in Jakar, so do not despair if you find you absolutely need to purchase that hand-woven silk scarf for your auntie back home.

You can receive money by Western Union in Jakar from home. There is a fee for this and they don't give the best exchange rate. The process can take two days.

ESTIMATED COSTS

Expenditure	Amount (U.S. dollar)
Night in Bangkok on way in, maybe out (food and lodging)	TBC
Airport immigration tax upon arrival, Paro	\$20 (cash only)
Spending money (6 weeks)	\$400-\$600
Reading packet and book purchases in Bhutan	TBC
Internet broadband card and bytes	\$30 + \$100+
T-shirt – the class designs a shirt (optional)	\$10
TOTAL	TBC

*You will need to pay for any optional activities during your free time and snacks.

Remember you will be responsible for the \$200+ daily tariff should you choose to remain in Bhutan after the program ends on July 9.

FACILITIES

In the capital city of Thimphu we will be lodging either in the dormitory of a youth center or in a secure hotel. In Jakar we will be hosted at an international field station. There SFS students and staff will lodge in two- to four-person dormitory rooms with shared bathrooms. The facility has the following spaces and amenities:

- Stand-alone dormitory with bathrooms
- Stand-alone cafeteria serving only during meal time
- Outdoor space for socializing, badminton

- Laundry facilities will not be available on campus; we will send our laundry out once per week. Pack accordingly.

The Institute's main building was formerly a king's residence. The renovated building surrounds a courtyard on all four sides. It includes the following:

- Classroom with desks
- Library
- Computer room for Institute staff [students will not have access to those computers]
- Offices for Institute staff
- Common space for socializing indoors and in the courtyard

COMPUTERS AND INTERNET

Internet service in Bhutan is still quite slow and expensive. There is at least one internet café in Jakar, but it may only have a few computers, and the charge is on the order of \$2.00 per hour. You will not be able to connect your laptop directly to the Institute's network or printers.

You may purchase a broadband USB card in Bhutan and load it up with bytes at your own expense. We will not require the internet for course work.

Be sure to take your project data with you backed up on a USB drive upon completion of the program, as it will not be available from SFS later.

FOOD

All meals will be provided to us either at restaurants or the Institute's cafeteria. While we will make every effort to accommodate special dietary needs, we will not be able to cater to individual preferences. Vegetarians will delight in the Bhutanese cuisine, and meat lovers should consider vegetarianism for the duration of their stay in Bhutan. Killing animals is against Buddhist philosophy, so meat is usually imported dried. It is at best tough and at worst inedible.

Be prepared to eat a lot of rice, and many interesting varieties of it. Vegetables will include fiddle heads (young fern fronds), potatoes, and chilies, among other temperate crops. Cheese, butter and milk are also a staple element of the Bhutanese diet.

COMMUNICATIONS

MAIL

Do not expect to receive post mail while in Bhutan. The Institute will not return or forward mail that may arrive for you after your departure.

TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

In Bhutan just about everyone has a cell phone. The phone itself is inexpensive, but minutes for international calls are costly. We will have more information on telephone and internet communication later.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Be sure to let your friends and family know that SFS publishes News from the Field every two weeks on our web site (www.fieldstudies.org). This includes photos, updates from the field staff on what students have been doing most recently, and quotes from students with their thoughts about their experience. It's a great way for your loved ones to follow your exciting adventures!

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Emergency contact should be made with The School for Field Studies Headquarters office in Salem, Massachusetts at 978-741-3544. Office hours are 8:30am to 5:00pm (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. At all other times SFS maintains a 24-hour emergency message system while students are in the field. This system is for reporting family emergencies that require immediate contact with a student in the field, or to report a problem with a student in transit to or from one of the SFS field stations. To leave a message, which will page a staff member, call 978-741-3567, once prompted, press "2" for the emergency system. While headquarters' staff knows the whereabouts of student groups at all times, it may require 24 hours or more to make contact in some cases.

NOTE: Problems or emergencies that arise in the field will be reported directly to the SFS Safety Director. SFS will then contact appropriate parties as necessary.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

6 days a week, one day off.

The academic program is delivered over a six-day week. During program time (6 days a week) you will find yourself following a rigorous schedule, however, one must be very flexible for changes occur all of the time! There is no real typical day we could describe for the program, but we will be having breakfast, lunch and dinner at the usual times in the day. Throughout all programs, one day a week is reserved for studying and relaxing. While staff members are given a day off here and there throughout the program period, at least one staff member is always on duty.

The weekly schedule will vary significantly from the beginning of the program to the end. The rough schedule is planned as follows:

Week 1: In Thimphu for orientation to Bhutan, classes on Bhutanese society, culture, government.

Weeks 2, 3: Classes and field excursions, including 4-day trek

Weeks 4, 5, 6: Field research, write-up, presentations; course wrap-up

STUDENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

During your stay at the Institute, you are a member of several communities: first is the SFS community. We will foster a supportive, stimulating learning community where our actions and behaviors are governed by a set of common values. Second, you will be part of an international research and learning community of the Institute. Third, you will be a temporary resident to the greater Bumthang regional community and Bhutanese community. In these Bhutanese communities, our behavior will be governed by the local and national norms. There are many occasions when you will be expected to interact with the local residents in both academic and informal situations. Please remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies from culture to culture and be sensitive to this at all times while interacting with Institute and external community members. The staff will brief you on this in more detail during Orientation. You may have the opportunity to present the findings of your research to scientists, civil servants and local authorities.

SAFETY EDUCATION

In some areas where our programs operate the average local five-year-old has vastly superior knowledge about what is important in order to keep safe than our students do upon arrival. Learning to observe and interpret what is going on around you is a desirable skill that may enable you to effectively minimize risks, make better-informed decisions and mitigate the consequences of undesirable events. Like most skills, it takes some time to develop. The following section will help guide your behavior while you are learning and help facilitate the process.

This section (Traveling and Living Abroad) presents traveler best practices and lists a number of information resources. This will serve you during your SFS program time, as well as during travels before or after the program, and during break and free time. In addition, during your on-site orientation you will learn about potential local hazards, safety systems, Center specific rules and the local Operational Objectives. In addition, you may have discussions based on case studies and on your experiences and those of your group members.

TRAVELING AND LIVING ABROAD

<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/index.shtml>

http://www.bhutan.gov.bt/government/index_new.php

For Government Worldwide Travel Advisories

The following sites contain information on road/travel safety, the political situation, laws, medical facilities, crime, political strife, terrorism, etc:

US State Dept., Bureau of Consular Affairs:

<http://travel.state.gov/>

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html

Personal Safety

Adapted from the USC Center for Global Education Study Abroad Safety Handbook

According to travel and study abroad experts, most of the incidents resulting in injury or death of students while participating in study abroad involve:

- Travel/traffic accidents
- Use and abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Sexual harassment and assault
- Crime/petty theft
- Mental health issues/stress
- Diseases and illnesses that exist in the host country

Some Best Practices for Mitigating Personal Safety Risks

Precautions When Accepting Food and Drink: Be cautious about accepting drinks from a stranger, alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Be cautious about accepting food from a stranger.

Risk upon Arrival: Travelers, especially those having just arrived abroad, are often targets of crime and at higher risk of harm, because they:

- Are unfamiliar with their surroundings
- Might not speak the local language well
- Are clearly recognizable as foreigners
- Have not yet learned the social norms or unwritten rules of conduct
- Are eager to get to know new people and the local culture
- Are naive to the intentions of people around them
- Are carrying all their valuables with them when they first step off the plane, train, or boat

Keeping in Control: In addition to the circumstances involved with being new in a foreign country, which are often beyond one's immediate control, there are many situations that you can control. Some controllable factors that place you at greatest risk include:

- Being out after midnight
- Being alone at night in an isolated area
- Being in a known high-crime area
- Sleeping in an unlocked place
- Being out after a local curfew
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Non-verbal Communication: Non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in the U.S. may be offensive to people in other countries. The list of gestures considered rude in other countries can grow beyond the obvious.

Sexually-Transmitted Diseases: Keep yourself free from sexually-transmitted diseases by using protection (like condoms or abstinence). Also, remember that “no” may not always be interpreted as “no” in other countries. Inform yourself about the types of diseases prevalent in the area in which you are traveling. Unprotected sex puts one at risk for acquiring a sexually-transmitted disease, including HIV. Traveling abroad can be romantic - beautiful scenery, a new culture, none of the constraints of home. Do not however, let the romance overwhelm your common sense. If you do decide to have sex, you should make sure that it is protected sex.

International Sources of Information: Inform yourself about your new environment, making use of as many different sources as possible – the Internet, the library, television and radio news programs, and the newspaper. Don’t limit yourself to U.S. sources. Instead, contrast the U.S. information with that provided by other countries.

Understanding Locals: Beyond tuning into yourself, make it a point to try to understand what locals are communicating to you, how they feel about you and about U.S. citizens in general, how you are fitting with their values, and how well you understand them. Obviously a stronger grasp of the local language will help you with these things, but even knowing a few essential phrases can be immensely beneficial.

How to Dress: It is often best to dress conservatively – by local standards, so you can’t be identified on sight as a tourist or a U.S. citizen.

Jewelry and Other Valuables: Any time or place you travel be careful with your valuables. Leave your good jewelry at home, and keep money in a safe place like a money belt or hidden pouch under your clothes. Keep a low profile with regard to your camera and electronic equipment, and keep your bags with you at all times.

Becoming Aware of Your Surroundings: You should be aware of your surroundings, remembering to:

- Pay attention to what people around you are saying
- Find out which areas of the city are less safe than others
- Know which hours of night are considered more dangerous
- Stay and walk only in well-lit areas
- Avoid being alone in unfamiliar neighborhoods
- Know where to get help (police station, fire station, phones, stores, etc.)
- Do not touch suspicious items like letters or packages mailed to you from someone you don’t know
- Know what is "normal" and "not normal" to see on a daily basis in the areas you frequent
- Do not respond to explosions or gunfire by going to a window; seek cover away from windows and exterior walls

Effects of U.S. Foreign Policy: The foreign policy of the U.S. does not always sit well with citizens of foreign countries. In some cases, Americans living abroad can be targets of the frustrations of these individuals. Consider the nature of the political climate and relations between the U.S. and the countries you plan to visit.

Crimes against U.S. Citizens: There are some steps you can take to avoid being targeted for politically-motivated crime or anti-U.S. crime in general. Try to assimilate your style of dress and mannerisms as much as possible into the local norms. "Dressing like a U.S. citizen" (or any way conspicuously different from local people) can make you a target.

Political Rallies: Avoid political rallies, which can increase tensions and emotions or breed angry mobs for which a U.S. citizen may serve as a scapegoat.

Health: Every region has its own unique health challenges. We strongly recommended that you consult with a travel medicine clinic or physician who can look at your travel itinerary and your personal health profile and work with you to devise a health strategy for your travel, including all appropriate vaccinations, medications and treatment options.

To locate a travel medicine clinic as well as for information on destinations, outbreaks, diseases, vaccinations, insect protection, safe food and water, and medical emergency preparation: The Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

Disease maps; health risks and precautions; travel by air; environmental health risks; accidents, injuries and violence; infectious diseases; vaccine-preventable diseases; malaria; blood transfusions, etc.: <http://www.who.int/en/>

SOME HEATH CONSIDERATIONS

Medications

You should bring enough over-the-counter and/or prescription medication to last throughout the program and your travel before or afterwards, if applicable. Keep it in its original container (this will be helpful when passing through customs). Please make sure that all medication is noted on the SFS Medical Form. Program staff will check in with you on your medication requirements (storage, schedule, etc.) during the orientation at the Center. Per local laws, staff may be limited in their ability to dispense over-the-counter and prescription medications.

Special medical conditions/needs

If you have any allergies or special conditions which might lead to sudden illness (such as asthma, diabetes, bee sting or penicillin allergies, etc.) you must inform the staff of possible reactions. You should also consider discussing these with the rest of the student group during the orientation at the Center so that other people will know how to react in case you suddenly need assistance or medication. If you have any critical medications, you must carry them with you at all times and should report these medications on their SFS Medical Form. SFS also recommends that students consider wearing a medical alert bracelet describing any special medical conditions.

If you have asthma, even if you have not had any problems for years, you should bring an inhaler and all the necessary medications because past students have found that asthma acts up in some of the environments where our Centers are located.

Food

According to the US Center for Disease Control, to avoid illness, travelers should be advised to select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, the traveler should be advised to avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese, and to eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot or fruit that has been peeled by the traveler personally.

Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth and should be thoroughly reheated before serving. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street food vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness.

Protection from insects

Travelers should be advised that exposure to spider and insect bites can be minimized by modifying patterns of activity or behavior. Some vector mosquitoes are most active in twilight periods at dawn and dusk or in the evening. Avoidance of outdoor activity during these periods can reduce risk of exposure. Wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats minimizes areas of exposed skin. Shirts should be tucked in. Repellents applied to clothing, shoes, tents, mosquito nets, and other gear will enhance protection.

When exposure to ticks or biting insects is a possibility, travelers should be advised to tuck their pants into their socks and to wear boots, not sandals. Permethrin-based repellents applied to clothing as directed will enhance protection. Travelers should be advised to inspect themselves and their clothing for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day. Ticks are detected more easily on light-colored or white clothing. Ticks should be promptly removed from skin by using tweezers to firmly grasp the head and then slowly pull back. Bite should be cleaned well with an antimicrobial soap or alcohol etc.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

DEFINING CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Think about how you are feeling now as you prepare to go abroad with an SFS program. Are you feeling excited? Anxious? Overwhelmed? Content? Afraid?

Now, think about how you might feel when you first arrive at your host country. Will you feel high on life? Bombarded by the newness of it all? Jet-lagged? Irritated or humbled by the reality that you are unable to communicate as well as you are used to being able to?

How will your emotions and thoughts change with time after the initial high of arrival? Will you be amazed and/or frustrated by the differences between how things are done

at home and how things are done at your temporary home abroad? Confronted with these differences, will you question values you held and always thought were in the “right”? Will you grow in depth of thought and sense of self? Will you be unbearably homesick and seek out a friend to talk with?

It may seem like a very long time from now, but imagine returning home after study abroad. How do you hope you have changed as a result of your time abroad? How will others see your new personal, cultural, social, and academic developments? Will it be easy to reconnect with family, friends, and your community? Will it take effort? How will you communicate your experiences and developments and help loved ones take part in an important period of your life?

The flow of emotions and experiences above describes the cultural adjustment process that many students move through before, during, and after their study abroad terms.

So, what is cultural adjustment? Most simply put, cultural adjustment is the process of adjusting to a different cultural context. It is the process of filtering through initially identifiable differences in eating style, language, customs, and more to discover the underlying values and assumptions that are the foundation of a certain way of life. Whether you are from the United States or from another country, confronting another way of life may entail questioning your own basic values and beliefs. Cultural adjustment may beg of you to ask the question, “Who am I?” By asking such a fundamental question and working through the answers, you can build a strong sense of self, gain more confidence in whom you are, learn to identify at a basic level with people from any background, and become more accepting of others. At this point, you will have begun to develop a sense of global citizenship, a crucial key to developing a peaceful global society.

SIGNS OF CULTURE SHOCK

Experiencing some difficulty adjusting to your new environment is normal and even important for personal development. Some students experience:

- Homesickness
- Physical symptoms such as mild colds and headaches
- Anxiety, depression, disappointment, and/or frustration
- Defensiveness toward home culture(s)
- Tendency to put the host or home culture(s) and way(s) of life on a pedestal
- Criticism toward home or host countries
- Gratitude for the chance to rethink world views and customs

CYCLING THROUGH CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT: THE “W” CURVE



The model above puts into visual format the process of cultural adjustment previously described.

Arrival: Upon arrival, many students are exhilarated by the hundreds of new sights, sounds, and smells of their host country. You may feel physically exhausted from the travel, and you may need to give your body time and care to help it adjust to the different weather, geographic conditions, food, and time schedule. During this initial period, you may experience a variety of heightened emotions.

Culture Shock: After the initial high period, you may begin to notice the many differences between your home and your temporary home abroad. Processing these differences may be difficult, and many students report emotions of anxiety, stress, confusion, homesickness, discouragement, hostility toward the local culture and customs, and even depression. You may experience physical symptoms such as colds, headaches, or stomach upsets. On the other hand, some students experience very little culture shock.

Recovery: Fear not! With effort and time, you will get your legs back under you again. You may wish to employ some of the coping strategies listed in the next section, or find your own way to regain and rethink equilibrium.

Adaptation: At this stage, students have renegotiated belief systems and “the way things are done.” You may feel at home in your residence abroad.

Returning Home: Some students find that just when they have become comfortable with their surroundings abroad, it is time to return home! Because you are traveling back to a familiar place, you may not expect to experience reverse culture shock, which mirrors the culture shock process. Many students experience re-entry culture shock more severely than they do culture shock. The best way to smooth the reverse culture shock process is to prepare for it before, during, *and* after your time abroad. Make sure to share your experiences and personal development with important family and friends so that they can take part in your growth! Continuous communication in a spirit of sharing

(rather than expecting or needing others to understand) will greatly smooth the reentry process.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN AMERICAN?

Perhaps this is your first time visiting a foreign country for an extended period. By removing yourself from the USA or other country of origin and being confronted with difference, you may gain a greater awareness of what it means to be American, Chinese, Mexican, or whatever you identify as.

In part because of the USA's prominent media and political and economic presence, you may find that people around the world have formed viewpoints, even stereotypes about Americans.

Below are some examples of stereotypes of Americans that you might encounter in-country. Keep in mind that there are many different points of view on Americans.

- Wealthy and wasteful
- Caring about the environment
- Heavy drinkers
- Careless
- Want to help others
- Loud and dumb
- Openly friendly and kind
- The youth like to party
- Academically-oriented

As you can see, stereotypes are not always accurate, and they do not apply to every person within a culture. Making generalizations about a culture or people is normal and even useful in learning about them. However, be aware of the possible negative impact of stereotyping. Be open to and appreciative of the great differences between individuals within a population.

A NOTE TO WOMEN AND DIVERSE STUDENTS

What it means to identify as IGLBTA, a woman, a person of color, a member of a certain religious group, a participant with a disability, etc. may be very different in your host country than at home. For example, a gay student may find that the host community is much less accepting of homosexuality than his university community. Asian or Asian-American students may find that host nationals, who perhaps have had little or no contact with Asians, view them as exotic. Students who are accustomed to being part of the majority group at home (e.g. Caucasian students) may need to readjust

to living as a minority abroad. The change may be for better or for worse, but you might not be treated or viewed in the way that you are accustomed to at home.

There is more information about women and underrepresented students traveling abroad than it is possible to cover in this section. Please use the resources below to better inform yourself as you prepare for your abroad experience.

Women Travel Tips - Women

<http://www.womentraveltips.com/index.shtml>

University of Minnesota's Learning Abroad Center – GLBT Students, Students with Disabilities, Multicultural Students (Scroll down page for links)

<http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/index.html>

All Abroad – Ethnic Minorities

<http://allabroad.us/>

Mobility International USA – Students with Disabilities

<http://www.miusa.org/>

COPING WITH CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

What are some tricks for coping with and growing through the cultural adjustment process?

- Keep a journal. Be your own best counselor and write about the experiences, emotions, and thoughts that you have.
- Take care of your physical body. Be sure to get sufficient exercise, and take care of your body's nutritional needs. Get enough rest and sleep.
- Communicate. If you are feeling particularly down, approach a friend, staff member, or mentor. Sometimes just talking about difficulties you are facing makes the burden seem lighter. Many of the people surrounding you at the Center have experienced or are experiencing the same cultural adjustment process as you. There is strength and comfort in sharing!
- Step out of your comfort zone. When everything around us is new, we sometimes just want to withdraw. Although some level of withdrawal can be helpful, in the end, there is more joy in living fully than hiding from fear. Do not do anything unreasonably risky or foolish, but do try to interact with the community. Try delicious foods you had never heard of before. Take advantage of your abroad experience, because you will not have the same exact opportunity again!

- Breathe! The simple act of inhaling and exhaling a few times will help clear your mind.
- Keep in touch with family and friends at home. Regularly sharing your experiences will help ease the reentry process. However, be aware of spending too much time on the phone or internet to the detriment of your abroad experience.
- Remember to be grateful for what you have. A sense of gratitude makes cultural adjustment easier because of a positive outlook. You will see things in a more positive light, and those you meet will respond to you more positively because they can sense your humility and good feelings.

The above are just examples of strategies for facing cultural adjustment. There are a multitude of ways that people cope, and you may discover other strategies that work particularly well for you.

Everyone at The School for Field Studies extends a warm welcome to you and looks forward to seeing you in the field!