



THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

## **Student Field Preparation Guide**

Semester Programs 2015-2016

The School for Field Studies (SFS)

**PLEASE READ THIS MATERIAL CAREFULLY BEFORE LEAVING  
FOR THE PROGRAM. BRING IT WITH YOU TO THE FIELD AS IT  
CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION.**

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# Introduction

This Field Preparation Guide is an important document which includes everything you need to know to prepare for your SFS program!

We begin with a reminder list and timeline of the vital tasks you need to accomplish, including what you need to send to SFS prior to departure. There is information about traveling to and from the program, visa instructions, and arrival at the airport on the first day. You will also find background information about the particular country and Center where you will be studying. There is a description of what life is like at your Center on a day-to-day basis and what to expect as far as living conditions. We have included a packing list and some financial suggestions to help guide you in planning what to bring with you. Finally, we have included some resources on safety and traveling abroad. **Please be sure to read through the entire guide** and don't hesitate to contact your Admissions Counselor with any questions.

## Terms and Regulations Contract

Note that as a condition for participation in an SFS program, you are required to document that you have read, understood and accepted all academic, safety, administrative and operational policies, rules and requirements by reading and signing the SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.

# Preparing for Departure

## Preparation Checklist

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### *Paperwork and Fees to Send to SFS*

Please see the Accepted Students Page (<http://www.fieldstudies.org/admissions/accepted>) of the SFS website to find instructions, links to the infosnap login page, and PDF versions of these forms. All required forms should be sent to SFS (or complete online through your SFS infosnap account when possible):

**The School for Field Studies**  
**100 Cummings Center, Suite 534-G**  
**Beverly, MA 01915**

**All forms, information, and deposit payments are due within 10 business days after acceptance to SFS. If you are not able to meet this deadline you must contact your Admissions Counselor to request an extension.**

- **Nonrefundable deposit of \$1000.** If your school is responsible for paying your deposit (see your acceptance email for this information), this deadline does not apply.
- **SFS Terms and Regulations Contract.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **FERPA Notice and Consent.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **Passport number and expiration date** (passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the last day of the program). This must be entered electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **SFS SCUBA/Snorkel Form.** This can be submitted as hard copy or electronically through your online infosnap account at [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org).
- **SFS Online Medical Review Form.** This form must be completed online through your infosnap account.
- **SFS Physical Examination & Authorization Form.** This form must be submitted as a hard copy via fax, scan and email, or regular mail.
- **PADI Medical Statement** for students who plan to dive during the program.
- **Psychotropic Medication Form and/or Counseling Questionnaire**, if applicable. These forms must be submitted as a hard copy via fax, scan and email, or regular mail.

***No student may enter the field until a current SFS Online Medical Review Form, Physical Examination & Authorization Form, and PADI Medical Statement (when applicable) 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.***

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

### ***Other Preparation To-Do's***

- Obtain passport/check to make sure your passport is valid until at least 6 months after the end of the program.
- If you plan to apply for SFS Financial Aid, you must submit your application at least 60 days prior to the start of the program.
- Contact SFS alumni on campus or as provided by SFS to learn more about what to expect.
- Obtain visa for entry into country if necessary. See Passport and Visa section of this Field Guide for more information.
- Make sure your bank/credit card companies know you will be using your cards abroad. In order to receive medical attention, a credit card with a limit of at least \$1,000 is required.
- 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 SFS. If you do not book using Advantage Travel, you must submit your itinerary to your Admissions Counselor and have it approved prior to purchase.
- 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 Insurance, Health and 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
  - Discuss and 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.
- Configure your laptop to access your home school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field (see *Library and Computers* section for further details).
- Purchase Divers Alert Network Insurance (**required**) if you plan to dive during the program. Refer to the Table of Contents to find more information about DAN insurance later in this guide.
- Make arrangements to have student housing/registration/summer employment taken care of before departure.
- Leave Center mailing address and phone number (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.

## Travel Arrangements

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements and for paying your travel to and from the program. You have a few choices: you may wish to book your ticket online, through your local travel agent, or by working with Advantage Travel Agency, which is the SFS travel agency of choice.

### Advantage Travel

SFS and Advantage Travel do not arrange a group flight for this program because it is not the most cost-effective or convenient option for student travel. We hope that students will be able to explore other options that better suit their needs without the restrictions of group travel. Even without a group flight, there are many benefits to booking with Advantage, including:

- 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!

## Making Your Travel Arrangements

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Be sure to arrive at the pickup location on time! If you do not book using Advantage, all travel plans must be reviewed and approved by your SFS Admissions Counselor prior to purchase. SFS will designate a group meeting time at the airport on the island of Providenciales (Provo for short), as well as the program departure time. SFS staff members will meet the group at the airport at the meeting time and help facilitate transportation to the Center. If you miss the group pickup time, you are responsible for getting to the Center on your own.

You will book your flight from the U.S. to the international airport in Providenciales, Turks & Caicos (PLS). SFS will make your reservation for your round-trip travel between Provo and South Caicos (fondly referred to as “South”) either through the local airline ([www.intercaribbean.com/](http://www.intercaribbean.com/)) or the Caribbean Cruisin’ ferry system ([www.caribbean-cruisin.com/south-caicos-ferry](http://www.caribbean-cruisin.com/south-caicos-ferry)).

Regardless of whether your ticket is purchased through Advantage Travel or another agent, SFS is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power or communications. Therefore, SFS routinely does not authorize its designated agent to issue tickets until 30 days prior to the start of a program.

If you opt to travel before or after your program, be sure to check with immigration officials regarding your visa status. It’s a great idea to arrange all your travel before you leave because the only chance you’ll have to exchange tickets is during mid-term break of the semester program.

Be sure to join a frequent flyer program! Also, check with your agent about multiple stops or stopovers; long trips are an excellent opportunity to see other countries or regions for a small fee or at no extra cost, but this usually needs to be arranged at the time of ticket purchase.

**CARBON OFFSET:** In an effort to make your semester with The School for Field Studies more sustainable, we ask you to consider a carbon neutral flights to and from TCI.

## Passport and Visa

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**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.**

When you arrive at the Turks and Caicos Islands (on Provo), you will need to go through immigration and will need to present your passport in order to be issued a **90-day visitor’s pass**. **It is important that you explain that you are coming to *study* at The School for Field Studies on South Caicos for a *study abroad program*. The conversation with the immigration officer determines the length of your visa. The 90 day visitor's pass will need to be renewed once during the semester.** The cost for renewal is



approximately \$50 US (cash only), and the SFS staff will handle the process with local immigration officials. If you are issued a 30 or 60 day visa upon entry, you will need to renew it multiple times during the semester. So it is important to get the 90 day visa! Students who are not citizens of the U.S., U.K., or Canada are responsible for investigating whether or not they must make arrangements for their visa prior to arrival.

### Arrival at the Airport in TCI

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After you collect your bags, you will go through customs and will need to present your completed Customs Declaration Form. Since you should not be leaving anything behind on the island, you will have nothing to declare (unless you bring in tobacco — SFS prohibits alcohol on site). It is not unusual for bags to get delayed in transit; they usually show up in one to four days. If your bags are delayed in travel, you should complete a lost baggage form at the airline desk after clearing customs. Ask the individual at the airline desk to route your bags to The School for Field Studies on South Caicos. After you clear your luggage through customs, the Student Affairs Manager will meet you outside the main doors of the Providenciales International Airport and you will all travel together to the Center on South Caicos.

It is important for you to check with the airline you are using to travel from the US to Providenciales, but the standard baggage allowance is two checked bags, one carry-on bag, and a personal item. Some US airlines charge for any/all checked luggage, so you should look into that and budget accordingly.

No individual bag should weigh more than 70lbs, and your total luggage (checked bags and carry-on bag) should not exceed 75lbs. This maximum weight limit does not include your personal item (purse/small backpack). **Fall semester** students will travel by ferry between Provo and South at the beginning and end of the semester, but these luggage restrictions still apply as there is limited storage on the ferry. **Spring semester** students will use the local airline (InterCaribbean Airlines) to travel from Provo to South at the beginning of the semester and will travel by ferry at the end. If your luggage exceeds 75lbs, the airline may charge \$0.50 for each pound above 75, and this fee can only be paid for in cash. For this reason, you are encouraged to pack your belongings in advance so you can determine how heavy your bags will be and whether or not you will need to adjust your packing. The best advice is to pack conservatively and to not exceed the 75lb limit.

## About SFS Turks & Caicos

### History of the Region

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The TCI have a diverse history filled with indigenous populations, salt traders, and cotton and sisal plantations. The TCI have been under the British flag for most of the last 400 years. In 1972, the TCI became a British Dependent Territory; though the Parliament and Ministers are elected locally, the British government appoints a Governor, who holds ultimate authority.

The population of the TCI (approximately 31,500) is divided across many islands. Non-belongers represent about 60% of the population. Grand Turk is the seat of government and the second most popular tourist destination. Providenciales (or Provo) is the most developed for tourism, which began in earnest in the mid-1980s. The TCI welcome more than 250,000 visitors each quarter, and hotel construction continues at a rapid pace. The other islands, including South Caicos, host little tourism at the present time and are home to small-scale business and subsistence fishing. However, several resorts are under construction on South Caicos and significant changes are expected to accompany their opening.

### Online Resources for TCI Current Events

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[www.suntci.com](http://www.suntci.com)

[www.caribbeannewsnow.com/tci.php](http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/tci.php)

[www.tcinewsnow.com](http://www.tcinewsnow.com)

### Weather and Climate

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The climate in the TCI is hot and dry. The dry season on South lasts from February until September, and the wet season lasts from October to January, with an average annual rainfall of 17 inches (42.5 cm) or less. Temperatures vary little throughout the year from the mean of 80° F, but the evening temperatures in December, January and February can get dip into the low 60s. Due to the arid conditions, fresh water is in critically short supply, and special attention must be paid to water use.

Part of living and working in the Caribbean is facing the potential threat of hurricanes. Hurricane season runs from June 1st to November 30th, but August, September and October are traditionally the most active months. SFS has access to shelter and safety in the event that a severe storm passes near South.

### Geography and Ecology

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The TCI are a limestone archipelago lying at the southeastern tip of the Bahamian archipelago, approximately 575 miles (925 km) southeast of Miami and 100 miles (170 km) north of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and 888 miles (1,430 km) northwest of Puerto Rico. The total land area of the island complex is about 166 square miles (430 km<sup>2</sup>).

The islands are ancient coral seamounts that have been periodically exposed and covered by changes in sea level. South Caicos lies at the southeastern edge of the Caicos Bank and is approximately 12 square miles (32 km<sup>2</sup>, maximum elevation = 157 feet; 48 m).

The vegetation on South is a scrubby “coppice” plant community, dominated by plants that are well-adapted to the xeric conditions. Most shrubs are less than 6 feet (2 m) in height, cacti are abundant, trees are uncommon, and palm trees are relegated to a few ornamental plantings in Cockburn Harbour. The soil of South is generally poor and unable to support agriculture; however, it is likely that the original plant and soil covers of the island were much richer and that human activity has changed the ecosystem greatly.

The marine environment of South Caicos is almost pristine and ideal for learning and research. The offshore areas support a variety of marine habitats, including vast sea grass beds, coral reefs,

mangroves, and sand flats. Coral reef habitats include patch reefs, barrier reefs, fringing reefs, and deep reefs. Underwater visibility often exceeds 100 ft. (30 m). Due in part to upwelling of nutrients from the deep ocean, the bank has supported extensive commercial conch and lobster fisheries in the past.



### South Caicos and Cockburn Harbour

South Caicos is not a resort island – there are no swaying palm trees and very few amenities. It is a small, arid island with many cacti and salt bushes. Virtually the entire South population resides in Cockburn (pronounced "Coburn") Harbour on the southwestern shore. The population is approximately 800-1,200, varying as individuals (primarily younger males) emigrate for employment and return for the lobster fishing season.

The number of cars and trucks on the island is growing, but many people still get around by foot. Cats, dogs, donkeys, and horses roam freely. Many locals carry their household water daily from a municipal supply. Telephone service is adequate, but expensive. Basketball and soccer are the most popular local sports, although cricket is coming back to the islands as well.

There are a number of small stores that carry groceries and household items (although none would be considered a souvenir shop), small family restaurants, and 14 churches. There is a lovely Bed & Breakfast and one hotel that are currently open to accommodate a small number of guests. South has one bank that is open one morning per week, and a single ATM was installed in a shop in 2012. Everything is imported, and most items are subject to a 40% duty. Prices therefore average nearly 200% of mainland U.S. rates. Many things that might be easily accessible elsewhere are not available locally on South and therefore can only be imported with two weeks' notice.

One of the most important aspects of Cockburn Harbour, from a resource management standpoint, is that it is the center of a thriving lobster and conch fishery in the TCI. In fact, the TCI are one of the largest exporters of conch in the world. Cockburn Harbour has three conch and lobster processing plants that export seafood in large quantities.

## Program Overview

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Since the opening of the Center for Marine Resource Studies, SFS has worked closely with the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA) on a variety of conch and lobster-related fisheries projects of local importance. At present, South is awaiting the opening or expansion of large-scale tourist developments, which have been underway for years. There is also a plan to dredge the harbor for a deep-water port in East Caicos, as well as a deep-water port proposal for South. SFS is involved in the natural resource inventories that are an essential step in formulating resource management plans for several important resource-dependent sites.

Recently, the Center has been involved in marine parks planning and the review of environmental impact assessment documents. Both projects have partnered SFS with the TCI Government.

The TCI are at a critical point in their development, when decisions regarding fisheries development and management, tourism development, and national park design and management will play a pivotal role in the success of national development schemes.

SFS uses SCUBA diving and snorkeling as a tool for research and education. SFS programs are NOT designed for people whose primary interest is sport diving. Faculty will often have students snorkel instead of SCUBA dive because this allows for increased time spent in the water and ease of communication. South offers outstanding diving, but the focus of our logistical resources is on the academic and research program. Please reconsider attending this program if your primary interest is recreational SCUBA diving. There are other less expensive ways to go SCUBA diving. The use of SCUBA and the sites chosen for dives are wholly based on the research needs of the Center. Semester students can expect to dive an average of 10-20 times during the program. **Water activities are entirely dependent on the weather; therefore, please be flexible and prepared for scheduled activities to change in the event of bad weather.**

With the above information in mind, SCUBA is part of the learning experience. Diving involves groups of 4-7 students and a Dive Master who go out in small boats to sites generally within a mile of the Center. SFS follows conservative diving table use.

If you are not SCUBA certified for this program, you will experience no restrictions in terms of course content. Most of the fieldwork is accomplished in waters less than 20 feet (7m) deep, well within snorkeling range.

Students who plan to dive during the program may obtain their certification prior to arrival from a recognized organization such as PADI, NAUI, CMAS, or SSI, or enroll in the PADI Open Water course offered at the SFS field station. Specific information and details about the SFS Open Water course will be sent several months before the program begins. There is also an Advanced Open Water course offered during the semester, which will be further explained once you arrive. Students who plan to dive must also purchase DAN insurance prior to arriving at the Center. Please see the **Insurance, Health, and Safety** section of this Field Preparation Guide for more information. Students who are certified before arriving in the field will perform a SCUBA and rescue skills checkout with an SFS Dive

Master before diving with the program. Additionally, a written exam on dive policy may be given at the discretion of the Diving Safety Officer.

## Facilities

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The Center is located in Cockburn Harbour in a modest former hotel previously known as the “Admirals’ Arms Inn.” The Center and student rooms sit on top of a 20 foot cliff facing the sea and provide a spectacular view of the sunset and starlit skies. Each room sleeps four to six students in bunk beds and has a freshwater shower and sink and saltwater toilet. Fifteen hotel-style rooms arranged in three wings extend from the main building, which houses dining room, kitchen, classroom and library facilities. You will be sharing close quarters with about 50 other people (students and staff).

The Center overlooks the Cockburn Harbour entrance, and is structured in the shape of a large U, with the open side facing the sea to the south and west. Architecture is Caribbean style, using shade and trade wind ventilation to keep things comfortable in the heat. The Center has a combined library and computer room for writing final reports and data analysis.

There is a dive locker and snorkel shed on the property that houses the compressor and stores SFS’ SCUBA tanks and your personal equipment. The Center has a small fleet of five boats, most of which are kept alongside a pier at the east end of the property.

## Water Use and Sanitation

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South Caicos is not a lush, green island, although the ocean views and underwater scenery are spectacular. Fresh water is a precious commodity on South since the island receives little rainfall. The SFS Center uses captured rainwater for its fresh water supply and does not use water as one might in the United States. The average Turks and Caicos Islander uses 7 gallons of water per day; the average American uses 90-150 gallons per day. The Center must maintain its rate of consumption at local levels. You will be oriented on habits that conserve the very limited water supply. You will be able to rinse your dive/snorkel gear sufficiently in fresh water, but we must limit the use of fresh water where we can. You will be able to take a fresh cold-water shower once a week. Bathing in the ocean is common (with biodegradable soap only). Despite stringent water restrictions on showers, the toilets use an unlimited supply of saltwater. You will find that hand washing your laundry with seawater will suffice. No laundry facilities are available at the Center. Each student room has a sink with running fresh water (for brushing teeth, etc.) and a shower (for use once per week).

The Center drinking water is runoff collected from the rooftops and a concrete catchment area. This water is stored in a cistern. It is pumped through a sediment filter (5 micron filter) and then chlorinated to 1-3 pm. As a final step, the drinking water tap in the kitchen, which is the only recommended drinking water, is passed through another filter and an ultraviolet sterilizer. Drinking water in town is not recommended unless it is bottled.

## Research Equipment

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The Center's commitment to non-destructive field research has led to the accumulation of an extensive collection of laboratory equipment. Sampling equipment is therefore limited to transect tapes,

calipers, etc. Consequently, the Center does not have a laboratory as such. The field sites are the laboratory. The Center has one research-grade binocular and one high-power microscope. Other equipment includes a pan balance (sensitivity to 0.01g), plankton net, some glassware, and a chemical test kit.

### Center SCUBA Equipment

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The center owns an electrically driven Bauer Mariner Vertical MII E3 charging 8.4 scfm<sup>1</sup> with a Bauer Junior II as support. The center operates all compressed gas equipment at a maximum pressure of 3000 PSI. Only trained/certified members of staff operate the compressor.

The center owns almost 100 80-cubic foot aluminum 6061 alloy cylinders. All cylinders are visually inspected after every year or before and all cylinders undergo a non-jacket volumetric hydro pressure test every five years as industry standard. The center provides weight for divers so they do not need to bring any. All snorkel equipment is your responsibility.

### Library and Computers

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During the 2008 hurricanes, most of the library resources at the Center were destroyed. We are currently rebuilding and restocking this library. The focus of the collection will be on topics of direct relevance to the Center — primarily marine resource management and tropical coastal environments. If you have applicable books that you would like to donate, you are encouraged to bring materials that can be left on-site. Though SFS does its best to update its library accordingly, you should plan to rely on the databases and online library available to you through your home institution during your SFS program. SFS does not provide additional access to any e-library resources from our Centers. Before arriving in-country for your SFS program, you should make arrangements with your home school to have remote access to your library's online journals, as you will use this very often during your program. **Make sure you know your remote library log-in and password, understand your home school's policy on accessing library materials remotely, and configure your laptop to access your school's online libraries and e-journals before you arrive in the field.**

At a minimum, there will be five networked student computers available, running Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office software. Access controls on all student computers will prevent additional software installations and settings changes.

**While there are a few computers available to use at the Center, students are required to bring their own laptop computers with them for use during the program. Students are not allowed to use computers during lecture time; however, personal computers prove to be useful outside of the classroom. Please see the "Required Items for the Classroom" section of the packing list later in the guide for more details.**

SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite 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.

**Be sure to take your project data with you upon completion of the program, as it will not be available from SFS later.**

## Food

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Almost all food is imported to the Center, much of it by an island freighter which only visits South every two weeks. Our two local cooks prepare three meals a day Monday through Saturday (program days), and on Sundays (non-program days) the staff and students will cook together to make brunch and dinner.

SFS works to ensure that balanced meals are prepared, but unlike large college dormitory kitchens, usually only a single entree, with a vegetarian alternative, is prepared for each meal. Be prepared to eat canned fruits and vegetables, as fresh produce arrives on the boat every two weeks, but usually only lasts a week. If you have any good recipes that serve 40+ people, please bring them. Despite the location of the Center, fresh seafood is not readily available.

Please inform SFS if you have any special medical or dietary restrictions. If you have dietary restrictions, you will need to be flexible and not expect much variety in your diet. It may be difficult to accommodate exclusive dietary requirements. If your requirements are extreme, please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss. You may want to consider taking vitamins, or bringing personal supplies of preferred foods, if you have dietary restrictions or preferences. There are 2 refrigerators onsite for student use. Since you spend so much time in the water during this program, you will be very active each day and you may want to eat more frequently than you normally do. Bringing snacks from home, or extra spending money to purchase snacks locally if you are not picky, is a very good idea.

## Special Dietary Requirements

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In many cases, dietary requirements can be accommodated; however the meals may not be to your standards at home. We do our best to provide well-rounded meals for all participants while observing dietary restrictions. Being flexible with food preferences is necessary as we are cooking for a group rather than providing individualized meals.

**Student Dietary Needs** are defined as documented by a medical professional (such as food allergies) or required because of religious observance. These dietary needs must be listed on the student's online medical review and the student must notify their Admissions Counselor of this need prior to arriving at the Center. It may be difficult to accommodate exclusive dietary requirements; please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss any of your questions regarding your diet.

**Student Dietary Preferences**, such as a vegan or vegetarian diet may be accommodated, but the variety of food may be limited due to the location of the program, travel schedules, etc. Due to the group nature of the SFS experience, the cooks are unable to prepare individual meals. Although past vegan students have found our meals to be both delicious and sufficient, please be prepared to bear any additional costs associated with veganism or any special dietary requirements (students may need to purchase their own food in town/bring a substantial supply with them)

## Special Religious Requirements

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If you have questions regarding a religious holiday that falls during program time, please contact your Admissions Counselor immediately upon acceptance. We will try to accommodate students' religious



observances. However, schedules often involve complex coordination with many parties and reservations are often made months in advance. Any missed program time will necessarily need to be made up.

## Cleaning

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Please be ready to contribute and pull your weight as part of a team. Students and staff aid in unloading and stocking of food shipments. Student and staff teams assist with the clean-up at every meal. In addition to kitchen duties, you may also serve on a student committee concerned with greening the site, planning social events, or helping to organize academic activities. Also, every week students and staff participate in a site clean-up, which helps to keep the site in good shape. Students rotate responsibilities of cleaning rooms, site maintenance, monitoring the garden/worm composting, and organizing the common spaces. All of these responsibilities are integral parts to positive communal living.

## A Typical Weekday at the Center

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SFS programming operates 6 days per week. An example schedule of daily activities on Monday through Friday is spelled out below. The Saturday schedule varies as it is a mixture of diving/snorkeling activities, site clean-up, and community outreach. Sundays are non-programs days.

0700 Breakfast  
0750 Morning Meeting  
0800 Lecture (classroom or field)  
0900 Lecture (classroom or field)  
1000 Break  
1020 Lecture (classroom or field)  
1120 Lecture (classroom or field)  
1230 Lunch  
1400 Field Work  
1830 Dinner  
1930 Evening activities vary, but may include lecture/dive/snorkel/study/free time

## A Typical Week at the Center

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The weekly schedule on South will vary significantly from the beginning of the program to the end. The first week is filled with orientation and introductions to each of the courses and the program as a whole. After the first week and for the next 7-8 weeks, you will typically have 12-15 lectures a week plus 4-8 other meetings (organizational, research/paper presentations, guest lectures). The afternoons are generally filled with field work or research. Most of these activities take place in the water, but some are terrestrial/town-based. Academic and other program activities are scheduled 6 days per week, Monday through Saturday. Sundays are typically non-program days on which students can relax, explore South Caicos, and catch up on assignments.

After you complete your exams and have your mid-semester break (more details later in this guide), the lectures and organized classes diminish in frequency and are replaced with blocks of time allocated to the Directed Research projects. Groups of 2-8 students work with staff members on specific



projects relative to the faculty member's expertise and geared toward student interests. Meetings are scheduled to offer training sessions in the skills needed to complete the research. These include sessions on statistics, paper writing formats, computer spreadsheets, word processing, and laboratory analysis. You spend the last month or so of the semester focusing on your Directed Research.

Throughout the entire program there will be morning meetings and site clean-ups that everyone is required to take part in. There are also community outreach projects twice a week, where students assist local students and host Community Engagement Days each Saturday afternoon.

**In order to lock the gates at night for the protection and security of people and property at SFS-CMRS, there is a student curfew weeknights and Sunday of 11:00 PM and midnight on Saturdays. The curfew aides us in maintaining a positive relationship with the entire South Caicos community, and is strictly enforced. If you feel that you may have trouble adhering to a curfew policy, please speak with an Admissions Counselor as this may not be the best program for you.**

### Students and the Local Community

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SFS is involved with the community in many ways. Students and staff often assist with community-wide outreach projects such as teaching local elementary students how to read, participating in a homework club at the local high school, or pairing with a local family in the Friendship Family Program. Every Saturday afternoon, the Center hosts children from the community who want to participate in swim lessons led by SFS students (many TCI youth are not comfortable in the ocean), as well as sports, games, arts and crafts. We offer English and computer lessons based on individual's needs. The Center hosts three invitational dinners each year, and invites the community to Directed Research presentations. These events are both festive and educational, giving the Center the opportunity to share the research that is being done with local residents. Other engagement with the local community is primary student-driven. Students who take the initiative to involve themselves in local sports, church communities, etc. enjoy these rewarding experiences.

Please remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies from culture to culture and be sensitive to this when you are away from the Center or interacting with community members. The staff will brief you on this in more detail during Orientation.

### Policies and Expectations

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For a reiteration and a more comprehensive list of Center protocols, please refer to the **Turks & Caicos Program Manual** found on the *Accepted Students* page of our website. Remember that these rules are in place for both the safety of SFS staff and students, but also to maintain a healthy relationship with our local community on South Caicos. It is important to think less about how these policies might impact you, and more about how your actions and behavior may impact the community. SFS programs are not vacations and they are unlike many traditional study abroad programs. You will be expected to learn, understand, and abide by the rules as they are laid out for you. It is important for you to imagine yourself in this structured setting to make sure SFS is the right fit for you.

**Smoking/Drinking/Drugs:** If you smoke, please be conscious of where you smoke and where you deposit your butts. Smoking is only allowed in designated areas of the field station or outside the Center. All smoking must be done at least 100 feet from buildings. South Caicos is *very* dry. Fires can start easily, so please place all butts in the cans provided. Drinking is not tolerated while on CMRS property or during any *program* time. Those 18 years or older may legally drink in the TCI. However, you must follow local laws, which include no open containers on the streets. Intoxication and possession of alcohol or drugs on site are not tolerated and could result in probation or expulsion. Use of illegal drugs is prohibited during your entire time here and would result in immediate expulsion.

**Waterfront Activities/Swimming:** Large and small vessel boat traffic, wind, waves, weather, water currents, and marine life pose significant hazards to swimmers in Cockburn Harbour. To manage these risks, we have a swim zone, marked with buoys, next to the dock area directly in front of the Center. No swimming in channels for your safety; please refrain from jumping from elevation on and off of SFS property. You must pass a swim test, administered by waterfront staff, before going into either the pool or the swim zone. Students should always swim with a buddy. SCUBA will be led by waterfront staff only. No swimming after consuming alcohol. You must abide by the 12-hour (snorkel) and 24-hour (SCUBA) restriction to drinking before waterfront activities. Swimming in the pool at the field station is allowed between 6am-10pm.

**Center Hours/Sign In & Out Board:** The Center operates on a curfew of 11:00 pm Sunday to Friday and 12:00 am on Saturday. The sign in/out board is across from the front gate. Students **MUST** sign out/in when leaving the Center, except during program-related activities accompanied by staff.

**Security of the Center/Visitors:** Gates are locked at the East Wing by 10:00 pm and the main gate is locked at curfew. You must get Center Director approval before inviting visitors into CMRS. There are no overnight visitors. All unannounced visitors must be accompanied to meet the Center Director, or asked to come back. Please report unauthorized site entry immediately.

**Quiet Hours/Areas:** For common courtesy within our SFS community, quiet hours begin at 10:00 pm every night. During quiet hours (6:00 am-10:00pm), swimming in the pool is not allowed. The classroom, the computer room, and the staff offices are designated quiet areas all of the time. CMRS has 24 hour courtesy hours, so you are justified speaking up if an individual is causing excessive noise.

**Animals:** Pets or animals of any kind are not allowed in the Center. Please do not bring any stray dogs or cats back to the Center as we do not have the resources to care for animals. You will notice many stray dogs and cats on South, and this is a serious problem of the community. With limited funds, the government is not focusing on the problem, and locals generally do not care for their animals in the way you would. Thankfully there are two non-profits whose mission is to protect and aid the overwhelming populations. We help our contacts at The TCI SPCA and The Potcake Place, based in Providenciales, by 1) turning the CMRS into a temporary veterinary clinic for annual spays and neuters, 2) sending sick animals to them (when space is available), and 3) educating you about their programs that help visitors adopt TCI animals. Please also take caution when near animals on South; there are wild horses and donkeys which are not accustomed to human interaction. Some of the stray (and owned) dogs and cats can also be aggressive.

## Field Trip

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Though the majority of the research conducted during the program is focused on the island of South Caicos itself, it is important for students to understand the socioeconomic and environmental situation of the rest of the Turks and Caicos Islands. To facilitate this understanding, students will participate in

a three-day field trip to a number of neighboring islands in order to explore the area and gain background knowledge of the differing local cultures and livelihood strategies.

The group will take a ferry to Middle and North Caicos to explore ecosystems different from those found on South Caicos (tropical forest, protected wetlands, and karst in the form of limestone caves). Students will visit local farms on North Caicos and bat caves on Middle Caicos, among other sites. The group will then continue to the tourism capital of Providenciales for one night. On Provo (as Providenciales is locally known), students will put their newly developed social science skills to the test, surveying tourists on the islands famous white sand beaches and at a variety of tourist sites. The research they undertake will allow them to both comprehend the impact that tourism and development can have on marine and small tropical island environments, as well as the various attitudes and values of foreign and local tourists.

### Mid-Semester Break

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Semester programs in the TCI include a five-day break, during which time **you must leave** the program (South Caicos) and travel on your own or in a group. The Center is closed during this break and you are responsible for yourself during this time. Some students use this time to meet up with friends or family. Others choose to travel with other students or on their own. Regardless of your plans, you must depart the South Caicos community during this period. **The exact dates of this break are not determined until about a week before the s starts, so it is not something you should plan for far in advance.** Most students decide where they want to travel after they arrive at the Center, and stay local to minimize travel and maximize vacation time! Break extensions will not be honored. Some examples of destinations include visiting another island of the TCI, the Dominican Republic, or Miami. SFS staff members will be able to assist you in making the necessary arrangements for travel and accommodations.

Before the mid-semester break, staff will brief you on current health and safety concerns as well as necessary precautions for traveling in the host country and/or surrounding countries. You are advised to travel in groups of two or more and will be given emergency contact numbers to carry with you during the break. You should also plan to submit a rough itinerary, with phone numbers where possible, prior to the break. **Please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor with any concerns regarding the mid-semester break.**

### Communications

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#### Mail

Letters to the TCI from the US normally take 3-6 weeks to arrive. You are welcome to give the Center address to your friends and family and ask them to send you letters. However, we ask that you please tell your friends and family to **avoid sending packages to the Center, unless using FedEx.** USPS Package service is very slow, and a considerable nuisance for the recipient. You will be liable for all applicable customs duty when you receive a package. The sender will have filled out a declaration of value; duty (what you will have to pay in cash to pick up the package) is likely to be 50% of this amount plus shipping. Invoices or sales slips should be enclosed in the package as proof of value. All packages will be opened and examined by customs officers. Given the above, please plan to pack and carry with

you everything you will need for the duration of the program. **Please advise family and friends not to send mail in the last month of the program, as it will not arrive before you leave.**

If you truly need a package sent to you, SFS encourages that the package to be sent using FedEx as this carrier typically takes the least amount of time. Be aware that not only will there be charges for tax and duty, but there will be an additional carrier charge to cover the cost of the package being sent from the Providenciales FedEx office to South Caicos.

Letters sent from the Center to the US usually take one to three weeks to arrive, although it can take much longer (up to 3 months!). You can buy stamps locally at \$1 per stamp.

**Regular mail should be sent to the following address:**

Student name  
The School for Field Studies  
P.O. Box 007, South Caicos  
Turks & Caicos Islands  
British West Indies

**Express mail can be sent (FedEx is recommended) to the following address:**

Student Name  
The School for Field Studies  
c/o Heidi Hertler  
1 West Street  
South Caicos  
Turks & Caicos Islands  
British West Indies

### **Telephone**

The Center has a **student telephone** (through a local cell phone provider) to which you will have access for incoming calls. You will not be able to make outgoing calls on this line (even with phone cards). The number for family and friends to call is (649) 332-3364. Some students have had success arranging an international calling plan on their home network, and have been able to use their home cell phone to contact family and friends. Alternatively, you can buy a local SIM card to use with your personal cell phone, but keep in mind that your phone must not be linked to a network in order to use it with a local SIM card. Another option that past students recommend is buying a local cell phone (\$100) with pre-paid minutes through Digicel, IslandCom, or Lime (the 3 local carriers) as the best way to keep in touch by phone. However, keep in mind that it is much cheaper for family and friends to call the TCI student phone, than it is for students to call the USA from the TCI. **Internet programs such as Skype and FaceTime are discouraged as your main contact tool**, as our resources are limited (see next section).

### **Internet**

Internet access and e-mail are available for students at the Center to support **research and educational work**. In order to maintain the stability of the network, the following actions are prohibited:

- Downloading any non-research related files
- Downloading large files, especially audio/video files (including iTunes, Spotify, and streaming videos from YouTube, Megavideo, Netflix, etc.)
- Downloading any software application
- Gaining unauthorized access to remote Internet systems or abusing Internet systems or Internet users.
- Taking actions that compromise the security of the center network.
- Representing The School for Field Studies in any manner.
- Distributing SFS-owned knowledge or propagating falsified information about SFS.
- Spamming, hacking, virus distribution, etc.
- Illegally copying or redistributing copyrighted material.
- Viewing pornographic or illegal content.

In the event of any violation of this policy SFS reserves the right to suspend or terminate any or all Internet access. These rules can be adapted and changed at any time. We must emphasize the fact that the Internet is a resource and not a luxury; therefore personal use should be kept to a minimum.

The internet is un-reliable at the center, due to its remote island location. The networked computers in the classroom are most reliable when it comes to consistently connecting to the internet. Students have found the network accessed by their personal computers is less reliable, very slow and frequently freezes up, partially due to the high volume of students attempting to use this network at once.

Therefore, SFS encourages students to “unplug” a bit during their semester abroad and certainly not expect to use the internet in the same way they are used to at home. Living in the TCI is a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of the surrounding marine and natural environment, and interact with locals and friends from the program. While students are encouraged to stay in touch with family and friends at home, **it is important to limit the amount time spend surfing the internet or uploading/downloading anything**, as it slows the internet use needed for academic and communication purposes and takes away from the SFS student experience.

### *News from the Field*

Be sure to let your friends and family know to check SFS News from the Field ([www.fieldstudies.org/blog](http://www.fieldstudies.org/blog)) often! Updates will include photos, posts from the faculty on what students have been doing most recently, as well as entries 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 Beverly, Massachusetts at 978-741-3567. 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 978-741-3544, once prompted, press “2” for the

emergency system. While headquarters' staff members know 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.**

## What to Bring

SFS' suggested packing list contains all the items that are essential for this program. It was compiled based on feedback from past students and current staff; other than the required items, **most items are only suggestions. You do not need to bring everything listed in the optional sections. You should pack based on your own lifestyle and preferences.** You must have the required clothing and equipment when you arrive on South, as it will be difficult to acquire items locally at a reasonable cost.

We suggest that you pack your passport, underwear, a shirt, a pair of shorts, minimal toiletries, a swimsuit, sandals, medications, mask, and snorkel in your carry-on bag just in case your bags are delayed. Dive gear is best packed in a sturdy duffel bag. Special "dive bags" are expensive and merely label the contents as valuable to others. Make sure your equipment is in excellent condition and ready to use upon arrival.

### Electrical Appliances

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All electrical outlets at the Center are the same voltage (110) as those in the United States. No adapters or converters are necessary, but we strongly recommend that you bring a **surge protector**.

### Required Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items

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You will have little storage space in your room; therefore, you should keep extra items to a minimum- **pack as efficiently and lightly as possible.** Loose, cool, cotton clothes are most comfortable. Women have found that casual sundresses and sarongs are good additions to their attire (depending on personal taste/style). Bear in mind that clothing gets heavily used, dirty, damp, and can only be washed in saltwater. Clothing items that resist dirt and dry quickly are good for this reason. You should not expect to bring any clothing home in good condition. Local standards of dress are more conservative, especially for women, than what we are accustomed to in the States. As a female visitor on South Caicos, shorts or skirts must be at least mid-thigh length and shirts should cover the shoulders, chest, and back when interacting with member of the local community. Students must dress more conservatively when attending local church services (for example) or during community engagement activities. Modesty while experiencing another culture is always wise and culturally sensitive, however around the field station itself you do not need to be as modest as you do when you interact with the wider community. Shirts and shorts or dresses must be worn in the classroom and at meal times – simply wearing a bathing suit is not appropriate during these types of activities.

**Note: this packing list does not suggest amounts, so pack according to your own needs and how frequently you plan on hand washing your laundry. You will not need to wear a new outfit every day – you can wear the same things over and over**

### **Required Clothing**

- Shorts. Shorts that stay clean, protect your upper legs, and dry quickly are best (such as board shorts or athletic/running shorts). Women should show modesty by not wearing super short shorts in town.
- Sarongs/sundresses for women (if you typically wear such clothing)
- T-shirts and tank tops. While it is hot here and you will most often choose to wear tank tops, there are times -walking in town at night, visiting with locals for research purposes, hosting guests at the Center- when sleeves are more appropriate. Shoulders must be covered when working in the kitchen in accordance with health code regulations.
- Long-sleeved, lightweight shirts for sun and insect protection in the field
- Rash guard – essential for water activities.
- Sweatshirt, depending on what weather you are used to! Nights are cool from November through April.
- Bathing suits, including a one-piece suit for women to be worn while interacting with community members (or plan to wear a rash guard with a two piece).
- Pajamas or other suitable, lightweight sleeping attire
- Casual long pants (for protection from insects)
- One nice outfit for scheduled meetings/events with local officials.
- Socks
- Sneakers – for running and exploring the trails around South Caicos
- Flip-flops, Tevas, or sandals – at least one sturdy pair that can withstand the rocks and sharp thorns around the island.
- Sunglasses, hat, and/or visor with brim

### **Required Personal Items, Gear, and Toiletries**

- Nalgene, canteens, or plastic quart/liter bottles (32 oz. CMRS logo water bottles are available for purchase at the field station for \$15.00)
- Anti-itch cream (Benadryl Gel and Calamine lotion work well)
- Insect Repellent - can be purchased locally
- Reef-safe waterproof sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 15. This can be purchased locally, as well. Brands like Reef, Badger, and Coral Safe are all good options.
- General toiletries: students often end up paying extra baggage charges by over-packing in this area. There is a decent selection of pharmacy and toiletry items available locally, including at our own Center! Here is our current inventory:
  - Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap (8 Oz. - \$10.00) in Peppermint, Tea Tree and Unscented formulas.
  - Caribbean SOLutions Reef-safe Sunscreen (6 oz. - \$15.00)
  - OFF Deep Woods Bug Spray (6 oz. - \$10.00)

**Biodegradable** soap, shampoo, and conditioner are important to bring for washing in seawater and freshwater showers (e.g. Dr. Bronner's, Bio Suds, Nature's Gate, JASON, Saive [some products], Giovanni, Campsuds, Outdoor Rx Anti-bacterial Outdoor Soap, Sea to Summit, Sea Savon Salt Water



Shampoo, EO (*essential oils*) and Body Bath). Health food stores carry many types of biodegradable products, but Suave also makes some biodegradable products that are widely available – check the label or call the company to be sure that are purchasing the ‘biodegradable formula’. You can purchase Dr.Bronner’s, which works for all types of washing, at the Center to save you space and weight.

- Prescription medications or other medicines you require (like Dramamine for motion sickness) to last the entire length of the program. You should bring over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen, acetaminophen, cold medicine, pepto bismol, etc. These medications will not be available at the field station and are difficult to find locally! **Please note that the Center has a first aid station with basic supplies only (band aids, tape, antiseptic). We do not have oral medicine for distribution.** All prescriptions must be cleared through the Diving Safety Officer before diving, as some medications contraindicate diving activities.
- Feminine Hygiene products: women should bring enough tampons or sanitary napkins to last the duration of the program. We encourage you to find the most environmentally friendly, biodegradable options, and look into alternatives such as the Diva Cup: [www.divacup.com](http://www.divacup.com).
- Extra prescription glasses or contacts
- Backpack (a good sized day pack will suffice)
- Alarm clock (if you don’t have an alarm feature on your phone)
- Headlamp or small, lightweight flashlight and batteries (bring extras). Batteries are expensive; therefore rechargeable batteries are recommended. The Center can recharge AA, C, or D batteries.

### **Required Items for the Room**

- Mosquito net (for rigging on top or bottom twin-size bunk bed – choose one with four corners, not single anchor point) along with string and lots of tacks to rig it.
- Small personal fan - particularly important for the fall semester. Clip-on fans can be rented at the Center for \$5 with a \$15 deposit.
- Bath towel (quick dry towels are best!), face cloth, and beach towel
- Bed sheets – twin size, fitted and flat – and pillowcases. Pillows are provided.
- Lightweight sleeping bag or other blanket for overnight beach camping trips and/or if you tend to get cold while sleeping.
- Surge protector for personal electronics (camera, fan, etc.)

### **Required Items for the Classroom**

- **Laptop computer.** As a general recommendation, you should bring a PC (preferably) or Mac compatible laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2003 or later software, or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents. **You should be familiar with Word and Excel features as you will be required to use these programs for assignments.** Mac computers are less resilient and often fail in the hot, humid weather on South Caicos, so



bring a PC computer with you if possible. **There are no computer repair services available on South Caicos.**

***Note:** Keep in mind that all readings for classes will be done on the computer, as the Center does not have the resources to print out many copies of large documents. If you have an **Amazon Kindle** or similar e-reader, students have found them helpful because of their convenience/portability.*

- Laptop carrying case and a security cable or lock to protect your laptop. SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite 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.
- Enough notebooks for 3 classes
- A flash drive (memory stick) with at least 2 GB (gigabytes) or more capacity – **you'll use this to submit all of your assignments**
- Pencils, pens, highlighters, and markers
- Any other school supplies you'll need for the semester. Don't count on buying any of these items locally. Even if they are available, they will be expensive.
- Underwater camera – used as part of your coursework for the Marine Ecology class. They only need to be waterproof to 30 feet/10 meters. Aside from your ecology assignments, these can only be used on recreational dives/snorkels after the mid-semester break.

### **Required Equipment for Snorkeling and SCUBA**

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**Note:** There is **NO** rental of SCUBA equipment on South Caicos. SCUBA tanks, weight belts and weights are provided at the Center. **DO NOT** bring weights to the program with you!

- Mask: Check for a good fit and solid strap construction and bring an extra strap. If you need corrective lenses, you'll find it easier to get a supply of disposable contacts for the program rather than investing in a mask with prescription lenses. You will be required to remove your mask underwater during review skills and training, so disposable contacts are the best option. **If you are unable to wear contacts, you should purchase a prescription mask because you will need to be able to see underwater!**
- Fins: There are two options, 1) fins with straps, sized to fit over dive booties (strongly preferred as you can use the booties in many other situations) – bring extra straps and clips OR 2) full foot fins.
- Hard-soled diving booties or similar wading/diving shoe. These are essential!
- Snorkel: Make sure you have a full-sized adult snorkel. Smaller models will restrict air flow.
- Underwater slate (4x6 or comparable size) and regular pencils (bring at least 2 spare pencils, as well). These can be purchased cheaply on eBay.
- Mr. Clean Magic Eraser – the best way to clean your underwater slate!

- Wetsuit: When performing work in water at 77-82°F for 45 minutes to 2 hours, it is possible to become hypothermic. A wet suit is also very important as protective barrier against biting and stinging marine organisms.

For those who plan to snorkel only: Fall and spring snorkelers may consider bringing a 1-3 mm “shorty” wetsuit depending on sensitivity to cold.

For those who plan to SCUBA dive: Spring semester students should strongly consider bringing a full-length, 1-3 mm thick wetsuit. Female students in particular should consider a warmer suit. Fall divers should also consider a 1-3 mm shorty, depending on tolerance for cool water.

**Overall, the maximum thickness you should bring is a 5 mm- we are in the tropics!**

- A mesh dive bag: Please ensure that this bag is large enough to hold your snorkel gear (mask, fins, booties, and snorkel).
- Waterproof watch: Make sure it can withstand the pressures of diving if you are a SCUBA diver. Students should bring extra watch batteries or even a “back-up” watch as there is nowhere to buy or repair watches on South Caicos.
- ‘Save A Dive’ Kit – when purchasing your equipment, ask the shop to put one of these together for you. This should include fin straps, mask straps, spare computer batteries, mouth pieces and bulbs for your flashlight.

**It is likely that you will have the opportunity to go on at least one optional night dive or night snorkel during your time at the Center (weather permitting).** We hold no responsibility if night dives/snorkels are not possible during a session. Divers do not need to have the Advanced Diver certification – the Open Water dive certification will suffice for participating in night dives. **If night water activities are offered (diving or snorkeling), you will be unable to participate unless you bring the items listed below:**

- Primary underwater flashlight for night **divers & snorkelers:** A standard dive light with adjustable strength is best – different circumstances and visibility conditions will call for different amounts of light. LED lights are suggested as they burn longer and can double as a flashlight on land. Bring rechargeable batteries and a charger – they better for the environment! Required of any students who wish to participate in any **night snorkels or SCUBA dives** that are offered.
- Secondary dive light source for night **divers only:** Can be a smaller light used as a backup. Required of any students who wish to participate in any **night SCUBA dives** that are offered.

### **Required Equipment specifically for SCUBA**

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**You MUST bring a SERVICE receipt for your SCUBA equipment (BC, Regulators) completed within the last 12 months. If your equipment is new (less than 12 months of age) then you MUST bring the sales receipt. Students arriving without this documentation will NOT be allowed to dive with the gear.**

- Dive Computer (with at least 75% battery power): There will be no opportunities to repair a dive computer that fails, so bring a backup battery and O-ring that you can change yourself as there are no facilities on South Caicos where this can be done should there be a problem. Because of the lack of repair facilities, **even students with a dive computer should bring PADI dive tables from your dive certification organization.**
  - A dive computer that provides depth, time, and no-decompression limits is mandatory. Some of these computers can be purchased with sensors that also provide information about tank pressure, which is acceptable.
  - If your dive computer does not have these sensors, you will need a **submersible pressure gauge** (SPG): The SPG displays tank pressure and is required equipment unless the information is displayed by the dive computer and sensor combination.
- Buoyancy Compensator ("BC"): Try on the BC before purchasing it to ensure a good fit! You should stand sideways in front of a mirror and make sure that there is no gap between your shoulder blades and the BC. You may even want to consider connecting the BC to a tank before trying it on.
- Primary (second stage) and secondary (second stage = octopus). Your first stage should have a yoke connection or you should bring a DIN to yoke adapter.
- Alternate air source retainer: Retains second stage regulator close to the body. Helps prevent damage to the reef and to your equipment and is important for safety.
- Console retainer: Retains the console close to the body. Helps prevent damage to the reef and to your equipment and is important for safety.
- Compass: Either wrist mount, BC mount, or (preferably) on your console mounted with a retractable clip.
- Underwater knife or cutting tool specifically intended for diving.

### Optional Clothing, Equipment, and Personal Items

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This list has been compiled based on suggestions and feedback from previous students – you might not need to bring **all** of these items, so it is important to keep in mind what you might *personally* need as you read through this list!

- Lightweight rain or spray jacket
- Leggings to wear during field exercises (for men and women) – these should be non-cotton as they are worn in the water to help protect against jellyfish stings.
- Board games, decks of cards, and ideas for different activities/things to do during nights at the Center
- **Textbooks:** The Reef Set: Reef Fish, Reef Coral, and Reef Creature (Florida, Caribbean, and Bahamas), by Paul Humann from New World Publications, Inc.
  - This textbook set is optional as there are several copies at the Center that you are welcome to borrow, but it is a great resource for students interested in pursuing marine biology or ecology in the future.
- Digital camera and plenty of memory cards, or a traditional camera with plenty of film! Some students have found it helpful to document the scope and specific nature of their work, particularly the Directed Research.

- Dry bag or otter box (waterproof container to protect small personal items – e.g. camera, medications)
- Sporting equipment: there is a volleyball court, soccer field and cricket ground. The local school also has a tennis court, but limited rackets. New or used tennis rackets, Frisbees, basketballs, soccer balls, beach volleyballs, and footballs will get plenty of use.
- Ear drops for after swimming/diving (please see Health and Safety in TCI section on page 35 for more information on ear care)
- Small personal reading lamp
- Index cards for flash cards
- Paperback books (a couple to read and exchange) – there is a small reading library at the Center
- Personal MP3 player, headphones, and speakers
- Spare pair of sunglasses
- External hard drive to back up laptop
- Bandanas
- Hair detangler for those with medium length to long hair
- Emergen-C/Airborne, and electrolyte power for water
- Collapsible storage containers, as there is limited closet and shelving space to store personal items. There are storage tubs under the beds in the rooms, but that is the only storage space you will have.
- Banners, posters, and flags from your home school – students come from colleges and universities all over the country, so it is fun to have each represented at the Center. They must be made to hang outdoors and withstand wind/rain, so no paper please!
- Any snack food that you like to eat frequently and may not be available locally such as granola bars, trail mix, crackers, peanut butter, chocolate, etc. – ***strongly encouraged!!***
- Collapsible fishing pole, if you are interested in fishing, though most locals use a line for fishing rather than a pole.

**Note:** Spear guns and lobster loopers are illegal in the TCI and will be confiscated by the TCI government; do NOT bring them! Fishing licenses are also required in the TCI. They can be purchased locally and students must adhere to local laws. Do not fish illegally or in MPAs!

### Optional SCUBA and Snorkel Equipment

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This list has been compiled based on suggestions and feedback from previous students – you might not need to bring **all** of these items, so it is important to keep in mind what you might *personally* need as you read through this list!

- Waterproof box (such as a “Pelican case”) to hold spare parts, glasses while diving, etc. This could be the “Save a Dive Kit” for keeping spare equipment parts.
- Snorkeling vest – only for students who are weak swimmers, but **STRONGLY** encouraged in such cases.

If you have specific questions regarding equipment, please contact your Admissions Counselor.

### Optional Supplies for the South Caicos Community

Schools here have limited equipment for hands-on science, art, and physical education. If you would like to bring items as donations, you certainly may and the SAM will help you distribute in an interactive, fun, respectful way. You will learn of other ways to give back to the community once you are at the Center. All board games and sporting equipment (sneakers, etc.) that are given to CMRS will be used by community members during engagement activities on Saturdays, by older residents at the Wellness Center, and by elementary school students during Physical Education classes. Anything you bring and donate to the field station will be used by the larger South Caicos community.

## Finances

Shopping on South Caicos is limited, and cash (US dollars) is the preferred medium of exchange as credit cards are not accepted at local stores (exception being the Cox Hotel). Many service stores in Provo and Grand Turk will accept cards. In September of 2012, an ATM machine was installed on South, so you will be able to occasionally withdraw more cash if necessary. However, it charges standard withdrawal fees, so it is still best to bring most of the cash you plan on spending with you to start. There are times, unfortunately, that the ATM does not have money or is malfunctioning. The bank on South is only open for 3 hours once a week. It is difficult to cash traveler's checks (e.g., American Express, Visa, Citibank, etc.) on South (with a \$1 bank fee per traveler's check cashed). Personal checks are not accepted, even by the bank, and the Center does not maintain sufficient funds to act as a bank. Cash should be carried in small denominations (preferably no bigger than \$20 bills- 5s and 10s are best for use in town) and you should plan to rely mostly on cash that you bring with you to last throughout the duration of the program. Debit or credit cards will be useful, though, while traveling during the mid-semester break. **We have a small safe on site that is only accessed by SFS staff where student valuables (passports, cash) can be secured.**

### Estimated Costs

Expenditure	Cost
Visitor's Pass Visa Renewal Fees	\$50 (cash only)
Spending money (depending on how often you plan to eat at local restaurants, purchase food and drinks in town, etc.)	\$550
Money if you plan to purchase a local cell phone or SIM card	\$100 + minutes
Break (mid-semester travel – highly dependent on your budget and living style)	Fall: \$500-700 Spring (peak travel season): \$600-800
Room/computer room deposits <b>Note:</b> Deposits will be returned on the day of departure.	\$60
Advanced Open Water course (optional, for SCUBA divers only)	\$150 (cash or credit card)
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATE</b>	<b>\$1,220 - \$1,720</b>

# Insurance, Health, and Safety

## *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. TCI public or private hospitals and clinics 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.

## *Personal 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.

## *Medical Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance*

Most insurance companies do not cover emergency medical evacuation costs. SFS provides students with emergency medical evacuation and repatriation insurance through American International Group, Inc. (AIG). This insurance is effective for the duration of the program. NOTE: This is not the same as health, medical or dental insurance.

Benefits include:

- \$350,000 for emergency medical evacuation
- \$100,000 for security or natural disaster evacuation
- \$20,000 for repatriation of remains

These services are managed through American International Assistance Services, Inc., (AIG), and can be accessed by SFS for its students and field staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Some of the services which can be accessed through AIG 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

### ***Divers Alert Network Insurance – REQUIRED for Divers***

Neither healthcare plans nor SFS' additional emergency evacuation policy will pay for treatment should you develop decompression sickness or other diving-related conditions. Dive-related injuries and illnesses are extremely rare at SFS, but they can happen, and the costs of even basic treatment can be high. Recompression facilities are available in the Turks & Caicos Islands, but the cost of those services can easily exceed US \$2,000. Currently, medical coverage is available through DAN (the Divers Alert Network) for US \$75 per year. When compared to the cost of professional medical treatment, SFS believes that a dive-specific insurance policy is a smart investment. For this reason, SFS requires all students who will be participating in SCUBA diving to purchase DAN insurance before the start of the program by calling 1-800-446-2671 or finding DAN on the web at

<https://www.diversalertnetwork.org/scuba-dive-insurance/>. It is possible to buy a membership to DAN without purchasing DAN insurance, so if you are planning to dive during your SFS program, you need to make sure that you have in fact purchased DAN insurance.

DAN is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to dive safety and accident prevention and is a recognized leader in the field of dive medicine research. At a minimum, you must register for the **DAN Master Plan (total cost \$75, including DAN membership)**, which provides coverage for any and all in-water injuries.

**When you sign up, you should include SFS's sponsor #030697.**

Note that you should send your registration directly to DAN in the envelope provided by the organization. **Do not send this registration form to The School for Field Studies.**

Finally, you must bring proof of coverage with you to the Center upon your arrival. The South Caicos staff will verify your policy at the start of the program. **You will not be allowed to SCUBA dive without proof of DAN insurance.**

### ***Safety Education***

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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 facilitate the process. The Traveling and Living Abroad section presents best practices and lists a number of information resources. This will serve you during your SFS



program time, during travels before or after the program, and during break and free time. During your on-site orientation you will learn about potential local hazards, safety systems, Center-specific rules, and the local operational objectives. You may have discussions based on case studies and on your experiences and those of your group members.

## Traveling and Living Abroad

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### Country Information

US State Dept. Country by Country Background Notes: [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/)

US Embassies and Consulates: [www.usembassy.state.gov](http://www.usembassy.state.gov)

CIA Country profiles including geography; people; government; economics; transportation; communications: [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.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

### 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 best to dress with respect for local customs, which may include a more conservative style for females, especially. Simply take note of how locals dress during the day and evenings, and do your best to fit in.

**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: [www.cdc.gov/travel](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.: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

### **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. In the common area of the Center there is a refrigerator where, if need be, students are permitted to store 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.

### **Dive Medical Screening**

The Safety Director and the Diving Safety Officer reserve the right to deny any diving privileges to any prospective diver if medical conditions are not met, or in cases of any unexpected anomalies. Certain

pre-existing conditions restrict or even preclude people from diving. SFS policy holds that persons with any of the following conditions must be evaluated by a DAN-approved physician and SFS to ensure their eligibility to dive.

Generally, diving will not be permitted for individuals with the following conditions:

1. Asthma or other severe respiratory disorders
2. Insulin dependent diabetes
3. Epilepsy or any seizure disorder
4. Pregnancy
5. Any condition which requires taking psychotropic medication or drugs that affect the central nervous system (Check with SFS Headquarters if you are taking any medication regularly; many physicians are unfamiliar with the special demands of diving)
6. Sickle-cell anemia
7. Any condition that inhibits normal cardiovascular functions
8. Any history of cardiac septal defects
9. Chronic ear or sinus conditions
10. Active depression, mania, or other psychiatric disorders
11. Eating disorders which may affect electrolyte balance or general health
12. History of migraine headaches
13. Bleeding disorders

It is important to note that this list is not complete; other conditions may preclude diving, as well. Any questionable medical backgrounds must be considered by a dive-knowledgeable physician in consultation with SFS staff and medical advisors.

### ***Food Safety***

To avoid illness, the CDC advises travelers 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. 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. For additional protection, SFS recommends all students bring a mosquito net to cover their dorm room bed.

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. Bites should be cleaned well with an antimicrobial soap or alcohol etc.

## Health and Safety in TCI

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In this section, we present some of the health and safety issues of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Statistically, the most common injuries sustained by students on SFS programs are recreational in nature. A common medical problem is traveler's diarrhea. However, international traveling and living presents potentially significant health and safety challenges.

The most common student health problem after arrival, and especially a month or two into the program, is ear issues. Please be sure to speak with your doctor about ways to care for your ears while you are in a wet, dusty environment. Ear issues are the most common problem encountered by students while they are here, whether or not there is prior history of infections, so be sure to talk about prevention and treatment with your own doctor.

Due to the remote nature of the program, there are some medical emergencies or conditions that may necessitate medical withdrawal from the program, including injuries and illnesses, such as infectious mononucleosis and malaria. Final decisions on medical withdrawal are made by School for Field Studies in conjunction with the treating physician.

## Travel Safety Resources

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: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)
- United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)
- Canadian Dept. of Foreign Affairs & International Trade: [www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/index.asp](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/index.asp)

## Disease

The TCI has its own unique health challenges. Risk from infectious disease is limited when compared to other countries in the tropics; however, it is still recommended that you consult with a travel medicine clinic or physician who can match up your health profile with this region and any additional travel that you may plan and work with you to create a health strategy that includes vaccinations, etc.

Please see <http://www.cdc.gov> for a list of immunizations recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including routine immunizations (vaccines that are given to all children

in the United States and that are usually required for matriculation into elementary school and into college) and immunizations especially for the country where you will be traveling.

### **CDC-Recommended Immunizations for Travelers to TCI**

**Hepatitis A** is a viral infection of the liver that results in jaundice and severe malaise. It is rarely fatal, but disease can be protracted, and infected persons can be ill for six weeks or more. The disease is transmitted through ingestion of food or water that is contaminated by infected fecal matter, even in microscopic amounts. Symptoms occur two to six weeks after first exposure to the virus. There are now two vaccines licensed in the United States that are extremely effective in preventing hepatitis A infection, and that are quite safe to administer. Both vaccines require two doses (the booster dose is given six to nine months after the initial dose). The initial dose, however, is effective in providing protection. The CDC recommends that all travelers to TCI receive this vaccine.

**Hepatitis B** is a contagious virus that is transmitted through blood, blood products, and other body fluids (such as semen). Symptoms include a sudden fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, dark urine, joint pain, and yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice). Symptoms may last from several weeks to several months, or can develop into chronic hepatitis B with increased chance of liver disease and liver cancer. Travelers can become infected through unprotected sex with an infected person, injection drug use, transfusions with unscreened blood, and contaminated needles, so the CDC recommends this vaccine for travelers who might have sex with a new partner, get a tattoo or piercing, or have any medical procedures.

**Typhoid fever** is a serious disease caused by bacteria in contaminated food and water. Symptoms of typhoid include lasting high fevers, weakness, stomach pains, headache, and loss of appetite. Some patients have constipation, and some have a rash. Internal bleeding and death can occur but are rare. The CDC recommends that most travelers to TCI get this vaccination.

*The recommendations enumerated above are specific for TCI. If you are planning to travel outside these countries, the health risks may be different, and you should consult with your travel medicine specialist as to what additional measures may be required.*

### **Disease (not vaccine preventable)**

**Chikungunya** is a viral infection transmitted by mosquitos and recently detected in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Symptoms most commonly include high fever and joint pain. Prevention includes minimizing exposed skin (long-sleeved shirts and pants) and applying insect repellent containing DEET.

**Dengue:** Dengue is a viral infection that can cause a very severe flu-like illness. It is transmitted by mosquitoes, and is becoming increasingly common in many tropical countries. There is no vaccine against dengue available in the United States. Prevention includes minimizing exposed skin (long-sleeved shirts and pants) and applying insect repellent containing DEET.

**Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV Infection:** HIV infection rates among heterosexuals in the TCI were high at one point, but have been decreasing for years as education efforts increase. Students are advised to be as careful as they normally would in regards to transmission of these sorts of diseases.

**Diarrhea** is the most common infectious ailment that you are likely to encounter. Contrary to some popular notions, it is not a change in diet that causes diarrhea, but rather infection with micro-

organisms - either bacteria or viruses. These bacteria and viruses are transmitted by food or water that has been contaminated, usually with human feces, but occasionally with the feces of animals. Prevention includes avoiding ingestion of food that has been contaminated by fecal matter or by killing the micro-organisms before you ingest the food. Eating food that has been heated but has become cold, or that has not been thoroughly cooked, presents a risk. This is especially true for food that is prepared outside the Center. Drinking untreated water also presents a risk, and should be avoided. Beverages that are safe to drink include tea or coffee (as the water has been boiled) and carbonated beverages (the carbonation kills any microorganisms). Water should be ingested only if you are sure that it has been boiled or treated. Bottled water that is carbonated is usually, but not always, safe. Shortly after you arrive, you will receive an orientation lecture explaining the importance of diligent hand washing, careful food preparation and purchasing, personal and kitchen hygiene, and water purification. These are important preventative measures and you will be expected to closely follow the directions given throughout the program. If you do contract diarrhea, it is for the most part easily treatable. The primary treatment is to replace the water and electrolytes that are lost in the diarrheal stool.

### **Other Hazards**

Some of the hazards associated with this SFS program and doing field work and living in TCI are described below. While SFS has tried to anticipate as many risks as possible, you may nonetheless encounter risks that are not described here.

**Heat/Sun:** You should bring along a good supply of SPF 15 (minimum) sunscreen, and carefully monitor your exposure to the sun, especially during their first week of adjustment to the climate. Use sunscreen, wear a hat, stay in the shade when possible, wear loose, light-colored clothes and get out of the sun if you feel dizzy. Dehydration occurs easily in hot environments. A conscious effort should be made to replace fluids lost through evaporation, which can be as much as two quarts an hour when exercising.

**Scorpions/Spiders/Wasps/Centipedes/Mosquitos:** There are scorpions and poisonous spiders on South Caicos, but they are reclusive and rarely encountered. Biting centipedes and wasps produce painful bites on rare occasion. Students with bee sting allergies should consult their physicians about bringing a bee sting kit which contains antihistamine and epinephrine. A prescription is necessary to obtain a kit. Mosquitoes become serious pests when there has been rain or the wind dies. For these times, SFS recommends a supply of good insect repellent.

**Bacteria:** Many different strands of bacteria occur in healthy individuals and cause no problems. Yet in close living/sleeping/eating situations, and when the skin is damaged or disrupted (by open bug bites, cuts, etc.), and while adapting to a new environment's flora & fauna, bacterial infection is more of a risk. Students must take daily precautions to maintain hygiene, including sanitizing dishes, covering cuts and scrapes, protecting from bugs, and staying dry when possible.

**Hazardous Marine Life and Debris:** Several biting and stinging marine animals are common, including: fire coral, bristle worms, sea lice and sea urchins (some of which are easily avoided in the water by wearing a wetsuit or dive skin). Run-ins with these creatures or with objects such as rusty nails, are uncomfortable, but seldom serious. More serious are scorpion fish, sting rays, and biting fish. All these creatures are found in waters surrounding the Center. A wetsuit, worn as thermal and anti-sting protection, is highly recommended along with booties or water shoes. Again, be sure your tetanus shot is up to date.

**Motor Vehicle Accidents:** Driving on roads in TCI is more hazardous than driving in the U.S., especially at night or during periods of heavy rains. It is also important as a pedestrian to have a heightened awareness of traffic. Do not assume pedestrians have the right-of-way. It is important to utilize only reputable and verified modes of transportation. At no time are students allowed to operate an automobile, boat, motorcycle, scooter, or other motorized vehicle.

*Please note this list is not exhaustive or complete. If you plan to travel to other areas, either inside or outside of country, the health and safety risks may be different, and you should educate yourself and consult with your travel medicine specialist as to what additional measures may be required.*

### **Physical Conditioning**

Field work by its very nature is physically arduous: the days are long, the traveling seldom comfortable, and creature comforts generally lacking. The program involves a few fairly strenuous hikes as part of the academic program, so physical conditioning is strongly advised. In order to withstand the pace and rigors of the program as well as any “foreign” health risks of the country, it is strongly advised that you be in good physical health. Due to the climate and temperatures, SFS has noted that chronic health problems often flare up, even if they are under control in the U.S. You should discuss such conditions seriously with your family doctor and the SFS Admissions Counselor to see if this SFS program will be right for you.

### **Medical Care in TCI**

**Be certain to take care of any medical issues before arriving in country. Due to the remote nature of the program, advanced medical care is not easily accessible. You will be responsible for all costs acquired to reach advanced medical care, including transportation and accommodations for yourself and staff.**

Staff will provide initial first aid in the event of an accident or illness. Student Affairs Managers have Wilderness First Responder certification (72-hour emergency medical training).

Community health care on South Caicos consists of a clinic, which is normally staffed by two Registered Nurses and one doctor. The clinic charges \$25 for a visit. Some prescriptions can be bought from the small pharmacy at the clinic for nominal fees. However, the clinic does not have an extensive pharmacy and as such many prescriptions must be transferred from Provo, which will be more expensive. You must be prepared to pay by cash for medical treatment on South when it is administered, and charge prescriptions sourced from Provo to a credit card. You cannot charge treatment to SFS. The closest hospital is on Grand Turk, a 10-minute flight away. Providenciales, a 15-25 minute flight away, has a clinic that we prefer to use for any serious cases, as we have developed a relationship with the doctors there ([www.doctor.tc](http://www.doctor.tc)). This well-respected medical clinic also has a 24-hour recompression chamber for diving accidents. However, organizing an unscheduled flight may take several hours and will be expensive. The facilities at that hospital may not be equipped to handle major emergencies; in the case of such an emergency you may have to be flown to Miami. There is also a well-respected medical clinic with a 24-hour recompression chamber for diving accidents on the island of Providenciales. Any serious medical accident requires air evacuation by charter aircraft. You will bear, at the time of the



incident, the cost of visits to the clinic, the hospital, or recompression chamber and all other expenses related to treatment, including the flight for an SFS staff member to accompany you. SFS will assist you in contacting your parents if you have insufficient funds on hand to pay for the cost of the visit and can assist your family in getting the necessary funds to you.

## Cultural Adjustment

### Defining Cultural Adjustment

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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 a sense of adventure? 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, encountering 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 who 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:



Based on Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn & Gallahorn (1963)

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

**Arrival:** Upon arrival, many students are exhilarated by the myriad 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?**

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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**

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What it means to identify as LGBTQ, 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. 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 (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

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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 practice your language skills with community members. Try delicious foods you had never heard of before. Travel with friends during the mid-semester break. 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!**