

Panama Packing List

Before you begin planning what to pack for the course, it is important to note that you will need to **dress conservatively**. It is better to be deliberately conservative in your appearance than to risk offending our hosts or anyone in the communities we visit.

Everyone has their preferred style of packing for travel, so please use this list as a helpful guide and be mindful of your own needs. Other than a few items, we do not recommend a certain number of items as this is left up to each family.

It is very important that you try to fit all of your belongings into one backpack/duffle and a daypack that you are comfortable carrying on your own. Your backpack/duffle cannot exceed 50 lbs. Here is a helpful article [on how to pack light](#).

Note: There is laundry service available for \$6 per load of laundry. Keep in mind that if it is rainy it will take the clothes a long time to dry, so it is best to pack as if you will not be able to do laundry.

DOCUMENTS & ESSENTIALS

- Passport** Your passport needs to be valid for six months after the day of arrival and have at least two blank pages. Also, bring a copy of your passport.
- Health Insurance Card** Copy of front and back
- Prescription Medications** Carry medications in their original containers, clearly labeled, and make sure you have enough for the entire trip. Bring medications in your carry-on, so you will still have access to them if your luggage is delayed or lost. Consult with a travel doctor for recommendations and a prescription. Ask the physician about the possibility of obtaining prescription drugs commonly used by travelers such as Cipro and Z-packs

GEAR

- Backpack/Duffel Bag** We recommend something that is (65-80 liters). Bring all your clothes in just one backpack/duffle, with essential pieces of gear carried in a daypack.
- Day Pack** Small, light, nylon bag with shoulder straps. This is what you'll take with you as a carry-on and on excursions. It should be big enough to hold a water bottle, headlamp or flashlight, some food, a raincoat, and a book or journal.

FOOTWEAR

- Sneakers** Closed-toed shoes that are comfortable for walking in.
- Mud Sneakers (Optional)** A second pair of shoes to wear if it is rainy/muddy.
- Sandals** Waterproof sandals (i.e. Tevas or Chaco-style) that attach at the toes & ankle.
- Flip Flops**- These are nice to have for shower shoes.

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CLOTHING

- RAINCOAT** Best if lightweight and breathable.
- HAT/BANDANAS** These are versatile and can keep hair clean and tied back. A wide-brimmed hat can be nice for sun protection.
- SOCKS** Thin synthetic socks can dry more quickly.
- UNDERWEAR** Cotton is fine, but synthetic quick-drying underwear dries fastest.
- T-Shirts** Please **do not bring shirts that reveal a lot of skin**; these are culturally inappropriate. Shirts should be made of synthetic, quick-drying material.
- Long Sleeve Shirt** 1-2 Have one light and loose-fitting layer for sun/insect protection.
- Long Pants** 1-2 pairs. Suitable for work and play that will dry quickly.
- Shorts** You'll be happiest if these are lightweight, dry easily, and don't show dirt. They should be **at least to your mid-thigh or longer and not tight**. Men may want one pair of board shorts for swimming. Women can also bring a pair of board shorts to wear as a swimsuit with a t-shirt/splash top or over a swimsuit when going to the beach. Have at least one pair that you won't mind **getting very dirty or ruined**.
- SWIMSUIT** For men, this can be a pair of board shorts. A swimsuit is fine for women when the group is at the beach, but it is best to be conservative when selecting a suit to bring. Swimming in shorts and a T-shirt is also fine.
- PAJAMAS** Bring something comfortable but culturally appropriate to sleep in. Light pants or shorts and a lightweight shirt can work well.
- TOWEL** Preferably quick-dry as cotton ones take a really long time to dry in the humid Panamanian climate; camping towels can be found at outdoor stores. The hostel has towels but you can not bring them to the beach. You can also purchase one in Panama.
- COLLARED SHIRT** 1 short or long-sleeved. You may want something a bit nicer for school or community functions.
- LONG SKIRTS/NICE PANTS.** Don't go out and buy anything fancy! Make sure your skirt is loose enough to sit cross-legged in. **Required to be below the knee**. However, if you are not comfortable wearing skirts, please bring the kind of pants you would wear when casually dressing up.
- BRAS/SPORTS BRAS-** Bring a few sports bras and one or two normal bras.

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PERSONAL ITEMS

- (2) WATER BOTTLES** Each should hold one liter.
- SUNGLASSES** Consider bringing two pairs in case one breaks.
- TOILETRIES** Bring a week's supply of everything you need for grooming yourself (hairbrush, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.). Women, please bring enough tampons/pads for the entire course.
- SECURITY WALLET/BELT** You'll want to keep your passport, ATM card, cash, and other valuables in a secure wallet or belt that's well attached to your body.
- JOURNAL/NOTEBOOK** You *must* bring something that you can write in. Should be compact, but have enough room to record your daily thoughts.
- FLASHLIGHT/HEADLAMP** We recommend headlamps, as these are more convenient should we find ourselves out at night or if the electricity goes out. Bring a few extra batteries.
- Reef Safe sunscreen** - SPF 30+ (water/sweat proof) We recommend [Badger Balm](#)
- Itch Cream**
- No Rinse Bathing Wipes**- In case water is scarce. We recommend [these from REI](#).
- TOILET PAPER/KLEENEX PACKETS** Bring a roll or a few packets. These can come in handy to start off the course or to have when stopping at bathrooms while driving.
- GLASSES** Bring an extra pair of glasses or contacts. It is best to bring your own saline solution.
- ALARM CLOCK/WATCH** Small travel clock or a watch with an alarm.
- INSECT REPELLENT**
- PURELL** (hand-sanitizing gel) A small bottle or anti-bacterial hand wipes.
- LIP BALM** SPF 15 or higher. Lip balm w/o SPF actually intensifies the sun's rays!
- ZIPLOCK BAGS** Having a few small and large sizes can be handy to keep things dry.

SPENDING MONEY

Although the course costs are covered in your tuition, it is still a good idea to bring some extra cash. You will need it for baggage fees, souvenirs, gifts, and snacks.

- ATM CARD/CREDIT CARD** You can bring one, but keep in mind many small shops don't accept credit cards. You can use this to pay for your bag fees or items at the airport before we start travelling together
- CASH** Please do not bring more than \$150 in cash. Most places in Bocas are CASH ONLY. Small bills (\$1, \$5, \$10) are best.

OPTIONAL

- BUG NET** We recommend [this one](#) , [this one](#) , or any Backpackers Mosquito Net.
- SPANISH-ENGLISH DICTIONARY** A small one will be very useful to assist in communication.
- CARD/TRAVEL GAMES**
- GOOD BOOKS**

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- POWER or ENERGY BARS** Especially recommended for picky eaters or those accustomed to especially high-calorie diets.
- EMERGEN-C** Water-soluble vitamin and electrolyte packets that dissolve into water. Gatorade powder is another option. These are great for combating dehydration, especially when fighting off sickness or suffering from diarrhea.
- OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS** SStS field staff carry an extensive medical kit. Most students bring a supply of whatever they use at home (i.e. ibuprofen, etc.), along with some cough drops and some Pepto-Bismol tablets for bellyaches. We stock our med-kit with just about everything, but it is recommended that each student brings what they need for motion sickness, headaches, or menstrual cramps.
- GOLD BOND/MEDICATED POWDER** Having a bottle of Gold Bond or another medicated powder can help avoid or treat heat rash in this humid, wet environment.
- DRAMAMINE** There are a couple of longer van rides and you will take a boat to and from some islands. Bring some Dramamine if you tend to get motion sickness.
- WET WIPES** Some students like to have a small pack of these for personal cleaning.
- CAMERA** We may not always have access to electricity, so you may want to pack an extra battery. For people using digital cameras, bring a few memory cards.
- PHOTO ALBUM/POSTCARDS OF HOME** People will want to see your family and hometown!
- SMALL LUGGAGE PADLOCK** A way to lock/secure your bags.

DONATIONS

If you would like to bring donations, here is a list from the local teachers:

- Crayons
- Pencil
- Chalk
- Beeds
- Coloring book
- Face Paint
- Jump Ropes
- Science games