



INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES INSTITUTE

สถาบันการศึกษาการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนนานาชาติ

Equipment and Clothing Requirements and Guidelines for ISDSI Expedition Field Courses

THIS IS REQUIRED READING FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

This document is available online as isdsi.org/docs/gearlist.pdf

WHY THIS LIST FOR A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM?

The ISDSI program in Thailand is based around “Expedition Field Courses” which are intensely experiential and hands on. While EFCs start with one week at the Institute in town, the remaining three weeks are in the field—living, learning and working with villagers, tribal people, and others. **The academic courses require students to live and travel in often remote and challenging environments while engaged in academically rigorous studies.** Thus, the academic requirements of the program necessitate strong expedition skills. As with any expedition into difficult conditions, appropriate equipment and clothing is often critical to success.

The following list includes both required and suggested clothing and equipment for the program. It also includes a discussion of clothing expectations in Thailand. These are based on university regulations in Thailand and Thai cultural expectations and norms.

Please read this carefully. **Students who do not have acceptable equipment will not be able to participate in required program activities. Students who do not follow the guidelines on clothing may have to leave the program due to cultural and safety concerns.** As guests in Thailand, following cultural norms and expectations are an important part of the learning that goes on during the program.

The focus of our program is on the experiential study of people, the environment and development. **If you are properly equipped for the expedition field courses, you will better be able to focus on your studies.**

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION FOR CLOTHING IN THAILAND

Thai culture places a great deal of importance on clothing. In Thailand, wearing inappropriate clothing is perceived in a very negative light. **Respecting the culture also means respecting values regarding dress.** You will find that your time in Thailand will be far more successful if you respect the customs regarding dress. **In Thai culture, what you wear is an expression of your respect for others.** It is not an expression of your individual identity.

During class and while on campus at the Institute, students are required to **dress in the same style that is worn by Thai university students.** All Thai university students wear a standard outfit. For women this is a short sleeved white blouse (buttons up the front) with a collar (not a T-shirt) and plain black skirt. For men, a collared short sleeved white shirt (not a T-shirt) and black trousers (no jeans). No long sleeved shirts for class. For both women and men, closed-toed shoes or nice sandals for women are appropriate footwear. Rubber flip-flops are **not acceptable** for classes at the Institute.

Foreign students who dress in the university outfit in Thailand have found that they are immediately identified as university students, not as tourists, and that most people speak to them in Thai first instead of attempting English (or not speaking with them at all). Thus, dressing this way is not only culturally appropriate, it works to a student’s advantage. (It is also cheaper, as local taxis will charge you the local rate, rather than the tourist rate!)

Outside class, clothing should be clean, neat and conservative. For women, this means no low-cut tops, no spaghetti straps, no tank tops and no mid-riffs. Neat jeans and skirts are appropriate. For men, this means no tank tops or sleeveless shirts. Neat jeans and other casual wear are appropriate. Knee length shorts are OK in certain circumstances.

You WILL see Thai students and others dressing in ways which seem to violate the guidelines above. Remember, they are Thai, and know when it is and is not appropriate to bend the rules. As you adjust to Thai culture you will learn what the expectations are, and anything you can do to distinguish yourself from the low budget “travelers” will help with your integration into Thai life.

INTRODUCTION TO GEAR AND EQUIPMENT

Program environment

During the program **you will be in several very different environments**—urban, lowland and upland fields, rugged mountain forest and beach/island environments. Most of the clothing and gear listed below is multi-functional—you can use it in each environment.

How to purchase / obtain required gear

The purchase of clothing and gear **does not need to be expensive**. Much of what you need you already have, and a lot can be purchased on-line at a discount or perhaps borrowed. In particular, check with local outdoor stores to see if they have last year’s goods marked down, used or “demo” items, etc. Pay attention to this list, and if you have any questions, bring it with you to a local backpacking/outdoor store (like Young’s, Moosejaw, EMS or REI). Tell them what you will be doing, let them see the list, and they can help you out.

Some items, such as quick-dry t-shirts or pants may be available in general sporting goods stores or general retail (e.g. Target). Technical gear, such as breathable shells and hiking shoes should be purchased at a specialized outdoor retailer (e.g. REI) since they have higher quality and greater selection.

There are, in some cities, gear swaps or used outdoor equipment shops—ask around and find out if they are available. Take your time and start early to take advantage of sales and discounts. However, **you must follow this list**, not the advice of well-meaning but perhaps uninformed staff at a store. Students have reported a number of times staff trying to be helpful and advising against items on this list (e.g. “I’ve been to Thailand, you don’t need *that*.”). Remember, they have not been on this program, and do not know the conditions you will encounter. Follow the list! **If you have questions about gear, please email us at gear@isdsi.org.**

If you need to purchase new clothing or equipment specifically for the program, we recommend Patagonia. Patagonia is an environmentally responsible company committed to the same goals as our Institute of creating a more sustainable world. They use 100% organic cotton, make fleece out of recycled pop bottles, and do their best to make gear and clothing which is multi-functional and long lasting while reducing their ecological footprint. Their clothing is not cheap, but will last a long time, and you can be sure it is produced in both an ecologically and socially responsible way. (We use Patagonia as a case study of a model sustainable business in our courses.) There are other companies that are environmentally sensitive—look for them and support them!

Some equipment is available through ISDSI once you arrive in Thailand. Please check below to find out what is currently available through ISDSI.

Gear check

During the first week on the program all students will have their gear checked. If anything you brought is not adequate, you will be required to purchase it locally, or have it shipped from the US—a very expensive proposition, as many of the items are not available in Thailand or are more expensive.

GEAR LIST

We have listed recommended amounts below, or just “#” to indicate that YOU need to decide on the appropriate number of items. If you have questions, email us at gear@isdsi.org.

Expedition Footwear

- 3 Socks: **No cotton**. Blend of wool/nylon or wool/polypropylene or capilene or similar. They should fit snugly, if they are too big or too loose they may give you blisters.
Limited availability in Thailand
- 1 Sandals: If you are buying new, we recommend Chacos or similar. If you already have a pair of “Teva” style river/sport sandals, they will work fine.
Limited availability in Thailand in larger sizes (10 and up)
- 1 Neoprene water shoes: These are for kayaking. We *require* the NRS Kickers Neoprene shoes. These are the best shoes for preventing entrapment in a capsized kayak as well as staying on your feet in the deep mud in the mangroves. They are available through REI and other retailers — shop around for the best price. These should fit snug but not tight. Other shoes are not acceptable.
Not available in Thailand.
- 1 Trail shoes: A good pair of shoes for hiking is essential for this program. We recommend hiking shoes over boots since there are extensive deep river crossings (knee deep and deeper) and in our experience boots will not dry adequately during the course. Heavy leather boots are not acceptable. If you have lightweight hiking boots they may work, but you will need to take extra care with your feet—bring extra socks and be prepared for possibly hiking with wet boots for 2-3 weeks. We DO NOT recommend GoreTex boots or hiking shoes, as they will not dry during the course, while a non-GoreTex version will dry out (water enters from the top of the shoe on deep river crossings). If you choose to bring lightweight hiking boots you already own, you may want to bring a pair of old athletic shoes in addition to the boots. If you are going to purchase new shoes, we recommend hiking shoes (stores may call them trail shoes, light hikers, or cross training shoes). Some trail running shoes may be okay if they have adequate heel stabilization. Contact us if you have any questions.
Very limited availability in Thailand. YOU MUST BRING THESE.
- 1 Gaiters: For keeping mud, water and critters out of your boots or trail shoes. These need to be above the calf. Low-cut “trail gaiters” are not acceptable.
Available from the program.

Expedition Clothing

- 2 Hiking Pants: These are very important, as you will be using them on every course. Quick dry brushed nylon or supplex material is required. No cotton. Pants should fit loosely and be made from a light material as it will be hot and humid part of the year, and very hot the rest of the time. Zip offs are okay, but occasionally jam or break.
Limited availability in Thailand.
- 2 Shorts: Nylon or other quick-dry material. If your pants zip off, then they can count as your shorts as well. Please bring conservative looking shorts—they must be knee length for both men and women.
Limited availability in Thailand.
- # Adequate # of cotton or quick-dry underwear. We recommend a few pair of Patagonia capilene or other similar quick-dry fabric since you will be getting wet on the trail and while paddling.
Limited availability in larger sizes, especially in quick-dry fabric.
- # Adequate # of sports bras (for women). Women have recommended 3 as adequate. A non-cotton quick dry material is recommended.
Available in Thailand. Limited availability in larger sizes.

- 1 Rain Jacket: **Plastic or rubberized or PVC is NOT acceptable.** A single layer waterproof breathable laminate is best. Don't get one that is too heavy or designed for use in the snow. "Soft shells" or "water resistant" is not acceptable. If you are buying a jacket, we recommend the Marmot Precip, Patagonia Rain Shadow or similar products.
Very limited availability in Thailand, especially in larger sizes.
- 1 Long-sleeved Shirt: Synthetic quick-dry material, pullover or button down. For sun protection. Make sure it isn't too thin, as it must protect against the sun.
Limited availability in Thailand.
- 3 T-Shirt: Ones that you do not mind getting dirty. At least two quick-dry synthetic shirts. Both cotton and quick-dry tees (soccer jerseys) are inexpensive and plentiful in Thailand. These need to be long enough so when you sit down on the floor they still cover you (some running shirts are too short for this).
Available in Thailand. Limited availability in larger sizes.
- 1 Pajamas: Light shirt and pants for sleeping in (men must wear shirts while sleeping).
Available in Thailand
- 1 Fleece jacket: Light weight is preferable (Polar Tec 100-200), unless you tend to get cold.
Limited availability in Thailand, especially in larger sizes.
- 2 Sarong/Wraparound Skirt: **Wait to buy this in Thailand.** They are used for bathing and wearing around camp, among other things. Men wear a *pakauwmaa*, women wear a *pasin* or *patung*.
Available in Thailand
- 1 Bathing Suit: A swimsuit with **full** coverage. You can use a pair of nylon shorts (e.g. Patagonia Baggies or river shorts). A two piece for women has been recommended - to get an idea for what is appropriate, anything in the Patagonia swimsuit line would suffice (see website for clarification).
Available in Thailand. Limited availability in larger sizes.
- 1 Rash guard: A skin tight **long** sleeve nylon/lycra top for using while swimming in the ocean and while sea kayaking. These are often available in surf shops, paddling shops and swimming goods stores. The Patagonia long sleeve rash guard, or NRS Hydrosilk work well. If it fits loose, it will chafe and be more difficult to swim/dive in. Be sure you have the right fit (they are looser when wet, so a loose fit dry is too loose). Short sleeve is NOT acceptable since your arms will get severely sunburned.
Very Limited availability in Thailand.
- 1 Sun Hat: With good brim to keep the sun off your face and ears. No baseball caps.
Available in Thailand but in limited sizes. If you have a big head, bring one with you.
- 1 Warm hat: Wool or synthetic material is preferable to cotton.
Available in Thailand but in limited sizes. If you have a big head, bring one with you.

Packing

- 3+ Stuff sacks: A sufficient number of small bags to help you organize your clothing and gear in your backpack. If you have stuff sacks, bring them, if not, Ziploc bags are available in Thailand and work well for this.
Available in Thailand.

- 1 Backpack: Internal frame. At least 65 liter capacity. Must be made of durable material with few pockets and straps on the outside. Must have hip and chest straps for proper fit and weight distribution. If you bring a backpack, it will be inspected during the initial gear check. If it is not acceptable, you will need to borrow one from the program.

In addition to using this for backpacking into remote villages, a backpack is the most efficient way of carrying your gear and clothing while traveling on the program, including getting off and on buses, trains and boats. Even if the courses you take have limited backpacking involved, it will still be important to have one.

If you are considering buying one for the program, please contact us at gear@isdsi.org. We have backpacks you may borrow, and can advise you on renting from us or purchasing before you come.

Available from the program (will also include rain cover)

- 1 Backpack Rain Cover (optional): A water resistant shell to cover your backpack while hiking. Make sure that the cover you buy is the right size for your backpack. If you are unsure, buy the larger size! If you do not wish to purchase this item, we will issue garbage bags to be used as internal liners for your pack.

Limited selection in Thailand.

Personal

- 1 Toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss. Just bring enough for the first few weeks and then buy locally.

Available in Thailand.
- 1 Lip Balm: With sun block.

Available in Thailand
- 1 Monistat 7 (for women) or similar product. You will be in a hot and damp climate which makes women more prone to get yeast infections.

Available in Thailand
- # Tampons or alternative menstrual products such as the Diva Cup, The Keeper, etc. (for women): O.B. can be bought in Chiang Mai but other brands may be hard to get. Bring an adequate supply with you.

Available in Thailand.
- 1-2 Soap/shampoo: Biodegradable soap for use when camping. "Dr. Bronners" works well and can double as shampoo. Only a small amount (6 oz) is necessary as we only use it on some courses.

Available in Thailand.
- 1 Towel: Most outdoor stores sell small "camp towels" made of viscose rayon that are super absorbent but dry very quickly. "Pack Towel" is a popular brand. A thin cotton towel which will dry quickly is fine too. No large bath or beach towels.

Limited availability in Thailand.
- # Prescription medication: If necessary. Advise your instructor of this at the beginning of the course. Bring more than a 6 month supply in case some gets lost or wet.

Note: You CANNOT get more shipped to you here. Bring a copy of your prescription with you if you cannot get 6 months supply. You MUST email the program to ensure that your prescription medication is legal in Thailand!
- # Sun block: SPF of 30 or above. Broad-spectrum with UVA and UVB protection. **Note: We recommend against combination sun block + insect repellent.** The time you need sun block is usually not the time you need insect repellent. Bring at least one SMALL bottle that you can refill.

Available in Thailand.

- 1-2 Insect repellent: Must be at least 30% DEET. Skin So Soft, etc. is not acceptable. You may be in malarial, dengue, or encephalitis zones. You need good protection. Two small bottles will be more convenient than one large bottle. **Note: Over 30% DEET (e.g. 100% DEET) is not necessary nor more effective.**
Available in Thailand.
- 1 Sunglasses: Very important. Sports sunglasses with dark lenses. Must have UV protection. Quality counts here. Glasses from Smith, Oakley, Spy or Optic Nerve are recommended. We recommend polarized lenses.
Available in Thailand but hard to find polarized lenses.
- 2 Eyeglasses or contact lenses (if needed): Bring a spare in a sturdy case. Some activities (such as snorkeling) you cannot do in glasses. If you must wear corrective lenses, you will need at least one pair of contacts.
Available in Thailand.
- 1 Sports strap for sunglasses.
Available in Thailand.
- 1 Headlamp. It must be LED and **must** run off of AA or AAA batteries (other types of batteries are very difficult to find). We recommend Black Diamond headlamps. Used at night, around camp and in the village.
Available in Thailand but quality varies a lot.
- 1 Wire-gate carabineer. Lots of uses. Not a “mini” carabineer, but a full sized carabineer. It does **not** need to be climbing grade.
Available in Thailand but expensive.
- 1 Watch: Water-resistant sports watch with an alarm function. (e.g. Timex Triathlon or similar)
Available in Thailand.
- 2 Water bottle: Durable **wide-mouthed** plastic bottle with a secure lid. We recommend the standard 32 oz Nalgene. You need a wide mouth to ease filling the bottle.
Available in Thailand, but expensive.
- 1 Water bladder/hydration system with 2-3 liter capacity with a drinking hose that can attach to a backpack. Camelback and Platypus brands work well, other brands are fine also.
Limited availability in Thailand.
- 1 Extra mouthpiece for your water hydration system.
Not available in Thailand.
- # Camera - film or digital (optional): We discourage video cameras because of the harsh travel conditions they will be subjected to. Disposables work well in harsh conditions. Camera shops can burn your digital photos to CD ROM.
Available in Thailand.
- 1 A small weather proof journal that can be written on when wet. Sold as “Rite in the Rain” journals and elsewhere. Get one about 4 5/8 x 7, spiral bound on the side, lined (not blank), 32 pages. They are available online at www.riteintherain.com for about \$6 as item # 393.
Not available in Thailand.
- 1 Mask, snorkel and fins: If you have a good set of your own, bring them (or at least bring the mask, since you know it fits you well). We will check if it is okay once you arrive, otherwise, you can use program supplied equipment.
Available from the program.

City clothing: *All of this is available in Thailand. Limited selection in larger sizes.*

You will be in the city for the first five weeks and then one week out of each of the following three months, for a total of 8 weeks. **Outside class, clothing should be clean, neat and conservative.** For women, this means no low-cut tops, no spaghetti straps, no tank tops and no mid-riffs. Neat jeans and skirts are appropriate. For men, this means no tank tops or sleeveless shirts. Neat jeans and other casual wear are appropriate. Knee length shorts are OK in certain circumstances. You should have one nice outfit in case you are invited out.

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|--------------------------|-----|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2-3 | School uniform: White short-sleeve button down shirt (not long sleeve) with a collar. For women, a black skirt; for men, black pants. You can get more in Thailand. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | # | Nice shirts (adequate number) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | # | Nice pants, jeans or skirts. Jeans are nice to have in the city. (adequate number) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | # | Socks (adequate number) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | # | Underwear (adequate number) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | # | Bra. This is required during all phases of the program as going without will be culturally offensive. (adequate number) |

EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FROM ISDSI

The program has high quality equipment available.

If you do not already own the items listed below, we would recommend using them from the program as it is more cost effective for you as a student and then we can be sure that the gear you have is appropriate for the conditions in which you will be traveling and studying.

- **Backpacks**—We have high quality backpacks and experienced staff that can ensure that you choose the backpack that fits your body well. We have a variety of brands of backpacks as well as different models (including women’s specific models) to ensure that we have a pack that will fit most body types well. Some popular backpacks that we have are the Osprey Aether, Osprey Ariel (women’s specific), Osprey Crescent, Black Diamond Infinity and Black Diamond Innova (women’s specific)..
- **Gaiters** – Variety of sizes and styles available.

PROGRAM SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT

The program will supply the following equipment for all students. **You do not need to bring the following** unless otherwise noted.

- Sleeping bag—Ones from North America are usually too hot for the Thai climate, but if you have a lightweight one, you may bring it.
- Sleeping pad—We supply foam “ensolite” or backpacking style pads. If you want to bring your “Thermarest” or similar product that is fine—but bring a patch kit!
- Snorkel, mask, fins—If you own a set you may bring them, and we will inspect them to make sure they are appropriate.
- Tents/tarps/shelters
- Dry bags for sea kayaking and canoeing
- Personal Floatation Device (PFD’s)
- Emergency equipment and medical supplies

OTHER THINGS TO BRING

Pack ATM/credit cards, traveler’s checks, photo-copies of your passport. A daypack if you want to bring one (10-20 litre is a good size).

You may want to bring a **small** personal first aid kit for your stay in the city (band-aids, Advil, cold medicine, Pepto Bismol, vitamins, cortisone cream). **All of the basic first aid items are available in Thailand.** You **do not** need to bring a six month’s supply of first aid products. Antibiotics such as Cipro are cheap and readily available in Chiang Mai.

A NOTE ON PERSONAL ELECTRONICS (CD AND iPod/MP3 PLAYERS, LAPTOPS, ETC.)

Personal music (e.g. CD or iPod/MP3 players) is nice for the plane and long train and bus rides. However, to minimize our impact in the communities we visit, and to maximize student interaction with the environment, **iPods/MP3 players, etc. are not allowed on field courses.** Although a personal laptop computer is by no means

necessary, some students have found them useful for internet access while in the city (ISDSI has wireless, and wireless is available in many cafes in Chiang Mai). Computers are not used for assignments at ISDSI (all written work goes in ISDSI Field Journals), except for students doing internships. We have a computer library at ISDSI with several desktop computers set up exclusively for student use.

PACKING YOUR BACKPACK FOR THE AIRPLANE

You can buy or make a travel sack for your backpack for the airplane. (This is NOT the same as a rain cover!) If you don't use a travel sack, tuck in and/or tape down all the straps, reverse and buckle the waist belt around the bag, etc. Make it "tight" to avoid anything getting snagged and your bag destroyed by a luggage conveyor belt!