

Furman University Study Away Program: Program Expectations

Program Title: Wild Semester

Locations: Hermosa, NM and South Africa (Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Nelspruit, Kruger)

Dates: August 23, 2025–December 22, 2025

Program Description: The Wild Semester is a 16 week, 4 course program that immerses students in wilderness, adventure, and environmental biology. Students will live in a remote ghost town on the edge of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness in the Gila National Forest in New Mexico for 12 weeks while taking Conservation Biology, Field Ecology, and Field Zoology. After time off to visit family and friends for Thanksgiving break, students will reunite at Furman before departing for South Africa where the fourth and final course of the program, African Biodiversity and Conservation, will be taught. The Wild Semester program emphasizes hands-on learning, practical skills for scientists (and conservationists in particular), research experience, exploring career options, and a thorough academic understanding of the course material. Learning takes place 24/7 through lectures, lab exercises, field trips, camping, hiking, and field studies. The program is personally, physically, and academically challenging, requiring students to be prepared, motivated, enthusiastic, and fun!

Academic, Environmental, Physical & Health Expectations for Participation

Below is a list of academic, environmental and physical expectations and requirements for participation in this study away program. The list captures most, but not all, requirements. If you have questions about the expectations and requirements, please check with the study away office or the program directors. Students requiring a physical or academic accommodation should contact the Student Office for Accessibility Resources (SOAR) no less than 4 months prior to the start date of the program.

	Frequency		Frequency
ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS	Always, Sometimes, Never/ Required or Optional	STUDY AWAY ENVIRONMENT	Always, Sometimes, Never/ Required or Optional
Course work in a foreign language	Never	Foreign Language Environment	Native African languages
Course work in English	Always	Terrain (Mountains, Tropical, Forest, Desert, Hilly, Flat)	New Mexico: Mountains, desert, forest South Africa: Hills and Savannah
Laptop Required	Not Required	Population: Rural, Urban, Remote, etc.	Rural and remote
Smart phone required (videos, photos, blogs)	Required	Environment (high altitude, air pollution, dusty, sandy, humid, dry, hot, cold)	Highly variable environmental conditions
Traditional Classroom	Never	Mosquito Borne Risk of Illness	Malaria zone during last five days of the program.
Group Work	Sometimes	Is tap water safe to drink	Always
Academic Assessments (tests, journals, presentations, essays)	Quizzes, exams, practicals, journal, research, projects	Other Risks (natural disasters, crime, pickpocketing, etc.)	Extreme unconventional and adverse environment conditions. See Health & Safety information for the program.
Interactions with local residents	Sometimes	Cultural Dress Code	Never
Field Work/Research	Field Work	Curfew	Always
Internship/ Volunteer Work	Volunteer work with the U.S. Forest Service in trail clearing and maintenance.	Motion Sickness	Plane, bus and van travel
Other	Expectations include cooking, cleaning and behavior	Other	

PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS	Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional	HEALTH & DIET	Frequency
Lifting/Carrying Own Luggage	Always (Must be able to carry 25-40 lbs. for backpacking)	Vegetarian and Vegan Options Available at all meals	Always
Carrying equipment or program supplies	Always	Food Allergy Accommodations	Always
Standing 60+ minutes	Frequently	Group Meals	Always
Ability to walk up one or more flights of stairs (elevators may not be available)	Equivalent of stairs for hiking incline	Cooking for oneself	Always
Hiking (easy to strenuous; frequency; miles)	Strenuous hiking	Host family prepares meals	Never
Walking 3+ miles per day	5-10 mile weekly hikes	Healthcare easily accessible	See Health and Safety information for this program.
Use of public transportation (buses, trams, trains, subways)	Never	Quality of Healthcare	See Health and Safety information for this program.
LIVING ARRANGEMENTS	Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional	WATER ACTIVITIES	Always, Sometimes, Never, / Required or Optional
Host Family	Never	Swimming	None
Roommate	Always	Snorkeling	None
Shared Apartment	Never	SCUBA	None
Dormitory	Never	Boat, canoes or other water activities	None
Camping	Sometimes (30%)	Sea sickness	None
Hotel	Sometimes (70%)	Other	None
Cell phone signal available	Only in town	Center for Disease Control Recommendations: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/south-africa	
Internet signal available	Only in town		
Refrigerator Access	Available in Hermosa		
Air Conditioning	Only in town		
Other			