

SEMESTER IN DEVELOPMENT

FIJI

A HANDBOOK FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Insight
Development

CONTENTS



3

WELCOME TO THE PROGRAM

4

PRE-DEPARTURE TO-DO LIST

5

PACKING LIST

6

CLOTHING & ATTIRE IN SUVA

7

FACTS ABOUT FIJI

8

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

9

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER AIRPORT

10

LIFE IN SUVA

11

COSTS IN SUVA

12

COSTS CONTINUED

13

TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES

14

FAQs



Fiji Museum
Spring 2018

WELCOME TO THE SEMESTER IN DEVELOPMENT FIJI!

Welcome to the *Insight* community, a network of professionals and students who are committed to learning about how the world truly works in order to make lasting impacts on global development.

Please make sure that your deposit is paid in order to reserve your spot in the program, and that you are aware of our pre-departure orientation sessions.

Stay informed about program updates by following us on social media:



Insight Global Education



Insight Global Education



insightglobaleducation



@insightglobaled

Pre-Departure

IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO AT HOME

- Book your flights! Insight staff will inform you of the mandatory arrival dates. Our travel agent from Flight Centre would be happy to assist you with finding good options. Contact her: janice.luu@flightcentre.ca
- Apply for, or renew, your passport. Ensure it will be valid for minimum 6 months after your return to Canada to avoid trouble with entry into Fiji.
- Complete the Internship Permit Checklist, sent via urgent email.
- Purchase comprehensive travel insurance.
- See your family doctor or a travel clinic to enquire about recommended vaccinations and medications.
- Be sure to have your smart phone unlocked while still at home, regardless of what your telecom provider tells you, as the process is far more challenging in Fiji.
- Call your bank to notify them of your plans to travel in the South Pacific. For spending money, you will be able to withdraw cash using your ATM card. Make sure that you have money in your chequing account and that your ATM card has this symbol on the back:



**See the 'Preparation Document' for a more thorough To-Do list.*

'Support prior to departure and during the entire trip was incredible. Insight made it very comfortable and easy to bring up any concerns we had about the trip. Also, the in-country support was amazing.'

– Stephanie Aida

Spring 2015 SID Uganda Participant

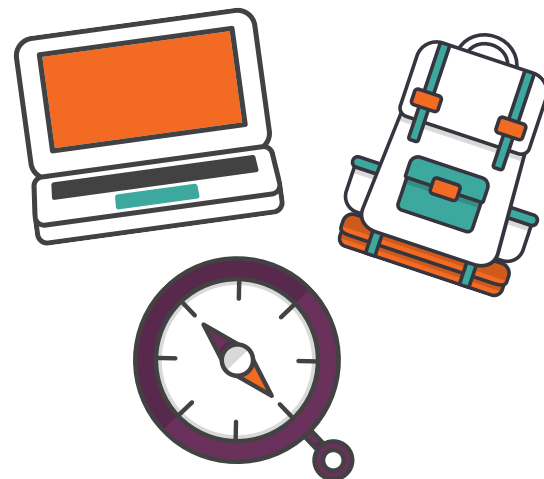


South Pacific Artwork

PACKING LIST

Though Suva is a sizeable city and most things that can be found in stores in Canada can be purchased there, prices can be steeper and brand selection sparse. As such, below are some of the essentials you will want to bring along.

**Don't forget to put a luggage tag with your name, address & contact information on each piece of luggage that you check in!*



1 TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

- o Passport
- o Itinerary/plane tickets
- o \$100 USD (for unexpected expenses en route)
- o Visa debit card (for ATM withdrawals)
- o Photocopies of passport, birth certificate, health insurance details
- o Money belt
- o Student ID
- o Lock (that fits on your luggage)

2 CARRY-ON ITEMS

- o Backpack (handy for daily use in Suva)
- o TSA Compliant toiletry kit (also handy for weekend trips)
- o Necessary prescription medications
- o Hand sanitizer
- o Ear plugs
- o A spare outfit and undergarments (in case your luggage gets delayed)
- o Book/E-reader
- o Any valuable items (electronics, cash, bank cards, etc.)

3 MEDICATIONS

- o Prescription medication (any meds recommended for you by your family doctor or travel clinician)



4 TOILETRIES & SUPPLIES

- o Shampoo/conditioner
- o Soap holder & 1 bar soap
- o Toothbrush/toothpaste/dental floss
- o Deodorant
- o Hairbrush/hair ties
- o Razors/shaving supplies
- o Glasses/contact lenses and solution
- o Nail clippers
- o Makeup/perfume
- o Face wash/ moisturizer
- o Sunscreen/sunglasses
- o Mosquito repellant
- o Tweezers
- o Feminine hygiene products
- o Towels (1 bath, 1 face)

Standard toiletry items like shampoo can be found in Suva. If you're particular about brands or quality, then it is recommended to bring the above supplies along.

5 ELECTRONICS

- o Laptop computer (mandatory for internships)
- o Unlocked smart phone
- o iPod/Tablet
- o Headphones
- o All necessary electronic chargers
- o Adapter/Converter (with power surge protector). Fiji uses a 240 volts AC 50Hz with three-pin power points
- o Camera (with memory cards) and charger
- o Extra batteries
- o Flashlight

6 KITCHEN SUPPLIES

The house where you will stay has a fully functioning kitchen. Simple pots, pans, plates and cutlery will be available. If you require specific cooking utensils or kitchen items that you would like to use, most can be purchased at grocery stores in Suva. If there are specific foods you want, check with us to ask whether you can find them in Suva. If not, we will recommend that you pack a small amount with you!

CLOTHING & ATTIRE



A common misconception made by first-time travellers to developing countries is that all you will need during your time there is sun hats, durable pants, Birkenstocks and plain t-shirts. This couldn't be further from the truth!

Suva is like any city with a diverse population and a range of things to do. While in Suva, our staff will dress similarly to how they do at home – similar attire for work, social settings, exercising, etc.

The only real differences are: (1) because of the tropical heat, Fijians tend to dress fairly informal in their day-to-day; (2) Fijians dress a bit more conservatively – long skirts worn by women and *sulus* worn by men. Younger Fijians in Suva dress more modern and similar to North American styles. In the village, the dress is **very** conservative (sleeves, sulus).

It is important to pack wisely – do you really need 10 pairs of shoes? Probably not! Think about the length of time you will be away, and the kinds of activities you will take part in. Consider the weather, culture and your comfort when packing.



WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU PACK THE FOLLOWING FOR

WORK

What you will wear at work will depend on your internship placement. Some offices wear business dress, such as dress pants and dress shirts, while others wear traditional breezy sulus and flowered bula shirts. Business dress is expected at meetings and conferences. Office temperatures can be unpredictable, as some have air conditioning and others just fans, so bring light clothes and layers. Regardless of where you intern, bring at least three professional outfits to Fiji, such as:

- Dress pants or skirts
- Nice blouses and tops
- Dress shoes (leather shoes, flats, etc.)
- Cardigan and/or blazer jacket
- A suit and a couple of ties for the men
- A pant/skirt suit for the women

SOCIAL EVENTS

The nightlife in Suva is small scale but lively! There are a handful of fun bars and nice restaurants. Much like the day-to-day attire, Suva's nightlife is laid back. You can dress up or dress down! However, some bars have a closed-toed shoe policy (no flip flops!). When socializing in Suva, our team wears similar clothing that we'd wear at home. At night, the dress code becomes much less conservative amongst young Fijians. Even if you are a fairly casual person, bring one nicer outfits for any special events. Examples:

- Jeans
- Dresses
- Nice tops/shirts
- Dress shoes
- Nice sandals

OTHER

Otherwise, you will dress how you would on a hot day at home! Just keep in mind that Fiji is super humid, and pack accordingly. Don't forget:

- Short and long sleeved shirts
- Jeans, shorts, light pants for hot days
- Dresses and long skirts
- A hoodie or light jacket for cool days
- Heavy jackets are unnecessary, but a light rain jacket is a good idea
- Undergarments
- Socks
- Pyjamas
- Sturdy sandals and flip-flops
- Walking/running/hiking shoes
- A belt, if needed
- A hat for hot days
- Swimwear
- Sporting/hiking gear



YOU'RE MOVING TO FIJI

SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Located in the turquoise waters of the South Pacific Ocean, Fiji is an archipelago made up of 322 islands. Only 110 of the islands are permanently inhabited with the country's population of just under 900,000 people.

The *Semester in Development: Fiji* program takes place on the main island of Viti Levu. Viti Levu is Fiji's largest island and is home to the country's capital city of Suva. Suva is located on the southeast coast of Viti Levu and has approximately 90,000 inhabitants.

Fiji's closest neighbouring countries are the island countries of Tonga and Vanuatu; New Zealand is to the south, and Australia to the west.

Fiji's climate is tropical and warm year-round. The warm season is from November to April and the cooler season lasts from May to October. Temperatures in the cool season still average 22°C. Rainfall is heavier during the warm season

Fiji's official languages are English, Fijian and Hindi. The population of Fiji is made up of native Fijians (54%), Indo-Fijians (38%) – who are descendants of Indian contract labourers – and smaller minority groups of Europeans, Chinese and other Pacific Islanders.

Religion plays an important role in Fijians' lives. Over 60% of the country is made up of Christians, 28% are Hindus and 6% are Muslims. Followers of all faiths coexist peacefully.

Fiji's leader is Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, who was democratically elected in September 2014. PM Bainimarama originally seized power back in 2006 after partaking in a military coup. Fiji is currently very peaceful and the election was well regarded by the international community.

Though the country is most famous for its turquoise waters and white sand beaches, these aren't what make Fiji a truly special country. Rather, it is the overwhelming kindness and genuine hospitality of Fijian people that make the country a unique and incredible place. From the minute you get off the plane, you will be greeted with a wide smile and warm "bula!" – the Fijian word for 'hello.' Also, as a foreigner, you will stand out and thus be greeted often.

You will notice a number of differences between Fiji and Canada. Most notable ones include:

- As people are generally very friendly, striking up random conversations with strangers is not uncommon.
- The Fijian lifestyle is very relaxed. 'Fiji Time' refers to a relaxed (and slower) way of life.
- Most Fijians are religious, and modest dress is expected. This means covering your shoulders and knees when visiting villages. It is not uncommon to see people praying before meals, hear the sound of church choirs on Sundays, or observe a variety of Hind celebrations.
- There are some unique aspects to the Fijian language. For example, the letter "d" is pronounced "nd", so "Nadi" is pronounced "Nandi".
- Punctuality is not common – you will soon learn that meetings and social events often begin late.
- Due to the weather, dress across Fiji is relatively informal. You may consider getting local "Bula" clothing while you're there!
- Not all bathrooms will be well stocked, so carry a pack of tissues and sanitizer!

YOUR ARRIVAL IN FIJI

You will fly into Nadi International Airport. As the plane approaches Nadi, flight attendants may hand out a customs declaration card. On the customs declaration card, you will need to fill out basic details.

Upon landing, you will follow the crowd off of the plane and towards the immigration desks. You will hand the customs agent your passport, declaration card, return itinerary, and immigration letter. The visa and immigration process will be shared with you during your Pre-Departure Orientation session.

You will then proceed to the baggage claim area. If your luggage does not arrive, it is important that you report it immediately to the "Missing Baggage" office and obtain all of the necessary documentation needed to track down and/or receive your missing luggage. Upon receiving your baggage, exit the baggage claim area where you will meet an Insight-approved driver who will greet you with an 'Insight' sign in hand!



WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE AIRPORT

- From the Nadi International airport, it will be an approximately four-hour drive to Suva. You will be driven straight to the program's place of residence.
- Your in-country Program Director will be waiting to greet you at the guest house and show you to your room.
- Once at the guest house, you will be provided with light snacks and water, and the opportunity for a full meal will be made possible either later in the day or the following morning, depending on your arrival time. *We suggest you pack some extra snacks with you.*
- A more extensive 'Life in Suva' handbook will be available for your convenience in the guest house. This resource will include everything from transportation tips, to restaurant suggestions, and is an addition to the in-country orientation that will take place over the course of your first few days in Suva .
- Please note that upon arrival, our in-country coordinator(s) will help set you up with a sim card, ATM withdrawal, currency exchange, and groceries.



YOUR LIFE IN SUVA

As a member of the Semester in Development cohort, you will be living with fellow participants in a secure guesthouse in Suva. You will share a room and living spaces with fellow cohort members; a housekeeper will visit twice per week, and onsite laundry will be available.

Your primary activities will be attending university and interning at the organization with which you'll been placed. In addition to studying and interning, past participants took advantage of the lively culture that exists in Suva. With a variety of great restaurants, local cultural shows, and fun bars, there is plenty to do in the city! Weekends can be spent travelling to beaches, and long weekends are often spent travelling to the other islands of Fiji – depending on budgets. Weekly reflections and group activities take place in the house and throughout Suva.

Transportation, communication, grocery shopping, and all other aspects of life abroad will be covered in our upcoming information sessions. Insight's in-country staff will also conduct thorough orientation sessions upon your arrival in Suva, helping you to feel comfortable and confident during your stay.



COSTS IN SUVA

Please note that these prices and spending descriptions are approximates and are provided by Insight to help participants plan and budget accordingly. Spending habits are dependent on an individual person's interests, budget, etc. The prices below are based on our own experiences in Suva. Do not hesitate to ask if you require clarification on costs. *Please note that prices have been converted into **US dollars** for convenience.*

FOOD & GROCERIES

Whether you cook at home or eat out, there are many food and dining options available in Suva. Groceries can be purchased at local markets or at larger grocery stores (which are comparable to a Safeway, Loblaws or Walmart). Food can be eaten at small restaurants that serve Fijian food, or at mid-to-upper-range restaurants where one can find anything from Japanese to Mexican cuisine. Fresh fruits and vegetables are by far the cheapest food items in Suva. Other examples of food prices are:

- One meal at a mid-range restaurant: \$4.00 - 10.00
- 1 L Milk: \$2.00
- Can of local beer: \$3.00
- 500 grams cheese: \$5.00
- Loaf of Bread: \$2.00
- 1 kilo apples: \$2.00
- 1 pound chicken: \$4.50

ENTERTAINMENT

With quaint bars playing top-40 and movie theatres showing new releases, though Suva's entertainment scene is different from North America, it is familiar in ways. Below are the prices for some entertainment activities:

- Movie theatre ticket: \$5.00
- One-month gym membership: \$40
- Yoga class: \$5.00
- A cocktail at an upscale bar: \$7.00
- Beer: \$3.00 per bottle

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation costs will be dependent on the form of transportation that you prefer. The transportation options made available to you are:

- 1) **Local Bus:** cheapest option (approximately \$0.50 per ride)
- 2) **Taxi cab:** pricer option (there are metres in most cabs, be sure to insist that your driver uses his metre)

Program participants will not be driving while in Suva, so one of the above public transportation options must be chosen from.

PHONE & INTERNET

Telecommunications is advanced in Fiji – smart phones are widely used, and data packages offer 4G LTE. The telecom company that we recommend for talk/text is **Vodafone**. Your talk/text and data bundles will be purchased on a pay-as-you-go basis, and are generally cheaper than in North America. Specific prices will be based on your preferred bundle. WiFi is rare in Fiji, as people purchase 'personal wifi' routers that they carry around with them or they use data. WiFi is not provided at the guesthouse and each student is responsible for their own internet.

Other Costs to Consider

Pre-Program

- Flight
- Visa (permit) Application Fees
- Travel insurance
- Vaccinations or travel-related medications
- Passport renewal (if necessary)

During Program

- Meals
- Toilet paper
- Cleaning supplies
- Phone and Internet
- Other daily expenses



TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES

Fiji is a popular travel destination for a reason! With pristine beaches, bright blue waters and vibrant reefs, Fiji looks like something out of a postcard. For seasoned and beginner divers and snorkellers alike, there are plenty of fish and seemingly endless stretches of reefs, making it a favourite for underwater exploration. For those who are more interested in staying on land, Fiji's beaches are a snapshot of paradise. But that's not all! There's also plenty of lush forests, fantastic hiking opportunities, and a lively nightlife.

Former participants of the Semester in Development have almost always suggested that more travel time be incorporated into the program. As a result, since Spring 2016 onwards our programs contain a one-week break from courses and internships, during which students will have the opportunity to travel.

All travel plans will be dependent on a participant's desire to travel, personal budget, and sense of adventure. Insight's in-country program coordinator can provide support with travel logistics and offer advice.

DESTINATIONS IN FIJI

Mamanuca Islands

It's not surprising that the Mamanuca island group is one of Fiji's most popular destinations. The islands are perfect for exploring colourful reefs, observing masses of marine life, surfing the waves, and enjoying plenty of activities on gorgeous beaches.



Natadola Beach

Natadola is one of Viti Levu's best beaches. The sand is white and the water is great for swimming or surfing. You can also ride a horse on the beach!



Nananu-i-ra

Nananu-i-ra is a tiny island, just 3.5 square kilometres, in northern Viti Levu. The landscapes are beautiful, with hills, white-sand beaches, and mangroves. The island is great for its reefs and water sports. Keep in mind that there are no roads or villages, and accommodation is simple.

Taveuni

Known as Fiji's Garden Island, Taveuni is home to lush, humid rainforests with plenty of admirable flora. Check out Des Voeux Peak on its rugged coastline, or Fiji's highest point at Mt. Uluigalau. There's great hiking, beautiful waterfalls, and peaceful beaches.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How long is the program and how soon before the program start date should I arrive?

A: The Semester in Development is a 12-week long program. Please see our website for specific program dates, and our staff will inform you about arrival/departure dates before booking your flights!

Q: What are classes like?

A: Similar to seminars at your home university, courses at Fiji National University are 2 to 3 hours long and consist of lectures, discussions, assignments, and presentations.

Q: What will our work hours be?

A: That depends on the office hours of your work placement. Either 8:00 or 9:00 am, to 5:00 pm, Mondays through Thursdays. Occasionally you may work on weekends if there are special events or work trips to the field.

Q: Which vaccinations are mandatory for travel to Fiji?

A: Please visit a travel clinic to inquire about the necessary vaccinations.

Q: Should I bring photocopies of my important documents?

A: Yes! Bring 1 or 2 copies of your passport, birth certificate, travel insurance information, banking information (particularly contact numbers for your bank, in case you lose your ATM/credit cards), etc.

Q: Will I experience culture shock?

A: The initial reactions of each individual arriving in a new country are different. Fiji is very different from Canada and the U.S., so the more aware and prepared you are for the changes, the better! This document has aimed to do just that – prepare you well, so that the adaptation process isn't too challenging.

'I participated in the Spring SID Uganda program and it was a very memorable experience, but also important in helping me understand what I want to do career-wise. The academic component is extremely unique, as you are taught by local professors who really understand the landscape and context behind important course concepts. The workload is manageable and the professors understand that you may also be travelling or busy with your internships. The internship component is a fantastic way to learn how NGOs and social enterprises operate and is just long enough for you to determine whether you could see yourself working in that field after graduation. I learned a lot in Uganda and am thankful to Insight for providing the opportunity!'

– Rafiq Suleman
Spring 2015 Participant

'I think that the school component sets SID apart from other internship/volunteer abroad programs. Keeping in mind that voluntourism is quite trendy at the moment, it is easy to find an array of programs online without very much effort. I believe that having the schooling aspect as a prominent component of the program makes it clear that SID is not simply aiming to inject volunteers into a developing country, but rather aiming to allow the cohort to experience a new way of life in an unfamiliar part of the world. That said, I think that the internship is the main attraction for the program. The workload was appropriate to that focus. There was just enough schoolwork that the academic aspect of the program wasn't negligible, but also allowed for the internship portion to remain the main focus of our time. The fact that the lens of this program steers our experience to learning what it means to live in a developing country rather than injecting volunteers into a developing country to "fix" something is what makes this program individual and worthwhile. It offers a thorough learning experience rather than a pat-on-the-back experience.'

– Catherine James
Summer 2015 Participant

Don't hesitate to contact us with queries!

VP Operations

Ghazal Habib

ghazal@insightglobaleducation.com



FOLLOW US



Insight Global Education



@insightglobaleducation



@insightglobaled



Insight Global Education

