EPI

POLICIES & LOGISTICS
Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 2

WHO WE ARE .................................................................. 2
  Our Vision ................................................................. 2
  Academic Programming ............................................. 2
  Partnerships & Local Students .................................... 3

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES ................................. 4
  The Big 5 ..................................................................... 4
  100% Unplugged ......................................................... 4
  EPI Staff Qualifications .............................................. 5
  24 Hour Contact Phone .............................................. 5
  Health Insurance ........................................................ 5
  Medical Forms ........................................................... 5
  Health Status & Medication Changes ....................... 6
  Medications ............................................................... 6
  Immunizations ........................................................... 7

LOGISTICS ...................................................................... 8
  Forms .......................................................................... 8
  Payments ..................................................................... 9
  Withdrawal & Refund Policies .................................... 9
  Travel .......................................................................... 9
  Document Control ..................................................... 11
  Extra Expenses ........................................................ 11
  Gift Giving ................................................................. 11

REMINDES

- Read this guide & review the Student Handbook well in advance of the course.
- Get travel insurance that will reimburse you in the event of a cancellation.
- Give us a call anytime you have questions!
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to EPI! We’re looking forward to having you join us for an unforgettable time in the field, and we hope this Policies & Logistics guide will help prepare you for your upcoming experience. In both this guide and the Student Handbook, you can find answers to commonly asked questions and details about our policies and expectations, so please make some time to review these materials in full. Your help in this important stage of preparation goes a long way to ensuring a fun and safe adventure on course!

WHO WE ARE

Our Vision
EPI is education, adventure, conservation, and innovation. At our core, we are a non-profit dedicated to bringing youth from around the world together with local experts to address critical conservation issues and protect threatened ecosystems.

We are hands-on, experiential, inquiry-based, constructivist, and one-of-a-kind. Our vision is to create an ecologically literate society where the world’s youth are empowered to take an active role in conservation.

To learn more about our mission, vision, and goals, please visit our website.

Academic Programming
At each of our program sites and throughout all our courses, our programming focus is scientific. We are an innovative and established leader in creating environmentally literate students through a hands-on and academically rigorous curriculum designed with national and international education standards.

However, science education is just the beginning. In addition to teaching research techniques and local ecology, we devote time to writing exercises, team-building activities, the arts, and leadership training.
While on course, participants complete between 20 and 40 hours of academic coursework and related activities, 5-20 hours of field research, and 1-5 hours of service learning. For specifics on your program, please see your Student Handbook.

**Partnerships & Local Students**
From students to schools, scientists to local business owners, our partnerships form the solid foundation imperative to lifelong stewardship. We believe that this commitment to stewardship must cross cultural and national borders, so we involve people local to each of our program sites in every aspect of what we do.

We also believe that every student deserves the opportunity to learn and engage with science in their own backyards. Each year, we provide scholarships to students from the communities adjacent to our program sites so that they can also participate in our courses and continue the conservation efforts throughout the year.

More than 30,000 students have participated in our field programs since EPI was established in 2000. Of those participants, over 80% are local, underserved teens, many of whom have never engaged with the dynamic and important ecosystems close by.

83% of our participants are local students!

Want to know more about our local programs and how you can help support underserved teens in the U.S. and Latin America?

Learn more on our [website](http://www.ecologyproject.org).
THE BIG 5
Perhaps our most important Health & Safety Policies is the “Big 5.” Participants can familiarize themselves with the Big 5 in their Student Handbook prior to departure, and it will be the first thing they review with instructors once on course. If participants break one of the Big 5, we reserve the right to send them home at the expense of the participant or their parents or guardians. The Big 5 are:

- **No tobacco products:** The use and/or possession of cigarettes or tobacco products of any kind are not allowed on course.
- **No alcohol:** The use and/or possession of alcohol is not allowed on course.
- **No sexual behavior or coupling:** Sexual activity of any kind is prohibited on course.
- **No illegal drugs:** The use and/or possession of illegal drugs is not allowed on course.
- **No disruptive behavior:** While admittedly a broad category, we define disruptive behavior as any action or activity that jeopardizes the safety of other participants or our instructors or that negatively affects the group’s learning while on course.

100% UNPLUGGED
Educator and student lives are often filled with noise and distraction. One of our program goals is to help people slow down, listen, tune-in, and connect with each other and the environment. We recognize the importance of using technology in field science, and if appropriate, our instructors will use necessary tools in the field (e.g. GPS). However, we ask students and chaperones to completely unplug so that they can immerse themselves in the experience and take advantage of extra time to journal, talk with each other, interact with instructors, listen to the birds, or to just sit and soak in the incredible ecosystem around them.

For these reasons, **no electronic devices are allowed on course.** If students bring them for the plane ride, **EPI instructors will collect them upon arrival at the program site.** They will be kept in a secure place until the end of the course, at which time they will be returned. This policy includes: cell phones, pagers, laptops, mp3 players, CD & DVD players, iPods, PDAs, portable video games, etc.
EPI Staff Qualifications
Risk management and student safety always come first on an EPI course. Our field staff are trained and certified in advanced first aid, and at least one instructor on every course is Wilderness First Responder certified. Additionally, we train field staff in risk management on-site, with program-specific training prior to each season.

Our medical protocols, first aid kits, and emergency action plans are developed in consultation with a U.S. based physician, a wilderness medical advisor, and our local partners, and they are evaluated and revised every year.

24 Hour Contact Phone
Though we do not allow participants to take cell phones on course, EPI instructors in the field and staff in the U.S. carry emergency cell phones with them 24 hours a day while students are on course. If there is an emergency in the field, EPI contacts the parents. If there is an emergency at home, parents can call our U.S. office, and we contact the instructors in the field immediately. Otherwise, remember: No news is good news!

Health Insurance
All participants must be covered by medical insurance while on course.

When traveling abroad, we recommend that you check with your insurance carrier to confirm that your coverage is valid in the host country. If not, we request that participants purchase medical insurance specifically for this course. You may purchase temporary travel insurance from either a standard insurance company or from one that specializes in travel coverage. Please see our Travel Section below for more information on travel insurance.

Medical Forms
Five months prior to your EPI course (one month prior for local Yellowstone courses), we review your health forms and will call and/or email to clarify questions. We recommend that students carry a copy of their Medical Form in their carry-on bag when traveling. If you have questions about medical concerns during travel time to and from the EPI site, please contact the course chaperone.*

Even if you have a current physical form, you must complete the EPI Medical Form. This helps ensure that students receive clearance specifically for the course and that medical information is consistent for every participant.

There are two sections to our Medical Form: Participant Medical History and Medical Health Professional. The first section helps us understand and assess your medical needs in order to create the safest and best experience possible for you while on course. Please fill out this section with as much detail as possible.

The second section must be completed and signed by a licensed medical professional (EPI only accepts MDs, PAs, NPs, and DOs). Please check with your doctor to see if you will need a check-up prior to completing the form – they will need to review Section 1 and confirm its accuracy and/or make changes. To prevent delays you should also review Section 2, once completed by your doctor, to ensure it is filled out completely.

*An EPI Chaperone is the teacher(s) or parent(s) accompanying students on the EPI course.
Medical forms can be accessed electronically from your account [login page]. In an effort to conserve resources, we use a paperless enrollment process. Materials must be submitted electronically via email or fax.

Our thorough medical review process begins 5 months prior to course departure. However, if there are any medical conditions that you suspect may jeopardize your ability to participate in the course (severe food allergies, physical disabilities, life-threatening illnesses or other major medical conditions), please notify our staff as soon as possible.

**Health Status & Medication Changes**
If there is a change in your medical status after submitting the Medical Form—including recent hospitalizations or ER visits, EPI must be notified immediately so we can update our records and inform the program staff of changes prior to the course. Changes must be reviewed by our Medical Reviewer and/or our Chief Medical Screener in order for you to be cleared to participate.

Any cost incurred as a result of not communicating medical changes will be the sole responsibility of the participant.

**Medications**
All medications taken by minors (under 18) will be collected by EPI instructors within the first 24 hours of arrival in the host country. The only exceptions to this policy are asthma bronchodilator inhalers, epinephrine, and injectable insulin (see below for more information).

On course, EPI instructors will confidentially dispense and document each individual’s medication usage (*this includes all prescribed oral contraceptives*). This ensures that medications are taken as prescribed and that they are stored safely throughout all activities. Participants carrying inhalers, epinephrine, and insulin work directly with our instructors to document their medication usage. It is important that our trained and certified instructors are able to monitor the entire picture of our participants’ health so they can help make the course experience safe and fun.

Participants over 18 are responsible for their own medications, but instructors will check in with them at the beginning of the course and are happy to help safely store all medications.
Important Medication Reminders

- Record all medications on your Medical Form.
- Prescribed medications must come in a pharmacy container with a legible label that includes the participant’s name, the physician’s name, the medication name, and the dosage and frequency requirements.
- Keep all medications, vitamins, supplements, etc. in their original and appropriately labeled bottles or containers.
- Bring enough for the entire length of the stay, as well as an extra night in case of travel delays.
- Do **not** mix medications.

**Asthma Inhalers**

If you have a prescription for an inhaler, you are required to bring two inhalers on your course. You will carry one inhaler, and the EPI instructors will carry the other. If you do not have two inhalers when the instructors check with you at the beginning of the course, you will not be allowed to go into the field until a second inhaler is obtained.

**Epinephrine**

If you are prescribed an epinephrine injection, you are required to bring at least one dose. You will carry it with you on course and should know how to use it. EPI staff is trained and will help you administer it if needed. We recommend injections in the form of an EpiPen® or Twinject®, which are easier to self-administer during a reaction.

**Insulin and Other Injections**

EPI must be notified at least two months in advance of the course start date if a participant will be injecting medicine while on course. We expect participants who use injections (e.g. – insulin, growth hormone shots, anti-allergy shots, etc.) to be able to self-administer. If your medication needs to be kept cool, please note this on your Medical Form, and the instructors will store the injections for you throughout the course.

**Diabetes**

If you have diabetes, please contact EPI’s office directly to provide more information. Diabetic participants using injectable insulin will be allowed to keep their insulin and supplies on their person for easy access, but they must assist EPI instructors in documenting its usage (as per all medications on course).

**Preventative and “Just in Case” Medications**

Please do not bring preventative or “just in case” medications that you do not take on a regular basis (e.g. – aspirin, antacids, antibiotics, anti-diarrheals, etc.). EPI instructors have a first aid kit stocked with over-the-counter medications, which can be dispensed as needed. Any preventative or “just in case” medicines brought on course will be collected and held for the length of the course, unless otherwise instructed by a doctor and then returned to you upon departure for home.

If a participant gets sick on course, EPI staff will take the participant to a local licensed medical professional. Our philosophy is to have licensed medical professionals diagnose and treat illness, not EPI instructors.

**Immunizations**

We do not require vaccinations in order to participate on course. We do recommend, however, following [CDC recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov) and consulting your physician on this matter.
LOGISTICS

Forms
All forms are due 5 months prior to course. Timely submission of payments and paperwork helps ensure that you get on course and that the course runs smoothly.

EPI does not grant refunds for cancellations based on complications with paperwork.

If you are missing paperwork or payments within 2 months of the course start date, you will be cancelled from the course, and no refund will be given. If you anticipate difficulty meeting this deadline, please contact our office as soon as possible.

Medical Form (2 sections: participant and physician)
- Please ensure you have completed every section, that you or your parents have signed the first section, and your physician has completely filled out and signed the second section. No need to send proof of vaccinations.

Consent Forms
- Participant Agreement
- EPI Risk & Indemnity Agreement
- Course activity forms

Minor International Travel Letter
- Required for a U.S. minor to travel outside the U.S. without parents or guardians.
- Must be signed and notarized by both parents (even if one parent is traveling with the group) if you will be under 18 as of your course start date. If second parent is unavailable, one parent may sign the letter, but additional document proving sole custody is required. (Documentation may include: certified copy of divorce papers stating full legal custody of minor, birth certificate with one parent listed, death certificate, or adoption papers with one parent listed.)

Passports
- Must be a clear and legible color copy – a smartphone photo of the passport lying flat works well.
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your course start date.
- If you do not currently have a valid passport, please start the process immediately to ensure you receive it in time for the course.

Visas
- U.S. citizens do not require a visa. If you are not a U.S. citizen, it is your responsibility to check with the host country’s embassy and find out whether you will need a visa for the trip.

Note: If you withdraw due to passport/visa complications within 30 days of departure, or if you are not allowed into the destination country, you will not be eligible for a full or partial refund. EPI is not legally or financially responsible for issues that arise due to passport/visa difficulties.

Medical and EPI consent forms can be accessed electronically, and course activity forms can be downloaded from your account login page (ecologyproject.org/studentlogin).

In an effort to conserve resources, we use a paperless enrollment process. Materials must be submitted electronically via email or fax.
Payments
Payments may be made by Visa or MasterCard, check, money order, or cashier’s check.

Check & Credit Card Payments
- Mail checks to the EPI office with the participant name on the memo line.
- Bounced checks will incur a $35 NSF charge. EPI redeposits bounced checks and will apply this charge to your outstanding tuition each time a check is returned.
- Credit card transactions will be posted to the participant’s account by 10am MST the following day.
- All credit and debit card transactions incur a 3.5% processing fee.

Tuition Deposits
- Both the $250 and $750 deposits are due no later than 5 months prior to your course.
- These deposits are nonrefundable and nontransferable.
- A $50 tuition deposit surcharge will be applied to student accounts if the $750 non-refundable tuition deposit is late. Furthermore, a $20 late fee may be added to the account each week thereafter for late payments or past-due paperwork for which families have not made alternative arrangements with the office.

Final Tuition
- Due no later than 2 months prior to course*

Check the status of your paperwork and outstanding tuition balance anytime by logging into your account at www.ecologyproject.org/login (using your name and the 4-digit PIN you chose when applying). Please note that account updates may not be posted until the following business day.

Withdrawal & Refund Policies
If a participant withdraws or leaves a course for any reason:

- **24 hour Cancellation**: All payments will be refunded if student cancels within 24 hours of enrollment.
- **>150 Days**: For cancellations that occur more than 150 days prior to departure, EPI will retain the $250 enrollment deposit. All other funds will be refunded.
- **150 – 61 Days**: For cancellations that occur between 150 and 60 days prior to departure, EPI will retain the $250 enrollment deposit and the $750 tuition deposit. All other funds will be refunded.
- **60 – 30 Days**: Between 60 and 30 days prior to departure, EPI will retain enrollment and tuition deposits as well as 50% of remaining course tuition.
- **<30 Days**: Cancellations within one month of departure will result in no refunds; EPI retains all funds received.

Travel
Airline Arrangements
If your course tuition includes airfare, EPI will arrange and purchase round trip air travel from your closest major airport to the host country. We make every effort to arrange the quickest and most direct flight route for all participants; however, we reserve the right to choose the carrier, routing, and departure city airports. Once finalized, EPI will send a flight itinerary and confirmation codes to the group’s coordinator prior to the departure date.

*Any participant who has outstanding paperwork or payments after this date will be cancelled from the course and ineligible for refunds of any kind.
In order to ensure that everyone is on the same flight, we purchase group airfare. If we receive your second deposit after the group flight arrangements have been made, we will try to ticket you at the best available fare and time, but you will be responsible for paying any increase in fare.

Additionally, if you sign up late or do not pay tuition by the indicated deadlines, airfare costs may increase. This will result in a $50 booking charge in addition to paying any increases in fare. Because we generally purchase blocks of tickets, it is not possible to use frequent flier miles to cover the cost of your airfare.

EPI does not purchase airfare for individual participants desiring alternate itineraries. In the event that you desire an itinerary different from your group, you must:

- Confirm the deviation with the chaperone and/or school.
- Pay the tuition rate that does not include airfare (call us for details).
- Wait to hear from EPI that the group airfare is purchased.
- Purchase a ticket within predetermined windows of arrival and departure.
- Provide the itinerary to EPI.

Due to market volatility, EPI cannot guarantee airfare costs, and any expenses associated with increased airfare costs may be passed on to the participant.

Please Note:
- EPI is not responsible for paying checked baggage fees that may apply to your air travel, so please check with the airline prior to travel for fees you may incur.
- All flight arrangements are subject to change at any time for many reasons beyond EPI’s control.
- EPI staff generally does not fly with participants, but will meet them upon arrival at the destination airport.

Travel Insurance
Travel insurance can provide coverage for medical expenses, trip interruption/cancellation, baggage damage, medical evacuation, and much more.

We strongly encourage you to purchase travel insurance.

EPI does not cover the theft, loss, or damage of your personal property or equipment, so be sure to confirm that your insurance coverage includes these risks. World Nomads and other travel insurers offer temporary policies.
Packing
Check our your course packing list from your account login page. You can also read about helpful packing tips from your Student Handbook. Remember: You’re responsible for any checked baggage fees at the airport, so review your airline’s fee system and pack smartly if you want to avoid additional fees!

Lodging
Cabins, tents, and other sleeping accommodations are single-gender at all times for participants. In some cases, chaperones and students (single gender only) may share lodging. EPI is an inclusive organization that welcomes participants of all gender identities and sexual orientations. The gender identity of each student will be honored in all lodging decisions and will be handled with discretion by EPI. If EPI’s lodging policy is not compatible with school policies or personal preferences, please contact our office immediately to arrange alternative lodging options in conversation with EPI.

Document Control
Do not forget to bring your passport and original Minor International Travel Letter (plus supplementary documents, if needed) with you to the airport. Students cannot travel without these items. Upon arrival in the host country, our EPI instructors will collect your documents and store them in a safe location until the end of the course.

If you plan on bringing a credit card, you should make a copy of the steps to take and numbers to call if it is lost or stolen. You should also write down phone numbers for travel insurance, medical insurance, phone cards, and emergency contact numbers and store these copies separate from the originals.

Extra Expenses
In most circumstances, participants will not have any additional expenses while on course. Occasionally, however, extra expenses might be needed to cover unexpected transportation costs or visits to a clinic or hospital. Generally, EPI will ask the participants to cover the cost of any unforeseen expenses. In the event that circumstances make it impossible for a student to pay for needed services, EPI will cover the cost and then contact the family for reimbursement. Payment to EPI will be due upon receipt of the invoice.

Students may want to travel with up to $100 to cover some expenses on course that are not included (e.g. – checked baggage fees, snacks at the airport, or souvenirs on course).

Gift Giving
Although a generous gesture, we strongly discourage gift giving on cultural exchange days. In order to serve our mission, we strive to maintain a peer relationship between our U.S. and local students or partners. It’s important that we avoid a perception of “givers” and “receivers,” which might distract us from the cultural exchange goals that bring us together.

In addition, we want to avoid making the local students feel uncomfortable if they are unprepared or unable to give the U.S. students a gift in return. This is a day for students to share their lives and experiences with each other. We prefer that students enjoy a cultural exchange, rather than a gift exchange.
CONTACT EPI
Any Time, Any Reason

Have questions? Contact us – we’re real people, and we want to hear from you!

US Phone (M – F, 9am – 5pm MST): 1.800.721.8784
Email: info@ecologyproject.org
Website: www.ecologyproject.org
Mailing Address: 315 S 4th St E, Missoula, MT 59801

STAY IN TOUCH AFTER YOUR TRIP!

Share photos, find photos from your course, and get awesome EPI updates on our social media channels!