

Daily Itinerary for 2026 Environmental and Urban Sustainability in Southeast Asia: Geography and Urban Studies Group Study Program

Predeparture activities

| GEOG 390: International Field Studies - Predeparture course components | | |
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| Date | Time | Activity |
| 01 May | 09:00 – 12:00 | Module 01: Course introduction: teams, experiential learning, course expectations Activity: Teams Easter Egg Hunt Module 02: Purpose of fieldwork, examples of physical & human geography and urban studies in the field. |
| | 13:00 – 16:00 | Module 03: Elements of a field notebook Activity: Do you see what I see? Module 04: Making meaningful field notebook entries Assignment #1: Let's go on a field trip ! |
| 02 May | 09:00 – 12:00 | Module 05: The spatial element of geography fieldwork Activity: GIS Point Bingo |
| | 13:00 – 16:00 | Module 06: Using the software for data collection Assignment #2: Intro to ArcGIS Online Module 07: Mini assignments & software, apps and hardware for data collection |
| 03 May | 09:00 – 13:00 | Assignment #3: Individual mini assignment work Module 08: Providing peer feedback Activity: Gallery Walk of mini assignments + peer feedback |
| | 14:00 – 16:00 | Module 09: Working in groups – recommendations, expectations and team contracts. Assignment #4: Group mini-Assignment and project data compilation |
| 04 May | 09:00 – 12:00 | Module 10: Crash course: physical geography – what to expect on this field school Activity: Physical geography of SE Asia Assignment #5: Physical geography |
| | 13:00 – 16:00 | Module 11: Crash course: human geography – what to expect on this field school Activity: Human geography of SE Asia Assignment #6: Human geography |
| 05 May | 09:00 – 12:00 | Module 12: Sustainable travel and eco-tourism Activity: Carbon footprints – discussion on actions on this trip Module 13: Field preparation – personal considerations, review of the packing list, travelling as a group |
| | 13:00 – 18:00 | Course Conclusion/Project: Reflective Essay |

In field activities

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| May 8/9 | | Travel days Calgary to Singapore Cross international dateline |
| May 10 | Singapore | Orientation to Singapore, afternoon walking tour through the city center and urban park systems. |
| May 11 | Singapore | Lectures on the economic geography of Singapore and Southeast Asia and the increasing economic power and importance of this city state of Southeast Asia. Visit to the Singapore urban planning exhibition.. |
| May 12 | Singapore | Explorations of the urban morphology of Singapore. Lectures on the urban redevelopment policies of the Singapore government, displacement of the urban poor |

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| May 13 | Singapore | Explorations of Singapore's Urban Cloud Forest and Gardens by the Bay. Indoor enclosure, temperature-controlled environment conveying the world's tropical vegetation and other biomes located at the equator. |
| May 14 | Singapore | Explorations of the harbour, port facilities and reclamations projects in Singapore. Lectures on the historical geography of Singapore and the devastating impacts of the 1942 invasion by the Japanese in WWII. |
| May 15 | Singapore | Further Explorations of Singapore. Time to finish assignments. |
| May 16 | Khao Lak | Travel to Khao Lak in the morning, a beautiful tourist destination situated within pocket beaches along a long coast plain. Adjacent to a national park where tropical rainforest still exists. Khao Lak and nearby coastal villages and resorts was the region in Thailand most heavily impacted by the 2004 Andaman Indian Ocean Tsunami. Aaron Williams did his PhD. dissertation on the 2004 tsunami impact and long-term aid outcomes and recovery of this region |
| May 17 | Khao Lak | Day hike through Khao Lak National Park. Lecture on the tsunami mechanism, immediate impacts, and long-term recovery. Further discussion on the current and historical pressures and impacts on National Parks and coastal areas by resource industries (mining) monoculture (rubber and palm oil) and tourism development. |
| May 18 | Khao Lak | Daytrip to Ban Nam Khem, a fishing village devastated by the 2004 Tsunami. Visit tsunami memorial, resettlement villages, local recovery cooperative organization and other locations impacted by the 2004 Tsunami |
| May 19 | Khao Lak | Visit Sea Turtle Conservation Center and turtle nursery. They make sure the little turtles are safely returned to the sea. Exploration around Tha Din Daeng Community, agriculture and fishery village. A focus on concepts of eco-tourism and community-based tourism in the Mueang District. Following, a 30min-1hr kayak excursion through a mangrove estuary. Information on the benefits of mangrove forest in coastline stabilization, maintaining coastal biodiversity and as a barrier to coastal hazards such as storm surge and tsunamis. Participation in mangrove reforestation. |
| May 20 | Phuket | Travel day to Phuket. Lectures on the impacts of mass tourism and the impact of the 2004 tsunami on Phuket Island. A focus on the changing forms of tourism or tourism typologies, the environmental impacts of mass tourism, efforts to establish ecotourism. Afternoon exploration of Phuket, time for field observations and assignments. |
| May 21 | Phuket | A visit to Pangar Bay by longtail boat-Pangar Bay is renowned for its dramatic coastal beauty, highlighted by striking limestone casts that rise from the sea. These natural formations, sculpted over millennia by wind and water, create a breathtaking seascape of rugged cliffs, hidden coves, and towering karst. We have the option to stop at the gibbon rehabilitation centre The Gibbon Rehabilitation Project in Phuket is dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating, and reintroducing gibbons back into the wild after they've been exploited by the illegal pet and tourism trade. |
| May 22 | Phuket | A yacht trip from Phuket to Mai Ton Island offers a scenic journey through the Andaman Sea, part of the Indian Ocean. Just 9 km southeast of Phuket, Mai Ton is a privately owned island known for its clear waters, coral reefs, and preserved natural beauty. Geographically, this route crosses Thailand's coastal shelf, showcasing rich marine biodiversity and fringing reefs ideal for snorkeling. The island's limited access helps protect its fragile ecosystem, making it a model for sustainable island tourism in the region. |
| May 23 | Phuket – Bangkok | Arrival to Bangkok in the afternoon. Accommodation in the heart of old Bangkok. Thailand's bustling capital, Bangkok is famous for its tuk tuks, khlong boats and street vendors serving up delicious Thai food. |

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| May 24 | Bangkok | Travel through Bangkok on Tuk Tuk's to the main part of Rattanakosin island. Visit the Imperial Grand Palace. Travel through the Bangkok City Pillar Shrine. Walking tour through the local community around Phraeng Nara Rd. Orientation to urban and historical geography of Bangkok: A focus on issues of rapid urbanization in Southeast Asia since WWII. In 1945, Bangkok's population was less than 1 million people. Today the population of Bangkok proper is close to 9 million, and greater Bangkok is around 13 million. |
| May 25 | Bangkok | Visit to Buddhist Shrines of Wat Kalayanamit temple, Tien-Aun-Keng, an ancient Chinese Shrine. Visit to historic Chinese communities, the Catholic Church named "Santa Cruz". Afternoon visit to Chinatown. A focus on the historical and current urban development of Bangkok. Visit old Bangkok on a Chao Phraya River boat tour. Observations of the historic teak wood housing (protected and vulnerable) still present in these districts. Walk through the famous Kho San Road, the center of backpacker tourism in Southeast Asia. Lectures on the forms of tourism in Thailand and Southeast Asia and issues of economic, cultural, environmental, and social sustainability of tourism in Thailand. Afternoon visit to Watt Phra Kaeo and the Grand Palace. Student Presentations. |
| May 26 | Bangkok | Morning visit by boat to central Bangkok. A discussion of the red shirt protests of 2010 which shut down Central Bangkok for almost one year as well as the political implications and aftermath. |
| May 27 | Bangkok - Medan Indonesia | Travel day to Bukit Lawang |
| May 28 | Bukit Lawang | Half-day guided trek along the periphery of Gunung Leuser National Park. This introductory walk follows the Bohorok River and ascends into lowland forest trails, providing early immersion into the park's tropical rainforest environment. Students will engage in basic orientation, trail safety, and ecological observation with local guides. The terrain is moderately challenging, with varied elevation and forest cover. Return to the lodge by midday for rest and preparation ahead of the multi-day jungle expedition starting the next morning. This preliminary trek serves as foundational field exposure for geography students prior to an extended camp-based study. The activity focuses on introducing key concepts in tropical biogeography, forest structure, and conservation geography. Students will begin to assess spatial interactions between human settlements and protected ecosystems, explore the ecological edge effect, and observe land cover transitions. Field notes, sketch mapping, and guided discussion will prepare students to engage more critically with the challenges of in-situ biodiversity conservation, community-based tourism, and human-environment dynamics during the upcoming 2D/1N field camp deeper in the park. |
| May 29 | Bukit Lawang Camping | Set off on your trekking adventure through the Gunung Leuser National Park. This UNESCO World Heritage site and Wildlife Heritage Area. It's the home of many endangered species, including the Sumatran tiger, rhinoceros and elephants. These animals are extremely rare, but you'll get the chance to go in search for wild orangutans. There used to be an orangutan rehabilitation centre here, but now these creatures have all been returned to their natural habitat, so this is your best chance in Indonesia to see orangutans in the wild. Camp overnight in tents. |
| May 30 | Bukit Lawang | Trekking back to the lodge in Bukit Lawang |

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| May 31 | Bukit - Medan - Yogyakarta | Travel day to Yogyakarta |
| June 1 | Yogyakarta/ Borobudur | A day trip to Borobudur from Yogyakarta takes you on a scenic journey through Central Java's countryside to one of the world's most magnificent Buddhist monuments. Explore the massive 9th-century temple, famous for its intricate stone carvings and stunning panoramic views from the top. |
| June 2 | Yogyakarta | Begin your half-day field excursion by bike in the early morning, traversing the agrarian landscapes of Yogyakarta's countryside. This immersive trek offers a firsthand observation of Central Java's rural geography — from traditional land-use patterns and terraced rice cultivation to socio-spatial dynamics within village settlements. As you move through the region, you'll encounter diverse micro-environments shaped by both natural and anthropogenic processes, providing valuable insight into sustainable agricultural practices, rural livelihoods, and cultural landscapes unique to Java. This experience offers an ideal context for field-based learning and geographic inquiry outside the urban framework. |
| June 3 | Yogyakarta – Malang (Mt Bromo) | Enjoy the scenery as you travel by train to Malang, before continuing on to Mt Bromo. |
| June 4 | Bromo - Surabaya | Start today (around 3 am) will be well worth it! First, drive to a lookout point in jeeps to catch the sunrise over the sea of sand. After, you'll climb up to the volcano crater to take a peek inside – the ascent is not too difficult (approximately 45 minutes), but it can be very cold, so don't forget to bring extra layers of clothing. Return to the hotel to freshen up and then depart midmorning and transfer to Surabaya. |
| June 5 | Surabaya - Lombok | Flight to Lombok |
| June 6 | Lombok | Full day Lombok Cultural Tour. This immersive full-day Lombok Cultural Tour takes you through the island's rich traditions and landscapes. Discover the pottery-making heritage of Banyumulek, the intricate weaving techniques in Sukarara village, and the unique architecture and customs of Ende or Sade Village. The journey concludes with a relaxing sunset at Bukit Merese, offering panoramic views of the southern coastline. |
| June 7 | Lombok – Gili T | Island Hopping from Lombok to 3 Gili's (Gili T, Gili Meno, Gili Air) Exploration of the vibrant marine life at Garden Fish near Gili Air, then continue to Gili Meno to snorkel around the iconic underwater statues and visit the turtle sanctuary. Around midday, head to Gili Trawangan for a relaxed seaside lunch. In the afternoon, return by boat to Teluk Kodek Harbor, and cap off the day with a short trip to Malaka Hill for sweeping views of the coastline. |
| June 8 | Lombok | Full day Waterfall Tour. This waterfall trip takes you to the lush foothills of Mount Rinjani, beginning in the traditional village of Senaru. Trek through tropical forest to reach the breathtaking Sendang Gile and the majestic Tiu Kelep Waterfalls — a refreshing escape into nature, complete with cascading waters and misty jungle vibes. |
| June 9 | Lombok – Bali (Ubud) | Transfer via speedboat from Lombok to Bali. |
| June 10 | Bali - Ubud | Bali Culture & Kintamani Highlands Exploration Embark on a cultural and spiritual journey through Bali's heartland. Begin with a visit to Goa Gajah, the ancient "Elephant Cave" temple known for its mysterious carvings and sacred pools. Continue to the highlands of Kintamani, where you'll enjoy panoramic |

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| | | <p>views of Mount Batur and its volcanic crater lake. The adventure continues with a stop at Gunung Kawi, a majestic temple complex nestled in a lush river valley, followed by a visit to Tirta Empul, a holy spring temple where you can take part in a traditional Balinese purification ritual.</p> <p>390 reflection essays due</p> |
| June 11 | Bali - Ubud | <p>Full Day East Bali Cultural Experience - this enriching full-day cultural journey through East Bali explores the region's timeless heritage.</p> <p>Begin with a visit to Kerthagosha, a historical royal court hall adorned with traditional Balinese paintings. Continue to the Balinese Living Museum in Karangasem where immersive exhibits showcase local traditions, architecture, and daily rituals. Enjoy a leisurely lunch in the coastal town of Candidasa, known for its tranquil charm. The day concludes at Tenganan Village, one of Bali's oldest communities, where you'll encounter the preserved customs and double-ikat weaving of the Bali Aga people.</p> |
| June 12 | Bali – Ubud | <p>Full Day Highland & Village Life Experience.</p> <p>Discover the serene beauty and cultural depth of Bali's highlands on this immersive full-day experience. The journey begins in Bedugul, where you'll visit the iconic Ulun Danu Beratan Temple, a serene water temple set against the backdrop of misty mountains and nestled on the shores of Lake Beratan. Dedicated to Dewi Danu, the goddess of lakes and rivers, this spiritual site offers a glimpse into Bali's harmonious connection with nature.</p> <p>From the cool highlands, continue to Rumah Desa, a traditional Balinese village compound that offers a hands-on cultural adventure. This enriching program introduces you to the rhythms of authentic Balinese village life. Visit a local market and elementary school, admire traditional architecture, and gain insights into Balinese philosophy and daily customs. Take part in meaningful village activities—learn to make offerings, prepare a traditional herbal scrub (boreh), and write your name using ancient Balinese script on a lontar leaf. Enjoy a Balinese cooking demonstration, revealing the secrets of local spices and culinary heritage. Then, embark on a guided rice field trek, where you'll explore the Subak irrigation system—a living legacy of sustainable water management. Try your hand at ploughing with cows or planting rice, deepening your appreciation for the agricultural traditions that nourish both land and spirit. This unforgettable day blends nature, culture, and community into a truly meaningful Balinese experience.</p> |
| June 13 | Bali - Sanur | <p>Traveling from Ubud to Sanur with stops at Denpasar Heritage & Mangrove Conservation Tour.</p> <p>Delve into Bali's cultural and ecological heart with this insightful day excursion. Begin in Denpasar, the island's capital, with a visit to the Bali Museum, home to a rich collection of traditional artifacts. Explore the vibrant atmosphere of Pasar Badung, the largest traditional market in Bali, followed by a stop at Bajra Sandhi Monument, a striking symbol of Balinese struggle and resilience. Discover architectural charm at a heritage hotel in Denpasar before spending the afternoon at the Mangrove Conservation Area, where you'll learn about coastal ecosystems and enjoy a peaceful walk-through elevated boardwalks surrounded by lush greenery.</p> |
| June 14 | Sanur | <p>A coastal town on the southeastern shore of Bali, known for its calm beaches, traditional village charm, and slower pace compared to the island's busier tourist hubs. With its long stretch of sandy shoreline protected by offshore reefs, Sanur offers gentle waves ideal for swimming and sunrise walks. The area blends Balinese culture with low-rise resorts, local markets, and a scenic beachfront promenade, making it a peaceful destination with a strong sense of community and a focus on sustainability.</p> <p>Final projects due</p> |
| June 15 | Flight home - Calgary | Flight home or further independent excursions in Southeast Asia |