

**SEMESTER AT SEA**

Fall 2026 Voyage

# HEALTH & SAFETY BRIEFING



# SEMESTER AT SEA

## Table of Contents

<b>Voyager Responsibilities.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Itinerary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Healthcare Resources Available on the Ship.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Medical.....	4
Mental Health.....	4
<b>Medications.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Personal Prescriptions.....	5
Restrictions.....	5
Recommendations.....	6
Traveler’s Diarrhea.....	6
Seasickness.....	6
Malaria.....	7
<b>Immunizations.....</b>	<b>7</b>
REQUIRED!.....	7
Strongly Recommended.....	8
Standard Immunizations.....	8
Additional Immunizations to Consider.....	8
<b>Insect-Borne Diseases (Non-Vaccine).....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Pre-Travel Health Consultations.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Additional Health &amp; Safety Considerations.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Health Supplies Suggested Packing List.....</b>	<b>10</b>

# SEMESTER AT SEA

## Voyager Responsibilities

While Semester at Sea does everything it can to help prepare and educate its voyagers, every individual is expected to take responsibility for their own health and safety. This includes researching and understanding the risks inherent in international and ship-based travel. There are many resources available to help guide your search. A few recommendations include:

[TripPrep](#)

[CDC Travel Health Information](#)

[CDC Information on Studying Abroad](#)

[TravelHealthPro](#)

[U.S. Department of State](#)

Voyagers are responsible for ensuring that they bring sufficient medication for the full length of the voyage and for obeying all local laws pertaining to the importation and use of this medication.

## Itinerary

The planned itinerary for Fall 2026 is listed below. ISE has learned that itineraries are subject to adjustment, however. More than half of our voyages have required some deviation from the planned itinerary, and potential diversion ports are identified in advance. Health considerations are included in that selection process.

Country	Enter	Depart
Germany	9/5/26	9/7/26
Netherlands	9/8/26	9/9/26
Portugal	9/15/26	9/18/26
Morocco	9/22/26	9/27/26
Brazil	10/7/26	10/13/26
Saint Helena	10/20/26	10/20/26
South Africa	10/26/26	11/1/26
Mauritius	11/8/26	11/10/26
Sri Lanka	11/18/26	11/23/26
Vietnam	12/1/26	12/6/26
Hong Kong	12/10/26	12/15/26
Thailand	12/22/26	12/22/26

## Healthcare Resources Available on the Ship

# SEMESTER AT SEA

## Medical

The medical clinic on board exceeds industry standards for ocean-going vessels. Voyage medical and mental health staff are U.S. licensed health professionals and include:

- A board-certified program physician
- A board-certified program physician's assistant or nurse practitioner
- A certified ship's physician
- Two certified ship's nurses

Two walk-in clinics are offered daily while at sea, and a morning clinic is offered when in port. The facility is designed to handle routine and urgent medical needs, but is not appropriate for long-term care or monitoring. Chronic conditions should be well controlled and stable prior to the voyage.

The clinic can provide emergency stabilization but is not a full hospital. One member of the medical team is always on call 24/7 in the event of an emergency. Should a condition exceed the capabilities available onboard, the ship would divert to the nearest point of land or arrange an air evacuation to the nearest adequate facility.

Common conditions the medical team can assist with include

- Seasickness and dehydration
- Traveler's diarrhea
- Migraines
- Cuts, sprains, and wound care
- Allergic reactions
- Upper respiratory tract infections such as colds, flu, sinus infections, strep throat, and COVID-19

## Mental Health

The voyage Counseling Team consists of three licensed mental health professionals. Participants may make counseling appointments any day at sea, and requests for appointments are usually met in 1-2 days. Sessions focus on short-term, solution-oriented care. Given the inherently transient nature of the program and the number of clients requesting services, Semester at Sea is unable to address deeper mental health concerns requiring consistent, long-term therapy. Most voyagers who use the shipboard counseling services will attend 1-4 sessions over the course of the voyage.

# SEMESTER AT SEA

While in port, counseling appointments are for emergencies only. One member of the counseling team is always available 24/7 throughout the voyage in the event of an emergency.

## Medications

### Personal Prescriptions

The shipboard medical team is NOT able to fill prescriptions. It is critical that voyagers bring a full supply of medication to last the ENTIRE voyage. All medication must be in original containers with the pharmacy label including the name of the medication, dosage, administration instructions, and your name. If you are a student, the medical team will store your controlled or high-risk prescription medications in the medical clinic (beyond a one-month supply that is kept in your cabin).

Most countries require travelers to carry a copy of their prescription(s) with them. This can be obtained from the pharmacy upon request. To be valid for travel, it should include the

- Patient's full name
- Scientific and/or commercial drug name
- Pharmaceutical form (pill, capsule, etc.)
- Prescribed dose
- Date of issue
- Duration of treatment
- Physician's name
- Physician's license number

A **travel letter** from the prescribing physician outlining the same information is also typically accepted as an alternative.

### Restrictions

Some medications that are legal by prescription or over-the-counter in the United States are illegal in other countries or may require a special permit for entry. Adderall, codeine, and pseudoephedrine are common examples. Learn more about **traveling abroad with medicine**.

As outlined in the Voyager's Handbook, per International Maritime Law, regardless of state, local, or federal law in a voyager's home country, use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to marijuana, methamphetamines, cocaine, opiates, LSD, mushrooms, heroin, and designer drugs

# SEMESTER AT SEA

such as Ecstasy and GHB. The use, possession, or purchase of all products containing Cannabidiol (CBD) is strictly prohibited.

**Thailand:** **Adderall** (amphetamine/dextroamphetamine salts) is prohibited in Thailand, and it is illegal to bring it into the country. Voyagers embarking in Thailand should contact their providers in advance to consider alternatives. Voyagers disembarking in Thailand must leave any remaining Adderall behind with the ship's clinic to be destroyed. Other **narcotics** or **psychotropics** may require a special **permit** to bring into the country. Voyagers can check the legal status of any medication through Thailand's **Narcotics Control Division website**.

Voyagers unable to bring a full supply of medication should notify the voyage medical team as soon as possible to arrange for an additional prescription from a local provider.

## Recommendations

### Traveler's Diarrhea

Voyagers are encouraged to bring a prescription antibiotic (azithromycin) for self-treatment of traveler's diarrhea. Over-the-counter options, such as Pepto-Bismol and Imodium, may also be helpful.

Semester at Sea recommends 12 tablets of 250 mg azithromycin, as this will be enough for two courses and also offers flexibility if needed to treat other conditions such as pharyngitis or respiratory illness.

There are some side effects associated with use of azithromycin and evidence that antibiotic use for treatment of diarrhea increases intestinal carriage of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in returning travelers. The decision to take antibiotics should be done in consultation with a medical provider.

Voyagers should follow standard **food** and **water** precautions to avoid **potential illness** that could result from ingesting contaminated food or water. Semester at Sea will provide additional information and resources on board.

### Seasickness

Even voyagers who have never experienced seasickness before are encouraged to bring seasickness medication. Medication is most effective when begun prior to the onset of symptoms. Scopolamine patches can be very useful but require a prescription and have some potential side effects to

# SEMESTER AT SEA

be discussed with a provider. Over-the-counter medications such as Meclizine or Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine®) can also be used. Ondansetron or Promethazine pills or Promethazine suppositories (prescription needed for all of these) can be helpful for preventing or treating symptoms. Most of these medications may cause drowsiness, especially Promethazine.

## Malaria

Malaria is endemic to the following countries on our itinerary:

- Brazil
- South Africa
- Vietnam
- Thailand

Malaria prophylaxis is strongly recommended. Medications should be started 1-2 days before entering a malarious region and taken for 1-4 weeks after leaving, depending on the medication. Prophylaxis through this time is recommended. Thailand is not known to have malaria in Bangkok or other major cities, so prophylaxis for this country is only needed if the voyager is planning further independent travel to remote areas before or after the program. South Africa is largely malaria-free, but it is present in the region of Kruger National Park, which is a frequent field program destination and a tourist attraction for many voyagers. Voyagers should discuss the specifics of their planned travel and activities with a travel medicine practitioner.

Malarone (Atovaquone 250 mg/Proguanil 100 mg) is preferred because it is easier to take for a shorter duration and it has fewer potential side effects. Doxycycline is an alternative, but is not recommended for children under eight. Chloroquine is NOT acceptable due to resistance in most of the world. Mefloquine is also NOT recommended due to resistance and possible psychiatric side effects. Recommended prescription would be either:

**Doxycycline:** Doxycycline 100 mg, one tablet daily, to begin 2 days before reaching the endemic area and to continue daily until 4 weeks after leaving the endemic area. Prescribe 90 doses.

**Malarone:** Malarone 250 mg/100 mg, one tablet daily, to begin 2 days before reaching the endemic area and to continue daily until 7 days after leaving the endemic area. Prescribe 47 doses.

## Immunizations

**REQUIRED!**

# SEMESTER AT SEA

**Yellow Fever** vaccination is required. It is valid for life (even though it was once thought to last only ten years), so voyagers who were vaccinated for it previously do not need another dose. The official, physical International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) document, also known as the “Yellow Card,” is required for embarkation. Photo copies and scans are not accepted.

## Strongly Recommended

1. **Influenza (flu):** The flu is common and symptoms mimic those of COVID-19. Both viruses will require a period of quarantine if suspected, so voyagers are strongly recommended to consider vaccination.
2. **Typhoid:** Semester at Sea visits a number of areas where typhoid fever poses a risk and therefore strongly recommends all voyagers obtain the vaccine, regardless of the final itinerary. [Learn more about typhoid vaccination.](#)

## Standard Immunizations

Regardless of final itinerary, adults and adolescents who are not immune to common childhood diseases should discuss appropriate protective measures with their healthcare providers, including:

- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Meningococcal (ACWY)
- Polio

## Additional Immunizations to Consider

1. **Rabies:** Semester at Sea visits areas where rabies is prevalent. Monkeys, bats, and stray dogs are common carriers, and it is not uncommon for one or more voyagers to be scratched or bitten during a voyage. The vaccine requires multiple doses on a strict timeline. The ship carries an emergency supply of rabies vaccine and rabies immune globulin, but it may not be sufficient for multiple voyagers, depending on the amount required. Prior vaccination should be considered.
2. **Japanese Encephalitis:** Semester at Sea is likely to visit areas with Japanese encephalitis and recommends immunization for all voyagers, particularly

# SEMESTER AT SEA

those planning to engage in activities that increase risk of infection such as visiting rural areas, hiking or camping, and staying in places without air conditioning, screens, or bed nets.

3. **Chikungunya:** The CDC recommends the VIMKUNYA vaccine for travelers aged 12+ visiting an area with a **chikungunya outbreak**. The virus is transmitted by mosquitos and causes acute illness sometimes followed by chronic arthritis.
4. **Cholera:** Based on the current itinerary, **cholera** vaccination is generally not recommended for this voyage, but may be available for travelers desiring maximal protection.

## Insect-Borne Diseases (Non-Vaccine)

In much of the world, including areas Semester at Sea is likely to visit, insects and ticks can transmit significant illnesses. Many of these do not have vaccines to help prevent them such as leishmaniasis, rickettsial diseases, and Zika. Other diseases, such as dengue fever, may have a vaccine that is only available in limited areas or to specific populations.

Semester at Sea will educate and remind voyagers of preventative action to take throughout the voyage, but it is important to discuss risks and prevention strategies with a health care provider in advance of the voyage. Suggested resources:

### Avoiding Bug Bites

### Preventing Mosquito Bites While Traveling

Some travel-related illnesses may not cause symptoms for a long time after exposure. Voyagers who get sick at any point in the voyage should visit the ship's medical clinic to discuss previous travel history. See also **After Travel Tips** from the CDC.

## Pre-Travel Health Consultations

The information provided in this document is not intended to take the place of conversations with your personal medical and mental health care providers. Consult with your healthcare team to discuss the most up-to-date guidelines and individual recommendations for managing your own health and well-being. Consider

- Plans for sufficient prescription medication to last the full voyage
- Plans for preventing/treating traveler's diarrhea and motion sickness
- Vaccination recommendations
- Mental health
- Sexual health and STIs

# SEMESTER AT SEA

- Personal health concerns as they relate to international and ship-based travel
- Voyagers with disabilities, weakened immune systems, and/or chronic illnesses may have additional considerations and recommendations

## Additional Health & Safety Considerations

In addition to disease prevention, voyagers should consider prevention and management of other **travel-related health and safety risks** such as

- Traffic/road safety (the leading cause of death among travelers)
- Water safety
- Heat, humidity, and sun exposure
- Crime

## Health Supplies Suggested Packing List

- Masks (N-95, KN95, KF94, or FFP2 suggested)
- Prescription medications for the entire voyage
- Frequently used non-prescription medications (pain, allergy, cough, cold, etc.)
- Sleep aids (ex. Tylenol PM, ear plugs)
- Seasickness/nausea aids (ginger, Dramamine/meclizine, Scopolamine)
- Diarrhea medication (Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, etc.)
- Hand sanitizer/wet wipes
- Sunscreen of at least SPF 15
- Pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a hat (also required for lifeboat drills)
- Insect repellent - No aerosol cans! (EPA registered, at least 20% DEET)
- Small personal first-aid kit

Questions? Email [medical@semesteratsea.org](mailto:medical@semesteratsea.org) to contact our medical team.