

# Colleges of the Fenway Global Educational Opportunities (GEO) Center



## Pre-Departure Orientation Handbook for Travel Abroad



[www.colleges-fenway.org/global](http://www.colleges-fenway.org/global)

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# Global Education Opportunities Center

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Dear Study Abroad Student,

Congratulations on your decision to study abroad! This may be one of the most exciting aspects of your education. Within just a few weeks you will embark on an exciting adventure of travel, exploration and growth.

You can expect to go through some changes as a result of this time away from home. Most students who return to the USA from a semester or year abroad report a new sense of independence (traveling alone, solving problems, weighing risks) and confidence from navigating unfamiliar systems (airports, universities, currencies).

One of the challenges of studying abroad is handling uncertainties. You will likely find yourself in unfamiliar places, eating unusual foods, using a different language or phrases, and doing things that you wouldn't at home. Your study abroad experience will be much easier if you go with the flow and respect the norms of the local culture, while – at all times – staying safe. You will likely encounter people whose values are different from yours in politics, economics and religion.

I suggest you keep an open mind and use these encounters as opportunities to learn about what people are taught in the host culture. Differences are a source of knowledge and can enrich your study abroad experience.

Your experiences abroad will touch your life deeply. Your family and friends will also learn as you share your travel adventures, stories and photographs. You are doing more than educating yourself; you are educating your community, expanding their sense of what is possible and deepening their awareness about the world. You are an ambassador -- crossing cultures and communicating across borders.

May this journey be enriching for you!

Robin Melavalin, Director

COF Global Education Opportunities (GEO) Center

## Responsibilities of Your Program

Before you depart, your program should provide you with some essential information. If you do not feel adequate information has been provided to you regarding health, safety, housing, or any other necessity, contact your program immediately. Do not hesitate to ask for more information. Below is a list of what your program should have already or will shortly do for you:

- Provide an orientation before the start of your experience, either in the U.S. and/or, if needed, on site. This orientation should include information on safety, health, and legal issues, as well as environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the host country. The orientation should also address potential health and safety risks, along with appropriate emergency response measures.
- Provide health and safety information for the country in which you will be traveling so that you and your family can make informed decisions concerning preparation, participation and behavior while on the program.
- Conduct appropriate inquiries regarding available medical and professional services, provide information about these services to participants and their families, and help participants obtain the services they may need.
- Provide information concerning the facilities and services of the international campus and discuss differences from the home institution and/or home country educational system.
- Provide information about changes and advise participants and their families as needed.
- Develop codes of conduct for their programs and communicate those codes as well as the consequences of not following those codes to the students.
- Provide information for participants and their families regarding when and where the program's responsibility ends. Inform both students and families with information regarding which aspects of the student's experience (i.e. independent travel) are not the responsibilities of the program.

Remember there are some aspects of the Study Abroad experience that your program cannot and should not guarantee. Be aware that a program cannot guarantee the following:

- The complete safety and security of participants, or the elimination of all risks from the study abroad environment(s).
- Monitoring or control of all daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of participants, or prevention of participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities.
- Assurance that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country.
- Assurance that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings or provision of or payment for legal representation for participants involved in host country legal situations.

This handbook is a summary of general advice for students going abroad, and is not meant to replace the destination-specific orientation materials provided by your program. In addition to this and your program handbooks, we also recommend two comprehensive website handbooks:

1) [www.studentsabroad.com](http://www.studentsabroad.com): The Center for Global Education, a renowned leader in the field, offers both a general and many country-specific website handbooks. They include a 150-item "Checklist" to review pre-departure and beyond, a comprehensive A-to-Z listing of hundreds of additional online resources, and other very helpful information.

2) [www.peacecorps.gov/wvs/culturematters](http://www.peacecorps.gov/wvs/culturematters): This cultural training handbook is used by the Peace Corps to train their volunteers. Most of its chapters are very applicable to students going abroad, including "Understanding Culture," "American Culture and American Diversity," "Styles of Communication," "Social Relationships," and "Adjusting to a New Culture."

# I. Before You Go

## Timeline & Checklist

### Three Months Prior to Departure You Should:

- Meet with academic advisors to approve course of study
- Get a passport
- Get a student entry visa for the country you are going to
- Complete and submit financial aid forms for upcoming year (see financial aid office)
- Review your insurance policy and decide if international coverage (including medical, evacuation and repatriation) is adequate
- Secure housing for your return to Boston
- Complete *Campus Contact Form*
- Complete and return all forms to the appropriate offices
- Review *Health & Safety pages*. Determine if you need to visit a doctor or receive inoculations

### One Month Prior to Departure You Should:

- Review *Cultural Issues* section of this book
- Purchase a travel guide or reference book related to your destination (or borrow from library)
- Review *What to Bring*
- Make arrangements with a responsible person & forward your mail to them

### Two Weeks Prior to Departure You Should:

- Photocopy your important documents: passport, credit cards, ID card
- Reconfirm flight with airline at least 48 hours in advance
- Agree upon a communication schedule with family

### While Abroad You Should:

- Email your local address and phone number to your study abroad advisor
- Learn local emergency plans
- Complete your college's Verification of Enrollment form and return it to the Student Financial Services Office
- Refer back to your study abroad manual
- Keep a *Study Abroad Journal*

### Upon Return You Should:

- Attend COF workshop for returned study abroad students
- Complete online *Evaluation* forms

## **Preparing to Study Abroad**

“The better prepared you are for your study abroad experience – the more you know about what to expect and what is expected of you- the more meaningful your experience will be. It should go without saying that you should learn as much as you can about your host country – its language, history and culture as well as its current social and political conditions” (It’s Your World – Student’s Guide to Education Abroad, produced by studyabroad.com).

**Passports, Entry Visas, and the U.S. Embassy:** Make sure that your passport is valid for six months after the date you are scheduled to return home to the United States, and that you have the proper travel documents and visas for your destinations. Passport info is at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

Do not delay getting an entry visa for the country you are going to. This is a formal legal process that involves submitting documents such as a bank statement to demonstrate that you have enough money to live in the host country. Do not expect to get an appointment at the last minute; the process takes time and your visa is not guaranteed. Look at the entry/exit requirements on the website for your destination at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)

Register with the U.S. embassy in the country or countries in which you plan to travel (some programs will do this for you as a group; often you must do this on your own). In case of a natural disaster or political emergency, the US embassy may need to contact you. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_1186.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html)

Keep contact information for all U.S. embassies in your travel destinations with you, but remember their assistance may be limited in legal situations. <http://www.usembassy.gov/>

Be sure to let your program know where you will be if you travel on weekends. Ask your program director if s/he has other programs in the countries you plan to visit. This is an excellent way to meet other students studying abroad.

**Buy a Guidebook:** Series such as Let’s Go and Lonely Planet are geared towards solo travelers, and provide tips on where to stay, safe places to travel, and even places to meet other single travelers. The Culture Shock! series focuses on customs and etiquette rather than travel tips.

**What to Leave Behind:** Leave the following with a friend or relative at home, as well as with your program director or host family, if applicable: a detailed itinerary (including names, addresses, and telephone numbers where you will be staying), a copy of your passport's identification page, and a copy of your flight and ticket information. You may also want to leave with your family copies of credit card numbers and contact numbers for lost cards.

**Staying in Contact with Home/Telephone:** Consider getting a calling card. Ask your program provider if one is available or recommended through the program. Many programs now provide or recommend cell phones instead. Both calling cards and cell phones may not work in all countries so be sure to talk with your program before purchase. Many returning students recommend that any cell phones be “pay as you go” rather than those that bill you later – some students received four-figure phone bills late in the program! Having said all this – remember that much of the personal growth that we hope you experience through studying abroad is less likely to occur if you call your parents daily, or IM your friends constantly. Part of going abroad is about successfully striking out on your own. So stay in touch, but create your own support system abroad instead of completely relying on home friends and family.

**Staying in Contact with Home/Email:** Make sure you can use your email account overseas to keep in touch with your family, friends, and your college. We strongly advise – and some colleges, such as Emmanuel, require – that you continue use your home campus email account, which is accessible via internet from anywhere in the world. You are responsible for reading all emails sent through your college system, so talk to your college contact if you anticipate problems with this.

## **Pre-Departure Medical Planning**

**Visit your Doctor:** Make appointments to see your primary care physician and your dentist at least 2 months in advance of your departure. Inform your physician and dentist of your plans to study abroad. Inquire about any infectious diseases or health concerns in the areas where you will travel. Be sure to get the appropriate vaccinations or medications as recommended by your health care professionals. Ask your doctor about any possible side effects from the vaccinations or drugs he/she prescribes.

**Vaccinations:** For many countries, immunizations are not necessary. However, you should always check with your physician prior to departure, regardless of your destination. Remember some vaccinations require an initial shot followed by one or more booster shots, while others should not be given in combination. It is recommended that you inquire about vaccinations at least 2 months before departure. Record all vaccinations on an International Health Certificate, which is available from your physician or governmental health department.

**Prescription Medicine:** If you plan to carry prescription medication abroad, you must have authorization from your physician. Drug laws vary from country to country. Some prescription medicines commonly available in the U.S. are considered controlled substances in other countries. Keep your prescriptions in the original containers with both your name and the generic name of the medication on the label. To avoid any potential problems, carry a legible prescription or a letter from your doctor while traveling. This proves that you legally use the medication. If you plan to carry prescription medication with you abroad, it is best to check with the embassy or consulate of your host country to be certain your medications are not controlled substances. Also ensure that you have enough medication for the duration of your program, as some prescriptions may be difficult to fill abroad. This can be a problem with your insurance, so do not wait until the last minute to secure several months' of prescription drugs.

**Pre-existing Medical Conditions:** Be sure to inform your abroad program and home school Disabled Student Services or Health Center of any pre-existing medical conditions. You may also want to consider wearing a bracelet or carrying an identification card that indicates your condition, in case you are injured while abroad. Also, check with your physician regarding any monitoring you may need for either prescription medicines or pre-existing conditions. Your program or insurance company should be able to put you in contact with English speaking physicians to help monitor your conditions abroad.

**Medical Insurance:** Before going overseas, ensure that your U.S. insurance policy will cover you while abroad and upon your return. Arrange for payment of premiums, probably with your emergency contact person. Find out what medical services your health insurance will cover overseas, as well as any policy exclusions. Although some U.S. health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, they often require you to pay for services upfront and then apply for reimbursement upon return to the U.S.

Very few standard U.S. health insurance policies cover medical evacuation and repatriation of remains (in case of death). It is included in the package for many common program providers; if not, you must purchase medical evacuation and repatriation insurance separately (this is required). Check with your study abroad contact for advice on purchasing such insurance.

If you become seriously ill or injured while abroad, an advisor from your program or school can accompany you to the appropriate medical services. If you get to the hospital on your own, contact your program/school right away so they can take appropriate steps, including contacting the person you designated as your emergency contact.

**HTH Worldwide Assist is an example of a US-based company that insures medical situations while traveling or living abroad, even for pre-existing conditions, and has extensive information on its website about medical resources in various countries – including translations for medicines. See [www.HTHstudents.com](http://www.HTHstudents.com)**

## **Pre-Departure Safety Planning**

**Program Information:** First read all the materials on your host country provided by your program. Focus on materials relating to the safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions. Then do your own research. Use the internet, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the library, and non-U.S. sources to get informed.

**Be Aware of Real Security Threats:** Research and follow current events in the area you will be visiting, including the political climate, recent anti-government demonstrations, and anti-American groups. Being aware of the political environment will help you quickly recognize potentially dangerous situations. You should not travel to any country with political unrest or on the U.S. State Department's travel warning list. Visit the State Department's consular affairs Web site at <http://travel.state.gov> for a current list of such countries, and for security advisories and other travel guidance. We strongly discourage you from attending or getting involved in any local political rallies or protests, even those you agree with.

**Emergency Contacts:** Keep the program staff and your emergency contact in the U.S. well informed of your activities. Provide these people with copies of your travel documents, such as your passport, visa, plane tickets, traveler's checks, and prescriptions. Authorize a Power of Attorney for a trusted individual in case a problem occurs. Leave a photocopy of your passport and entry visa with your emergency contact in case these documents are lost or stolen. Notify your ATM and credit card companies of your intent to travel so they can confirm your credit limit and do not cut off your spending abilities (otherwise they may assume it was stolen).

**Medical Safety:** Follow the advice from your program provider and your doctor. If you have any medical or mental health concerns, your doctor can offer the best advice. Again – be sure to tell your doctor where you plan to study and how long you plan to be abroad. Your doctor and program can help you identify a medical professional in your host country that can continue or monitor health while overseas. (For more information on health, see *Staying Healthy*, p. 11)

## **What to Bring**

**Packing:** You should check with your study abroad program provider for details on what items to pack for your study abroad location and its climate. The following points are some practical packing tips to think about before you leave:

- **Make a List:** Your program should provide you with a general list of things you need to pack. Use that list and amend it to fit your own needs. Start the list days, weeks, or even months ahead of time to ensure that you don't forget anything essential.
- **PACK LIGHTLY!** This is the NUMBER ONE tip from returning students, and goes double if you plan to travel extensively. Pack what you think you need, take a trip around the block with all your bags, then take out half and, if you are really daring, take out half again. Most students are surprised at how little they actually use. Locals in many countries have much smaller wardrobes than the typical American. Pack clothing items you can use for a variety of activities and places. Remember, most things can be bought abroad, but many brand names will not be the same as in the U.S.
- **Electrical Appliances:** American hairdryers and other small appliances aren't compatible with many foreign electrical outlets (different wattage systems), so either purchase them abroad or purchase a wattage converter such as those found at Radio Shack. However, converters may not always work, so you may need to buy new appliances abroad. If you have any doubts about whether or not to pack an item, odds are you probably do not need it.
- **Bring an Empty Bag:** While abroad you will acquire souvenirs and other new purchases. Make sure you will be able to bring it all home with you. Additional bags may cost extra -

check with your airline to find out how much that service costs and if it is available. You can also use your empty bag as your day bag when traveling around a city.

- **Bring Some Toiletries:** Many brand-names you trust (contact lens solutions, deodorant, etc.) may not be found abroad. Hotels may not provide shampoo, so carry a small (3 oz) bottle of it. But don't bring large bottles of shampoo, etc that you can purchase in your host country.
- **Clothing:** Your clothing says a lot about who you are. What message do you want your style of dress to convey to others? Your style of dress may convey a different message abroad than in the U.S. Find out by talking to your program and doing some research; the best advice is to try to blend in with the people in your host country. Dressing "like an American" will only draw attention to yourself as a foreigner, make you an easy target for criminals, and possibly discourage locals from wanting to get to know you. In many countries, sweatshirts, sweatpants, and ball caps scream "I am an American college student"; in a few, logo clothing has become more acceptable. Think twice and do the research before packing. Pack at least one outfit suitable for an upscale restaurant. Women: pack at least one modest skirt, required at many religious sites. Some students have packed older underwear, socks, and t-shirts, then discarded them, creating more space to bring souvenirs and new clothes home. Please note: It can be a burden to local hosts to have to deal with your used clothes, so check with them first.
- **Do Not Pack Valuable – or Seemingly Valuable - Jewelry:** Wearing jewelry that even appears costly may put you at risk for burglary, even if it is not valuable. Do not take valuable, heirloom, or any other jewelry or other items which are irreplaceable to you.
- **Understand the Weather:** Know the weather patterns of your host country and pack accordingly. Do not bring sweaters if it is going to be warm the entire time you are studying, and limit warm clothes if you are leaving in September to return in December (unless you are going to Australia!). Remember to pack sunscreen!
- **Pack Important Items in Your Carry-On:** Pack these and other necessary items in your carry-on: passport and other documentation (including important paperwork from your program and your home school), prescription medicine, glasses/contacts, jewelry, electronics, your favorite teddy bear...anything you can't bear to lose. And, what will you need if stranded or stuck in the airport? Recommended: at least one outfit (especially a top), a day's worth of toiletries, moist towelettes/hand sanitizer, snacks/water, mints, etc.
- **Pack Double of All Essential Items:** Bring multiple pairs of contacts and, if possible, glasses. Feminine products are different in other countries; pack enough to last your time abroad if you are picky about what brands and types you use.

**Luggage:** The type of luggage you bring may be as important as what you pack in it. What is ideal for one person may not be ideal for you. Look for luggage that meets your needs and fits your personality as well as your budget.

- **Choosing Luggage:** Look for durable, fabric suitcases. Hard suitcases do not hold as much as fabric and they weigh much more, making them harder to move through various locations. Look for rolling suitcases that have a handle with a good center of gravity. When looking to buy, put some items from the store into the suitcase and drag it around. Does it move easily? Is the handle at the right height? Does it fall over when you try to turn it? These are all things you should consider before buying.
- **To Backpack or Not to Backpack:** Consider purchasing a large hiking backpack to do extensive travel. This can be a piece of initial luggage or packed as your extra bag within your other luggage. Backpacks are very individualized. When purchasing a backpack make sure it is durable, comfortable, and big enough and suitable for your travels.

- **Identify your Luggage:** Have contact information on a luggage tag AND inside your bags as luggage tags can fall off or be torn off. If your luggage looks similar to other people's, add an identifying feature to it, like a colorful ribbon.
- **Wallet/purse:** Buy a travel pouch, money belt, or some other item to carry passports, credit cards, and extra money closer on your person. Pick pocketing is rampant in crowded tourist areas around the world. In the airport, when you'll need to bring these things out, make sure you can carry everything without leaving a bag dangling as an invitation for pickpockets. Most of the time, your wallet or purse should only have non-essential items and small daily money amounts.

**First Aid/Medical Kit:** Your first line of health defense is to create a First Aid/Medical Kit to take abroad, especially for independent travel. Here is a list of items you may consider for your kit:

- Aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil), or acetaminophen (Tylenol) - for pain or fever
- Antihistamine (such as Benadryl) - useful as a decongestant for colds and allergies, to ease the itch from insect bites or stings and to help prevent motion sickness
- Anti-diarrhea tablets
- Antiseptics (alcohol, Betadine, or hydrogen peroxide) and triple-antibiotic cream (such as Neosporin) for cuts and grazes
- Calamine lotion or topical steroids (such as hydrocortisone) for poison ivy, bites, stings
- Antacids
- Multivitamins
- Calamine lotion or hydrocortisone - to ease irritation from bites and stings
- Various-size bandages, band-aids and adhesive tape - for minor injuries
- Scissors, tweezers, and a non-mercury thermometer
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen - SPF 15 or higher
- Lip balm
- Cold and flu tablets and throat lozenges. Sudafed may be useful if flying with a cold to avoid ear damage (make sure you won't react to it).
- Emergent-C - This helps everything from headaches to an upset stomach, but make sure there are no drug interactions with anything else you are taking!
- Useful if you're traveling off the beaten track: antibiotics (prescription required), water purification tablets, powdered electrolyte solutions (sports drinks) to rehydrate if severe diarrhea.

## II. Health and Safety Abroad

### “Swine Flu” or H1N1

H1N1 (swine) flu virus is an international concern. As a traveler, you are responsible to be sure you do not get or spread the virus. Make sure you know and practice the behaviors to prevent spread of the virus; know where you can access resources before, during and after travel; and know what to do if you do acquire the virus or are temporarily quarantined. You and your program should be monitoring this situation closely as it is constantly changing, so go to them with concerns. If you plan to travel in any affected countries, talk to your program first, read the Department of State info on that country, and follow the guidelines on the web links below. The most accurate information can always be found on the following websites:

- Check the US Embassy website for H1N1 information about the country you are planning to visit. [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)
- Department of State - specific for travelers going abroad [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health\\_3096.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_3096.html)
- Center for Disease Control/CDC <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/novel-h1n1-flu.aspx>
- World Health Organization/WHO <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>

H1N1 is named differently around the world. The CDC now calls this "2009 H1N1 Flu". In the Netherlands it is called "Mexican flu" and South Korea refers to "SI", short for "swine influenza". Some countries call it "new flu". The European Commission uses the term "novel flu virus". Before you head abroad, find out what it is called in your destinations so you can stay alert to news and notices about it.

### **What You Can Do to Stay Healthy**

There are everyday actions you can take to stay healthy.

- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While traveling do not use shared or public cloth towels.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- Find healthy ways to deal with stress and anxiety.

### **Safety Precautions – Once You Are There**

Safety is a crucial issue to consider before traveling overseas. In today's world, no place is immune from danger. However, according to the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), most study abroad professionals believe that studying in a foreign country is no more dangerous than in the United States. Many study abroad students believe that traveling abroad is safer than being in the United States. While crime is a reality in every country, careful preparation and planning can help minimize risk.

Even with extensive planning, the risk of danger can exist while you are studying abroad. Use caution when you are in a new country. Here are a few tips to help you avoid problems:

**Risk on Arrival:** Be very cautious when you first arrive in your host country. Travelers, especially those who have just arrived and do not speak the language very well, are easy targets of crime and are at a higher risk for harm. You will probably be carrying all of your belongings with you, so pay close attention to your possessions. Do not trust overly friendly locals. Thieves often work in groups at airports and train stations – one will distract you while the other grabs your dangling purse. If you need assistance finding your destination, carrying your luggage, or locating a cab, ask a uniformed official to help you. Your attitude is very important – act as if you know where you are going. If you need to consult a map, try to be discreet.

**Laws and Codes of Conduct:** Follow the rules and regulations of your study abroad program, as well as the local laws of the countries you visit. While you will usually be held to your program's rules rather than your home school's, you may be sanctioned at your home school if the program notifies your home school that you have broken the program rules. Your program will hold an orientation when you arrive to familiarize you with the laws and customs of your host country.

**Familiarize Yourself With Your Surroundings:** Set your watch to local time and familiarize yourself with your neighborhood and new environment. Find out which hours of the day are considered more dangerous, and where to get help, e.g. police station, fire station, phones, and stores. Many students take risks overseas that they would never take in the U.S. Use the same caution you would in an unfamiliar place in the U.S. By daily observation of your surroundings, try to determine what is "normal" and what is "abnormal." Tell your program staff immediately if you have any safety concerns.

**Alcohol and Drugs:** Drug and alcohol use abroad can increase the risk of accident or injury. Many study abroad accidents occur as a result of the use of alcohol and drugs. Be smart and safe about the new freedom you may have with alcohol (drugs will almost always be as illegal as they are in the U.S.). Further, you are in the country as a guest. Be conscious and respectful of the local laws and views on drugs and alcohol. If you are arrested abroad there is nothing that your home institution, your program or the U.S embassy can do for you. Drug laws abroad are often harsher than in the U.S. Drug possession in some countries can carry the death penalty.

**Precautions When Accepting Food or Drink:** You would rarely accept food or drinks from a stranger in the U.S., so you should not accept them in another country. If you think it is rude to not accept a gift, ask for a drink or food item that is prepackaged so you know that it has not been tampered with it. Although in certain countries it may be considered rude to refuse hospitality, think of your best interest first. If you have to decline offers of food or drink, do so politely. Again – your program is a good source of advice on these issues of protocol vs. safety.

**Keeping in Control:** Even though you are in a new country and many aspects of safety are out of your control, you can control some situations. Some controllable factors that place students at greatest risk include:

- Being out alone after midnight.
- Being alone at night in an isolated area.
- Being out at night alone with someone you just met.
- Being in a known high crime area.
- Sleeping in an unlocked place.
- Being out after a local curfew.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Driving or operating any motor vehicle in an unfamiliar city.

**Avoid unexpectedly amorous men and women:** It is flattering to be approached by people who want to woo you. However, they probably have another motive, like gaining a foreign passport or your wallet.

**Setting an Example/Being a Good Ambassador:** While abroad you will be representing the U.S., your home institution, and the program with which you are studying. Set a good example. Behave in a manner that is respectful of others, and encourage other people you travel with to behave similarly. Peer pressure works both ways – be the person that reminds others to choose *not* to be the “ugly American.”

## **Staying Healthy While You Are Abroad**

*Note: This is not meant to be medical advice. Please check with your personal physician and health insurer for appropriate medical advice specific to you and your personal health.*

Staying healthy is crucial to getting the most out of your study abroad experience. This is important regardless of where you study. Maintain a healthy routine abroad; eat right, exercise and get enough sleep. If you make healthy choices, your body will be better able to fight off infection with a stronger immune system. Contaminated food and drink are common causes of illnesses while studying abroad. It is very important for you to be aware of what you are ingesting.

**Food:** While abroad you will have the opportunity to enjoy a variety of new foods. Give your body time to adjust to the new types of foods you will be eating. To avoid illness, select your food very carefully. As in the United States, all raw foods are subject to contamination. In areas with poor hygiene and sanitation, avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, unpasteurized milk and other dairy products. Keep in mind that locals may have built up a tolerance to certain things that you may react violently to. Only eat foods that have been cooked and are still hot. Consuming foods from street food vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness as well. If you get diarrhea or food poisoning, remember to drink plenty of fluids (especially those with electrolytes, such as sports drinks) to stay hydrated. With any illness, see a doctor if your condition worsens.

**Water:** In the majority of the developed world you do not need to be concerned about the quality of drinking water. If you are traveling to a less developed region, check with your program regarding the water quality. If the water is not safe, avoid drinking tap water unless it is boiled. The safest items to drink are canned, bottled or made with boiled water. Such drinks include coffee, tea, bottled water or juices and soft drinks. Make sure the cap has not yet been broken. If the water quality is poor, the ice cubes are probably contaminated as well and should not be used in beverages. The safest way to drink a beverage is directly from the can or bottle. Wipe any water or ice off the container before drinking and wipe clean any surfaces your mouth will have direct contact with. Also, do not brush your teeth with tap water or swallow any untreated water if there is a real fear of water contamination.

**Traveler's Diarrhea (TD):** The onset of Traveler's Diarrhea is usually within the first week of travel but can occur at any time during the visit and even after returning home. Travelers with TD have two major complaints, abdominal cramps and diarrhea. Travelers in developing countries are more likely to suffer from TD. The best way to avoid Traveler's Diarrhea is to follow both the food and water guidelines detailed above. If you experience any of the symptoms, re-hydrate and take a bismuth anti-diarrheal solution. If diarrhea persists despite therapy, travelers should be evaluated by a doctor and treated for possible parasitic infection.

**Safe Sex:** Practice safe sex just as you would in the U.S., and even more so. Sexually transmitted diseases are common in all countries and need to be treated immediately. Just because you are abroad does not mean you are immune. Resist engaging in risky behavior. You may be more vulnerable emotionally, and sexual attitudes/sex education may be very different abroad. A potential partner may not have been exposed to the information most U.S. students have, and may encourage you to take risks. Protect your health! While abstinence is the best way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, using condoms and practicing safe sex is the next best option. Get informed about the risks of sexual activity and safe sex practices.

For more information about health related issues visit the following websites:

- [www.lonelyplanet.com/health/predeparture.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/health/predeparture.htm)
- [www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/health.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/health.html)
- For country specific information and health warnings go to: [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

## **Women's Health**

When traveling abroad, remember medical facilities will be different than what you are used to in America, no matter how advanced the country. Different communication styles may make you feel a little uncomfortable. Do your best to communicate problems and concerns to avoid any possible misunderstanding. If you are uncomfortable going to a medical appointment alone, ask someone from your program to accompany you. Before you go abroad, find out about the medical facilities in your host city and country.

**Contraception:** Most countries usually sell contraceptives such as condoms in drugstores and supermarkets. If you are taking birth control pills before you leave to study abroad, be sure to bring enough with you to last throughout your trip. Often, pharmacies overseas will not fill a prescription from a doctor in the U.S. If you choose to go on birth control while abroad, try to get a brand that is available in the U.S. so you can continue to take it when you return home.

**Prevention of Feminine Issues:** Antibiotic use, synthetic underwear, sweating and contraceptive pills can possibly lead to vaginal infections, especially when traveling in hot climates. Maintain good personal hygiene. Wear loose-fitting clothes and cotton underwear to help prevent infections. See a doctor if any type of infection occurs. Check with your program for a doctor or medical facility referral.

**Gynecological Concerns:** All countries will have access to gynecologists, but not all doctors will use the same method of treatment. Try to communicate your symptoms clearly to the doctor to avoid confusion. Before you go abroad you should see your gynecologist for your annual check-up. Explain to your doctor that you will be abroad and the length of your stay abroad. Ask questions about access to birth control or other medical concerns.

**Pregnancy:** If you believe you have become pregnant while studying abroad you must seek immediate medical attention. You could put yourself or your baby at risk if you do not.

**Additional tips and resources for women travel blogs, books, tips and database search can be found on:**

<http://www.journeywoman.com/>  
<http://travelerstaes.com/>

## **Sexual Harassment**

Unfortunately, sexual harassment is an everyday reality that women are likely to encounter abroad. As a newcomer, it is important to remember that relations between men and women in the host country may differ greatly from relations in the United States, although it may not be apparent at first. American women are at particular risk for sexual harassment because of how they are portrayed in the media. Locals may be looking specifically to pick up American women. If you are personally experiencing sexual harassment, notify your program provider immediately.

Men often mistake friendliness, eye contact, or even talking for romantic interest. Note the way men and women interact in your host country. Do they make eye contact? Do they have friendships with the opposite sex? Talk to and study the local women. How do they deal with the harassment? It is important to understand cultural differences and try to blend in. At the same time, your situation as an American may be different from those of local women. Seek advice from your program provider, school advisor, or host family.

Most often, it is best to ignore any unwanted attention. Aggressive behavior such as yelling or talking back could only escalate the situation and prolong the harassment. Still, if ignoring the unwanted attention isn't effective, it is important to follow your instincts. If the person is following you, go the opposite way or duck into a store. If the behavior continues, yell for help. Sometimes making a scene can discourage the harasser.

In the end, there are no surefire ways to prevent sexual harassment. However, there are a few steps that you can take to ensure your safety:

- Know the word “help” in your country’s language.
- Research gender roles in your host country BEFORE you depart.
- Dress conservatively. Parts of your wardrobe that may be fine here are often inappropriate or scandalous in other parts of the world.
- In some countries, inviting a man into your room or apartment is assumed to be an invitation to sexual intercourse. Remove all doubt by only meeting men in public areas.
- Do not walk alone at night. Always let someone know where you will be.
- Above all, trust your instincts. It is important to be culturally sensitive, but if you feel that your personal space has been invaded, do not be afraid to take action. Be assertive and confident. Do not worry about coming across as rude or ungracious. Your safety is more important in these situations!

If the harassment continues, document the incident in writing and report it to your program director. If you feel you are not getting adequate response or advice from your program, contact your study abroad campus advisor.

For more general issues about women traveling abroad, see the “Resources” section at the end of the packet for resources for diverse populations studying abroad.

## **LGBTQ Issues and Resources**

Most programs strive to create an open and accepting environment for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) students. However the level of cultural acceptance for LGBTQ people varies from country to country. While many places abroad are more accepting of the LGBTQ community than here in the U.S., members of the LGBTQ community may be at greater risk of crime or violence. Homosexuality is illegal in some countries and can result in imprisonment. LGBTQ students should carefully research their host country and use caution.

The United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office has issued travelers tips specifically for the LGBTQ community. These tips are intended as general advice to LGBTQ travelers and have been adapted here to fit the needs of the American LGBTQ community.

- Ask your program director if there are any legal issues related to LGBTQ issues in your study abroad country, or countries in which you will be traveling.
- Be aware of your surroundings. If you feel threatened or feel that someone is following you, go into a shop or other public area. Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- Get to know your destination. There are many gay travel guides on the market and the internet. The LGBTQ press can also be a great resource for travel information. For more information about specific websites see the next page.
- No matter what your sexual orientation, it is important to think about your sexual health before you leave. Many sexual health products are not as readily available abroad as they are in the United States and quality and dosages can differ. Always practice safe sex. (For more information, see Staying Healthy.)
- More and more hotels are now actively welcoming same-sex couples. But it is wise to learn this before you go and make reservations in advance to avoid difficulties when checking in.
- Bear in mind that some resorts can be quite segregated and, when you are outside distinct gay 'neighborhoods', open expressions of your sexuality might be frowned upon.
- Try to avoid potentially risky situations. Be aware of your environment, stay alert and in control.

- Be aware that criminals have been known to exploit the generally open and relaxed nature of gay 'neighborhoods' and beaches. Don't leave your belongings unattended and try not to carry large amounts of money around with you.
- If you get into any difficulties, seek the advice of your program director, local police, or the nearest American consulate.
- Learn the laws of your host country that relate to LGBTQ issues.

**LGBTQ Web Resources** – also, see the “Resources” section at the end of the packet for resources for diverse populations studying abroad.

<a href="http://www.ilga.org">www.ilga.org</a>	International Lesbian and Gay Association Features the most comprehensive data on laws affecting lesbians and gays around the world in the ILGA World Legal Survey section.
<a href="http://www.iglhrc.org">www.iglhrc.org</a>	International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. This site allows you to search for information regarding safety issues, and support networks all around the world.
<a href="http://www.gay.com">www.gay.com</a>	American company with country specific information. Has various sister sites in target languages for various regions of the world.
<a href="http://www.gayguide.net">www.gayguide.net</a>	Includes links to several hundreds of Gay Guides, covering almost every country in Africa, Asia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, Oceania and the United States.
<a href="http://www.pinkpassport.com">www.pinkpassport.com</a>	This website provides the Gay and Lesbian Community with information relevant to world travelers for free.

### **Students of Color**

As a student of color, you will encounter many cultural dynamics abroad. Understanding cross-cultural differences, including those that may be offensive, are an integral part of the entire study abroad “experience.” There are various methods that may assist your immersion into a new culture, and should be recognized as assets to help maintain comfort and security abroad:

- Use your communication, foreign language, and coping skills.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help and reach out for support.
- Research possible connections with minority student organizations on your host campus.
- Be informed of your legal rights as they pertain to discrimination abroad.
- Be in contact with organizations that combat discrimination in the immediate area.
- File complaint reports with local police departments or the U.S. embassy if needed.
- Always carry proper identification, in case local officials unexpectedly stop you.

There are also various coping methods you can use to deal with issues while abroad:

- Maintain pride and self-confidence by acting tactfully in addressing possible situations.
- Remain in contact with on-site program directors and counselors.
- Use your network of friends, both abroad and at home.
- Talk to your host families (if applicable).

See the “Resources” section at the end of the packet for resources for diverse populations studying abroad. Also, there is a new initiative (part of a very highly regarded organization) which is just beginning to build its website to support students of color traveling abroad. Currently, they have a webpage for each community of color, which includes under “Supporting Diversity” a “What About Discrimination” page customized for African-Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic-Americans, or Native Americans. Check these resources now, and check back during your experience: <http://www.globaled.us/plato/diversity.html>.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with learning, mental or physical disabilities may face more challenges abroad than in the U.S. Recognition of and support for disabilities vary from country to country. Accessibility can also be more limited. It is important to be very open and honest with your program provider about the accommodations or support that you may need while abroad. The Council on International Education and Exchange has a pamphlet on studying abroad with disabilities.

Tips include:

- Identify yourself as a person with a disability early in the process. If you do, you will improve your chances of securing the accommodations you need to make participation possible.
- Plan logistics and pack. Do you need special equipment like an adapter or transformer for your wheelchair, a laptop with adaptive software, or hearing aid batteries? Talk to the consulate of your host country and to your airline about entering the country with special equipment or medications.
- Verify health insurance coverage. Some study abroad programs include health insurance and some don't. Check your regular policy to be sure you are covered overseas, and how payment for services is rendered.
- Get informed. Ask program providers if they have dealt with disabilities before and if they can put you in touch with students willing share their stories.
- Discuss your accommodations with program staff. Introduce yourself to the program director and discuss specific needs or concerns with them. Do you need extra time on tests? Orientation and mobility training? Counseling? Wheelchair ramps? Sign language interpreters? They will do their best to help.
- Seek local resources. For country or city specific information, contact national or local disabilities organizations. The National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE) has a database of disability organizations worldwide at [www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org); their staff can assist in finding others for you.
- Take ownership of your disability and learn what you can do to accommodate your own needs. This may mean memorizing bus routes or which have street curb cuts, seeking out deaf clubs to learn the local sign language, or identifying people willing to provide informal support like assisting you with grocery shopping.
- Allow yourself to accept more assistance than you would at home, or use assistance at home if it's not available abroad.
- Be realistic about challenges and open to new experiences. The more open-minded you are about the ways things can happen, the more you'll experience. Realistically, though, you may not end up participating fully in every activity. Understand how the local culture works, adapt your behavior to accommodate it, and you'll have a fulfilling study abroad experience.

Mobility International USA also has great tips for international travelers with disabilities:

<http://www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets/mobilitydisability>

<http://www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets/medications>

Adapted from CIEE's *Knowledge* series.

## **Health and Safety – Independent Travel**

While you are studying in another country you may wish to travel to other destinations. By this time, you may feel comfortable and “at home” in your “home base” country. This is great, but when traveling in other countries, start again at square one – reread the “Risk on Arrival” section in “Health & Safety/Once You Are There.” In some ways, you may be at greater risk because your guard may be down more than when you first arrived abroad.

Thus, in addition to the previous recommendations, the following must also be considered while traveling:

**Safety and Security:** Again, use common sense and always be aware of your surroundings. If you are unsure about which areas are safe, check with your program director and/or the American Citizens Services section of the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for important security information. You may be more likely to visit tourist “hot spots” while on vacation travels – which are more likely to have groups of pickpockets targeting those whose clothes, luggage, and body language scream “American.” Do your best to blend into the host culture. Stay aware and act more conservatively than you normally would in the U.S. or even in your “home base” country.

**Communication:** Stay in touch with home and your program while you are traveling so you can learn about alerts and safety issues. Some students prefer to establish certain check in dates with their family while traveling. Students can call, email, or fax home to verify their whereabouts. While traveling, changes in local time or lack of the proper amenities could make it difficult for you to check in on those dates. Remember, if you miss a check-in, your loved ones may assume the worst and become unnecessarily worried, so arrange a back-up check-in system.

**Planning:** Plan your trips carefully and always know where you are going. The more prepared you are before you leave, the less likely you will be surprised by the travel differences you might encounter in other countries. Avoid night travel, especially when traveling alone. Night trains are adventurous, but are notorious for theft – don’t go alone. Travel with others whenever possible.

**Local Transportation:** Know which modes of transportation your program considers safest, and which areas of town are safe. Do not travel alone at night. If you have to travel at night take the fastest, most well lit way home. Take a taxi, do not walk or take a bus, and, if possible, travel with at least one other person. When you take a taxi, never ride in the front seat.

Travel in official, licensed taxis only. Write down the license plate number of the taxi. Avoid getting into a taxi already occupied by others, and, if necessary, pay extra for a single fare. If you are in a country where you can negotiate a fare, be sure to negotiate before you enter the taxi. Have money ready to pay in the appropriate denomination.

**Ask for directions before you leave for the day:** If you are lost, do not be afraid to ask for directions from a safe location, such as a store. Getting the right information may save you from ending up in a potentially unsafe area.

**Lodgings:** Use reputable hotels, hostels, or boarding houses near transportation. Avoid ground floor rooms at the hotel. Choose lodgings where security is good and the area is well lit. Your safety is worth any added cost.

When choosing a room, make sure all the doors and windows have locks that work. Do not take a hotel room nearest the exit, as these are easy targets for thieves. Keep in mind that second through fifth floors are harder to break into, but are still accessible to firefighting equipment. Familiarize yourself with emergency exits and fire extinguishers. Keep hotel doors, sliding glass doors, and windows locked with a dead bolt or chain at all times. If you are expecting visitors, meet them in the lobby. Always use your peephole and common sense about not letting strangers into your room.

In most youth hostels, students share a room with many people. You may not know some of the people sharing your room. If you are uncomfortable doing this, ask for a smaller room, a room with only women or budget enough money for a hotel. Bring a combination lock to secure your possessions in a locker or to your bed. You may be able to lock your valuables in the hostel's safe.

**Money and Personal Belongings:** Keep your money and passport in a safe place. Purchase a money belt or hidden pouch. Carry one or two photocopies of your passport and keep each copy in a separate location. Passports are hot commodities and pickpockets want them. Carry some cash outside of your money belt so that pickpockets do not see where you keep it.

**Jewelry and Other Valuables:** Even more than in your “home base” country, do not wear expensive or expensive looking jewelry. If you need to wear jewelry, wear what the locals wear. Exercise added caution when using possessions such as electronics, cameras, MP3 players, or expensive sunglasses.

**Purses:** Travel light and always keep a hand on your purse or backpack in public areas, especially at cafes, in parks, and in or around public transportation locations. If the strap is long enough, wear it across your chest so it is harder to snatch. If you choose to carry a wallet by itself make sure to carry it in your front or breast pocket, not the back.

Any important information (such as a passport, credit card, cash, etc.) should be carried in a purse that is worn under your clothes. Carry a small amount of cash in your pockets in case you are a victim of theft. You can appease the criminal with some money and still leave with your credit cards and other valuables safely tucked away.

### III. Cultural Issues

#### Cultural Adjustment – What Is It?

Adapted from the Arcadia University/Center for Education Abroad “Preparing to Go” website:

Cultural adjustment is the normal mental, physical and emotional adjustment to living in a new environment. It is the coming to terms with different ways of approaching everyday living—everything from fundamental philosophical assumptions (one's worldview) to daily chores. Anyone living in a new environment long enough cannot ignore the differences. They may become frustrating, and possibly infuriating, until recognizable patterns emerge and an understanding of why things are done differently develops.

Cultural adjustment is different for everyone, but a common pattern can be charted on a U-shaped curve that encompasses five separate phases: fun, fright, flight, fight and fun. Typically, when you first arrive in your host country, everything is wonderful. You are excited that you have arrived, finally seeing first-hand all those places that previously were just one-dimensional pictures. **This is the 'fun' stage.**

After awhile, all those wonderful, cute customs become aggravating. There is no point to them. You think your own culture's ways are much better, more efficient, and more sensible. While your host country's people seem friendly at first, you feel it is just superficial warmth, not a real interest in establishing a friendship. You begin to miss your family and friends. **This is the 'fright' stage.**

#### **Symptoms of Cultural Adjustment**

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal (spending too much time in your room, only seeing other U.S. students, avoiding your host family)
- Negative feelings and stereotyping of nationals
- Inability to concentrate
- Excessive sleep or insomnia
- Compulsive eating or drinking
- Lack of appetite
- Irritability
- Crying uncontrollably or outbursts of anger
- Physical ailments, such as frequent headaches or stomachaches

From the Arcadia University/Center for Education Abroad “Preparing to Go” website.

Then it may get worse. You're really homesick. You can't find anything good about your host country. Everything stinks. You are convinced that nothing beats your home country, and you remember how good you had it at home. You may even come to believe that all your problems will go away if you can just pack up and go home. **This is the 'flight' stage.** It can be serious but is usually temporary.

You give yourself a pep talk and decide to stick it out awhile longer. This experience deserves a fair chance. You become a bit more active in the clubs you joined earlier. You make more of an effort to get to know the people on your dorm floor. You decide to be less furious with those stupid policies (like post offices and stores that close early). **Now you are into the 'fight' stage.**

You begin to like the people on your residence hall floor. In fact, those acquaintances are more like friends. They tell you why those stupid policies are the way they are. In fact, those policies make sense and don't seem too stupid. You are no longer inconvenienced by them and have trouble understanding why they bothered you so much. You suddenly realize you like it there and want to stay forever. **You have arrived at the fifth and final stage — and have made it through the emotional roller coaster ride of cultural adjustment.** [See the "Culture Shock Roller Coaster" on page 21].

**Possible Symptoms of Cultural Adjustment:** Sometimes people don't realize when they are dealing with culture adjustment or they may experience some of the symptoms during different times and in varying degrees. This confusion can be the result of looking at several symptoms as isolated problems rather than as related components of a single situation. The text box "Symptoms of Cultural Adjustment" lists some signs which you may notice.

**Dealing with Cultural Adjustment:** There are ways to prepare for, and thereby lessen some problems with adjusting to your new context.

1. **Know that you will experience some degree of cultural adjustment (even if you don't believe it now).** Everyone does. Carefully read the process outlined so that you will recognize the symptoms and feelings. Most importantly, understand that those frustrating feelings will pass.
2. **Expect things to be different.** Some differences will be quite obvious, others less so. You are probably prepared for the major cultural differences, such as religious and socio-economic differences. It is the apparently trivial differences that will become the most aggravating. Try not to allow yourself to blow them out of proportion.
3. **Don't label differences as "good" or "bad."** Because the American way is the predominant (if not the only) way you know, you will inevitably compare everything in your host country with the ways and approaches you know from the U.S. Realize that you are not looking objectively at your new culture. Rather, you are seeing (and judging) it from the

#### Prescription for Cultural Adjustment

- Pursue information gathering.
- Look for logical reasons; make sense of your environment.
- Don't disparage the host culture.
- Find a host national friend.
- Use all the wisdom and patience that you have.
- Use your sense of humor.
- Have faith in yourself and your hosts.
- Don't fall into self-pity.
- Be active – mentally, physically, and socially.
- Get sufficient rest.
- Maintain a regular, well-balanced diet.
- Have a sense of adventure – take reasonable risks.
- Ask for help.
- Use your friends and family as an emotional support group.

From "Survival Kit for Overseas Living" by Bob Kohls.

American perspective. Instead of judging what you see as better or worse than what you know in the U.S., try to focus on the differences and ask why they exist.

4. **Maintain the ability to laugh at your mistakes.** It will take some time to adapt to the point where you can maneuver without making cultural missteps. After all, it took quite a bit of training by your parents and family and effort on your part to be comfortable in your own culture!
5. **Finally, you don't have to "do as the Romans do" and accept all the differences.** You will like some of your host country's ways and incorporate them into your daily routine. Other ways won't fit your values or outlook, and you will decide that they are not appropriate for you. You are free to make choices, and doing so is perfectly acceptable.

***Taking the Sting Out of the Adjustment:*** Cultural adjustment occurs because, unconsciously, we expect everyone to be like us. Inevitably, something will occur in a new culture that will not fit your frame of reference and therefore won't be fully comprehended. This sort of ambiguity is threatening and may cause fear, anger, repulsion or some other strong emotion.

The key to coping is to become aware of these reactions as they arise. Instead of allowing an extreme emotional reaction to control you, try to determine the cause of your reaction. By focusing on the cause instead of the reaction, you can frequently help the emotion to abate. Then you can experience the situation more objectively, without the American presumptions which caused the emotional reaction in the first place.

Careful observation not clouded or skewed by your own cultural presumptions and expectations will help you develop an understanding of the new culture and will facilitate your inclusion in that culture.

***American Cultural Patterns:*** Culture shapes everything — the ways in which you think and analyze; what you value; how you do things; what's considered proper behavior. It is difficult to assess all the effects of a culture while you are enmeshed in it. When you are abroad, you will discover important aspects of the American culture that you were unaware of before you left. Since you will be viewing your new culture from the American perspective, it is helpful to have a good grasp on the American perspective and understand how it shapes you.

Being aware of your own cultural biases and presumptions will enable you to understand your reactions to ambiguous events that occur while you are abroad. While you won't escape culture shock, you can be well-prepared to face it and dilute its effects. You may think this is obvious, but take a look anyway. Tacit knowledge can only be of help to you if you are cognizant of it.

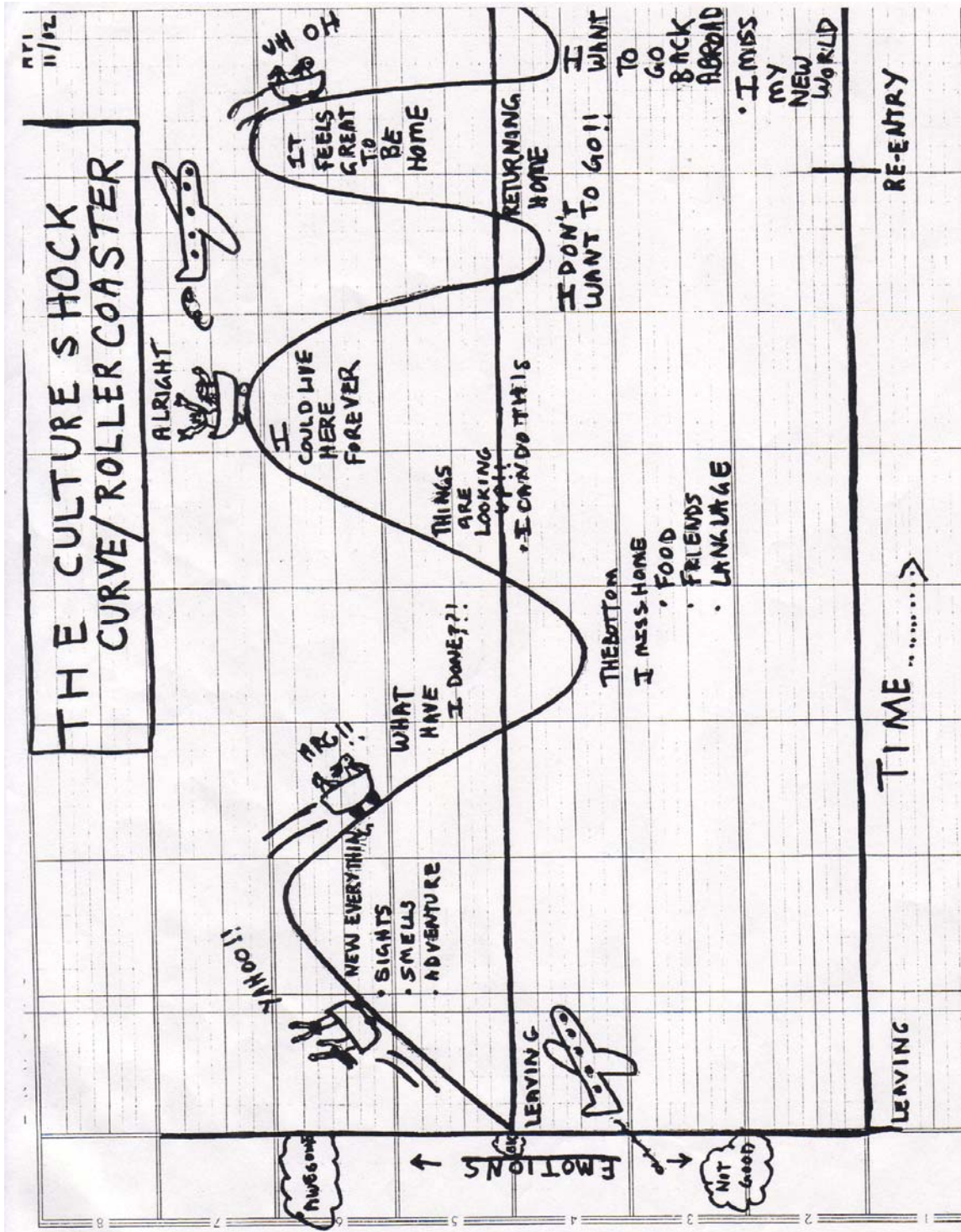
[Also see the section on "American Values" on page 25.]

***Cultural Variations:*** Most western cultures share many of the same assumptions with Americans, but some variations do exist. Be prepared for "efficient and quick" to be a very different concept from what you are used to. While everyone likes an idea that works, some cultures value aesthetics over practicality or emphasize the process over the end result, and family ties and social obligations are often given priority over individual needs and wants.

***You are Not Alone:*** Remember that everyone else on your program will experience similar feelings to yours. Don't hesitate to look to them for moral and emotional support. In addition, the staff of both your host institution's international student office and our offices abroad can help you if you're feeling particularly stressed or anxious. Please seek them out.

## The Cultural Adjustment Curve/Roller Coaster

This is a humorous look at the “cultural adjustment” curve described many different ways by study abroad advisors and providers. Courtesy of Julie Leitman, Academic Programs International (API).



## **Intercultural Communication: Interacting in Foreign Countries**

Your host country will have many unwritten cultural rules and norms, which may be quite different from what you are used to in the U.S. It is important to read up on your host country before you leave and be aware of the possible cultural differences between the U.S. and your host country. Early preparation can help you adapt more quickly to life in your host country.

While living and studying abroad, try to remain aware of cultural differences in everyday interactions. If you experience an exchange with someone that does not go well or feels strange for some reason, reflect on it – the best way is to write in your journal about the event. After you have gained more cultural knowledge about your host country, you can look back on it and understand in hindsight what the problem was.

An important tip to keep in mind: while reading up on your host country, try to find out what particular customs are common there. Keep in mind that there are always exceptions to the rules. Also be aware that people from your host culture will be making assumptions about you as an American. They may have several preconceived notions about Americans. Accept the fact that people from other cultures will likely make generalizations about you based on your culture, just as you might mistakenly do about theirs.

A good exercise before you depart is to write down any preconceived notions you have about your host country. What type of interactions do you expect? How do you think you will be perceived as an American? Save your notes and look them over at the end of your study abroad experience. Were you correct in your assumptions? Did your experience abroad turn out as you planned?



*Cheese production in Italy, photo Danielle Hirsch*

## American Values

The following is a list of common American values. Keep in mind that you might exemplify these qualities without even knowing it. Some of these results are stereotypes of Americans that locals in your host country may expect of you, even if you do not – or do not feel – that you have these traits.

- **Forwardness/Directness:** Americans are generally very direct and straightforward people. In other cultures, some of the questions we feel very comfortable asking each other may seem nosy or rude.
- **Equality and Diversity:** Equality and Diversity are two very important values in American culture. It is embedded in our government, everyday speech, workplace, and educational atmosphere. People from other cultures often find that Americans are too concerned with being “politically correct.” At times, you may be shocked by the inequality in other cultures. On the other hand – host nationals may ask you to explain the inequalities that do exist in the U.S.
- **Loudness:** Many foreign cultures associate Americans as being very loud. Americans typically speak loudly and engage in boisterous conversations in public. Take cues from your host culture to blend in, as many cultures differ greatly in this regard. Ask your program for tips.
- **Dress:** Americans have a distinctive style of dress and dress for comfort. It is not unusual to see Americans wearing pajama pants to class or a baggy college sweatshirt out to a club. This style of dress is unacceptable in many parts of the world. Be aware of how the locals dress and pay attention to what colors people wear in the host culture. Some colors may be culturally inappropriate. Adapt your dress accordingly to blend in and stay safe.
- **Money and Time:** Many foreigners see Americans as materialistic, and they might assume that we all live by the motto “time is money.” Americans live at a hurried pace. Some societies don’t even have coffee shops that sell cups to go! Keep in mind that living in another country will mean adapting to a different pace; this may include different meal times, class times, siestas, and even nightlife hours.

## “Americans As Others See Them” (source unknown):

People from other countries often become puzzled and intrigued by the intricacies and enigmas of American culture. Below is a selection of actual observations by people from around the world visiting the United States. Keep in mind that since America is such a vast country of regional differences, visitors’ ideas are influenced by the particular Americans they have met (as well as the stereotypes portrayed in the media). As you read them, ask yourself in each case how you may or may not have seen the observation in your experience, and how you would explain the trait in question.

**India:** “Americans seem to be in a perpetual hurry. Just watch the way they walk down the street. They never allow themselves the leisure to enjoy life; there are too many things to do.”

**Kenya:** “Americans appear to us rather distant. They are not really as close to other people – even fellow Americans – as Americans overseas tend to portray. It’s almost as if an American says, ‘I won’t let you get too close to me.’ It’s like building a wall.”

**Turkey:** “Once we were out in a rural area in the middle of nowhere and saw an American come to a stop sign. Though he could see in both directions for miles and no traffic was coming, he still stopped!”

**Colombia:** “The tendency in the United States to think that life is only work hits you in the face. Work seems to be the one type of motivation.”

**Indonesia:** “In the United States, everything has to be talked about and analyzed. Even the littlest thing has to be ‘Why, why why?’ I get a headache from such persistent questions.”

**Ethiopia:** “Americas are very explicit; ... [they] want a ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ If someone tries to speak figuratively, the American is confused.”

**Iran:** “The first time my [American] professor told me, ‘I don’t know the answer, I will have to look it up,’ I was shocked. I asked myself, ‘Why is he teaching me?’ In my country a professor would give the wrong answer rather than admit ignorance.”

COF colleagues who advise international students confirm that many of those who study in the U.S. do hold these and many other similar impressions. Even students from Europe, the region many feel is most similar to the U.S., have commented that Americans seem to them to be obsessed with work and achievement, and do not know how to slow down and enjoy the moment.

Whether or not you feel you have or express these traits, know that people around the world often have very definite ideas (again, often from the media) about American life and values – just as Americans have asked international students from Africa if they have electricity!

*Photos of Venice, Italy by Jennifer Larsen*



## Thinking About Cultural Differences

To better prepare you for the cultural interactions you will soon face, here is a list of some common blocks in intercultural communication (adapted from “Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication” by LaRay Barna, in *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, Fifth Edition, by Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter):

- **Assuming Similarity Instead of Difference:** Both the foreigner and the host can easily assume that they have similar nonverbal codes, reactions and feelings, especially when external cues like dress and language ability do not indicate difference.
- **Language:** This seems obvious, but language refers not only to vocabulary, syntax, idioms, etc., but also to comprehending non-verbal language such as hand gestures and body language.
- **Nonverbal Misinterpretations:** People from different cultures have different sensory realities. They see, hear, feel and smell only what has meaning or is important to them. Some nonverbal signs and symbols – gestures, postures, and body movements – are relatively easy to observe and comprehend. The less apparent cultural codes embedded in, for example, how time and space are handled, are far harder to note and discern.
- **The Presence of Preconceptions and Stereotypes:** Stereotypes make us less apt to search for cues that help us understand another’s reality.
- **The Tendency to Evaluate:** The tendency to make polarized judgments – either approving or disapproving – about the statements and actions of another person or group impedes one’s ability to comprehend the feelings and thoughts that are being expressed.
- **High Anxiety:** Anxiety underlies and compounds all the other stumbling blocks. Tension is common in cross-cultural experiences, because they are full of uncertainties that call forth a high level of alertness.

### **Cross-cultural Skills**

- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Low goal/task orientation
- Open-mindedness
- Non-judgmentalness
- Empathy
- Communicativeness
- Flexibility; Adaptability
- Curiosity
- Sense of humor
- Warmth in human relationships
- Motivation
- Self-reliance
- Strong sense of self
- Tolerance for differences
- Perceptiveness
- Ability to fail

From “Survival Kit for Overseas Living,” by Bob Kohls

## Handling Specific Situations

The most effective way to combat culture shock [and cross-cultural miscommunications] is to step back from a given event that has bothered you, assess it, and search for an appropriate explanation and response. Try the following (from NAFSA’s *International Student Handbook*):

- Observe how others are acting in the same situation.
- Describe the situation, what it means to you, and your response to it.
- Ask a host national or someone with extensive experience in the host culture how they would have handled the situation and what it means in the host culture.
- Plan how you might act in this or similar situations in the future.
- Test the new behavior and evaluate how well it works.
- Decide how you can apply what you have learned the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.

## **Avoiding Conflict**

Even after learning as much as you can about the local culture, you are likely to have low-level conflicts (heated discussions with host nationals) and/or may end up in a situation of greater conflict. Here are strategies for avoiding and defusing these situations:

***Understanding Locals:*** You may not know the native language of every country you visit, but knowing a few essential phrases can be very useful. Try to understand what locals are communicating to you. For example, how they feel about you and about the U.S. Do they think you respect their values? Do they think you understand them? Look for nonverbal cues for feedback.

***Know Your Audience:*** In some countries, a healthy debate is valued and not to be feared. Some host nationals will be eager to push you on your political or cultural views, and will respect your ability to disagree in a lively conversation. Other host nationals – even in the same country – may take great offense with any statement starting with “In America...” Know your audience before making any strong statements. In some situations, your greatest learning abroad may take place debating capitalism over coffee. In others, you may end up in danger after provoking someone you don’t know well. See how they react to a mild statement and go from there.

***Keep Your Sense of Humor:*** As you may have noticed this comes up again and again. In most situations, even if you have just made a horrible faux pas, the ability to laugh at yourself and admit that you made a mistake will defuse most tension.

***Political Conversations and Rallies:*** The people you encounter abroad may know more about U.S. politics than you do and may at times have negative opinions about the U.S. When discussing hot button topics, consider your audience. Try not to pick fights and keep in mind that criticism of U.S. policy is not a criticism of you personally. Try to avoid retaliating against hostile or bigoted remarks about Americans. Avoid political rallies, or large gatherings, especially those expressing anti-American sentiment. Even if you agree with the crowd, they may take their frustration out on you.

***Listen to your gut:*** Do not ignore your sixth sense. If you feel alarmed or spooked, find out why. Consider what may have set off your internal alarm. Observe and assess the situation around you and determine your options for getting to a safer place. Calmly and rationally make a decision and act on it. At the same time, realize that sometimes your “cultural radar” may be “off” due to cross-cultural issues. Sometimes situations that you assume are safe, because they seem like situations at home, may be more dangerous than you realize. Always err on the side of safety!

***Non-verbal Communication:*** Non-verbal communication, like body language and hand gestures, which is considered harmless in the U.S. may be offensive to people in other countries. Hand gestures are culturally specific and mean different things in different countries. Avoid hand gestures; even something as simple as waving, nodding your head, or giving the “thumbs-up” sign may mean something offensive in your host country.

***Personal Conduct:*** Americans are not always viewed favorably in other countries. Behaving in a professional manner and blending into the local society can help protect you against some unwanted negative feelings and actions. Establish personal boundaries and act to protect them.

## **Student Perspectives - How to Deal**

Don't let the fear of culture shock keep you from going abroad. While culture shock seems inevitable, go with the flow and keep an open mind. Here are some useful tips.

***Become Familiar with the New Culture:*** Information about social issues, culture, and customs are available from several sources, including your college study abroad contact and/or the COF GEO Center, the Simmons College Career Resource Library (1 Palace Road, suite P-304) which is open to the public, the Internet, guidebooks (such as Let's Go and Lonely Planet), and international students here on campus. One student headed to Hong Kong was glad to learn in advance that sticking your chopsticks straight up in your food means you wish death to the chef (in most Asian countries it has some connection with death, as it resembles incense sticks burning in funerary ashes).

***Talk to Returnees:*** Don't be shy. Return students can offer first-hand advice about using ATM cards, what to pack, the cheapest way to call home, laundry services, etc. As you will soon discover, return students love sharing information about their experience.

***Stay in Touch with Friends and Family:*** Use email to let others know what is happening as events occur. This interaction with loved ones back home can prepare you for re-entry. However, as mentioned before, do not use daily email, cell phones, and IMing as a crutch that will end up keeping you from some of the most meaningful study abroad experiences.

***Make Friends with Local People:*** Befriending locals is an excellent way to learn about a country's culture, help you be more understanding, and lessen your culture shock. Your new friends can help you learn the language and can introduce you to aspects of their culture most tourists never experience. You can also offer them new insights into your own culture. Making friends while abroad can help foster the international camaraderie that overseas living is intended to achieve.

***Keep a Journal (see below):*** Though it may be difficult to explain your overseas experience to people back home, a journal is an excellent way to record your observations. Some students prefer to blog or send weekly emails to friends, but these are often "censored" for friends and family – not just in terms of content you may want to keep from Mom and Dad, but also in terms of insecurities or fears you may not want to share with friends. A journal, private email diary, or other personal record will be more honest and more helpful. One way or another, find a way to record how your thoughts and feelings change while overseas. Many students say their biggest regret is not having some sort of permanent record of their emotions and experiences abroad.

## **Travel Journal**

You are not required to keep a journal of your experience while abroad. But, by doing so you will be able to keep track of the places you visit, people you meet, and all of your adventures. Even though you will discuss your experiences with your family and friends when you return, your journal will last a lifetime.

If you have not written a journal before or are unsure about where to begin, here are a few tips and ideas:

***Begin Before You Leave:*** Before you leave, write about what you expect from your time abroad, what you hope to learn, where you plan to travel, your hopes and fears. It will be interesting to see how different or similar your actual experience turns out to be.

**Observations:** Record what you do on a daily basis; who you have dinner with, where you go out at night, and the type of people you meet. Write down what you talk about, your perceptions of people and how you think people perceive you.

**Ethnocentric Moments:** Record your cultural assumptions about daily situations and events. Think about how different it is to go food shopping, to the post office, etc. How do these reactions change as you continue your travels?

**Reactions to You:** Write about how people respond to you. Do they misunderstand you? How do they react to your views and ideas? Keeping these reactions in mind, how do you think people in your host culture view you? Use this to compare and contrast cultural norms and traditions in your host culture and the U.S.

**Additional Response to Classroom Experiences:** By looking at your classroom discussions, assignments, and lectures in a cultural way, you will see how they relate to other aspects of your host culture. Assignments can enhance cultural understanding. Remember, study abroad is more than just travel and fun; it is also about learning!

**Use your Journal Creatively:** Remember that this is a personal journal. Feel free to write poems, sketch, take pictures, and have others write in it. Do whatever feels right at the moment; whatever will best portray your experience.

**Experiment:** If you feel that you are running out of things to write about your daily life, you might assign yourself projects such as: talking to 5 “locals” and writing about your conversations. Change your routine and make an adventure of it. Write about the things you learn by taking a different bus, walking instead of taking a cab, etc.

**Critique your Journal:** As you continue your Study Abroad experience, look back at your journal and see how your perceptions have changed. How do you see yourself growing? Are you writing about different topics? What does that mean about you? By looking at your journal this way, you can see how you have learned and grown from your experiences.



Again, a journal or diary is the most common way to record these experiences, but a different kind of permanent record may work better for you (blog, emails). Keep in mind, though, that records written for others will be very different from those meant for your eyes alone. The most helpful record will be one in which you can truly pour out all your thoughts, fears, and new lessons.

## **A Global Community**

To shed some of the cultural preconceptions you may have, consider the following. If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this:

- 57 Asians
- 21 Europeans
- 14 from the Western Hemisphere (North and South America)
- 8 Africans
- 52 would be female
- 48 would be male
- 70 would be non-white, 30 white
- 70 would be non-Christian, 30 would be Christian
- 89 would be heterosexual, 11 homosexual
- 59% of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people and all 6 would be citizens of the United States
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death, 1 would be near birth
- Only 1 would have a college education and only 1 would own a computer

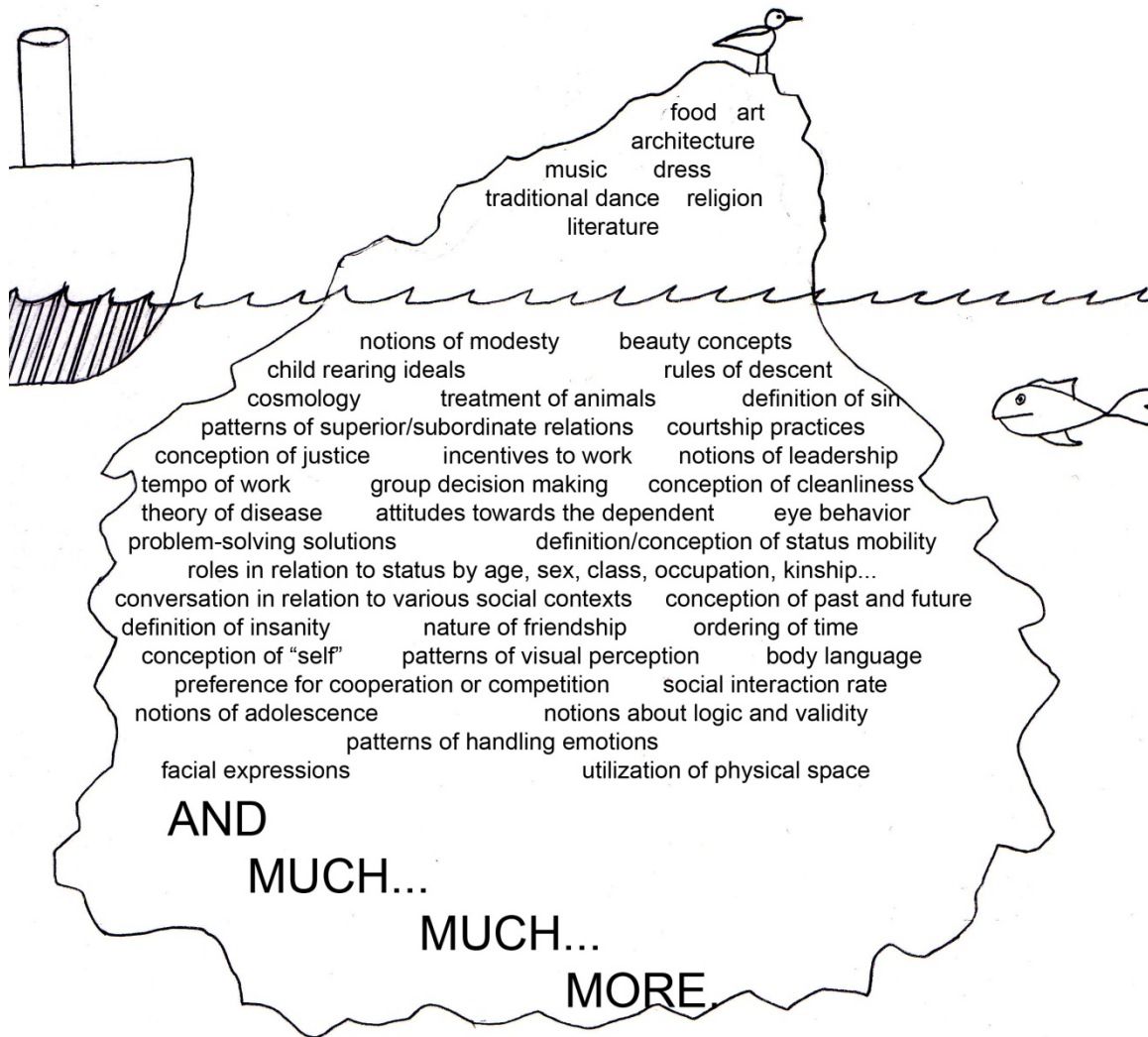


*Photos of Paris, France by Jennifer Larsen*

## The Cultural Iceberg

What pops into your mind when you think about another culture? Art? Music? Dance? Traditional dress? Architecture? Food? Those aspects form the tip of the cultural iceberg; what is obvious at first glance. Cultures consist of many more aspects than what is obvious at first glance.

While abroad, try to consider the various notions of your host culture listed in the cultural iceberg. Keep an open mind and you will learn a lot more about your own culture than you ever realized.



Just as nine-tenths of an iceberg is out of sight (below the water line), so is nine-tenths of culture out of conscious awareness. This part of culture has been deemed "deep culture".

## **Watch your language!**

When studying abroad in a non-English speaking country, trying to communicate can be much more difficult than one expects. Direct translation from English to the native language does not always work, and often times, mistakes are made in using “false friends”: words that look like an English equivalent but mean something completely different (example: the Spanish “embarazar” does not translate to “embarrass”, but rather “to impregnate”).

The following (adapted from The Web of Culture) are some marketing examples nominated for the Chevy Nova Award, which is given in honor of GM’s fiasco in trying to market this car in Central and South America. “No va” means, of course, in Spanish “it doesn’t go.”

- The Dairy Association’s huge success with the campaign “Got Milk?” prompted them to expand advertising to Mexico. It was soon brought to their attention the Spanish translation read, “Are you lactating?”
- Coors put its slogan “Turn it Loose,” into Spanish, where it read “Suffer From Diarrhea.”
- Scandinavian vacuum manufacturer Electrolux used the following in an American campaign: “Nothing sucks like an Electrolux.”
- Clairol introduced the “Mist Stick,” a curling iron, into Germany only to find out that “mist” is slang for manure. Not too many people had use for the “Manure Stick.”
- When Gerber started selling baby food in Africa, they used the same packaging as in the US, with the smiling baby on the label. Later they learned that in Africa, companies routinely put pictures on the labels of what’s inside, since many people can’t read.
- Colgate introduced a toothpaste in France called Cue - a notorious porno magazine.
- An American T-shirt maker in Miami printed shirts for the Spanish market which promoted the Pope’s visit. Instead of “I saw the Pope” (el Papa), the shirts read “I Saw the Potato” (la papa.)
- Pepsi’s “Come Alive With the Pepsi Generation” translated into “Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back From the Grave” in Chinese.
- The Coca-Cola name in China was first read as “Kekoukela,” meaning “Bite the wax tadpole” or “female horse stuffed with wax,” depending on the dialect. Coke then researched 40,000 characters to find a phonetic equivalent “kokou kole,” translating into “happiness in the mouth.”
- Frank Perdue’s chicken slogan, “It takes a strong man to make a tender chicken” was translated into Spanish as “it takes an aroused man to make a chicken affectionate.”
- When Parker Pen marketed a ballpoint pen in Mexico, its ads were supposed to have read, “It won’t leak in your pocket and embarrass you.” The company thought that the word “embarazar” (to impregnate) meant to embarrass, so the ad read: “It won’t leak in your pocket and make you pregnant!”
- When American Airlines wanted to advertise its new leather first class seats in the Mexican market, it translated its “Fly in Leather” campaign, literally, which meant “Fly Naked” (vuela en cuero) in Spanish.

Remember to remind yourself that everyone makes mistakes, use your sense of humor when you realize you have made a mistake, and learn to “watch your language!”

## **Reverse (Re-entry) Cultural Adjustment**

Reverse cultural adjustment includes a feeling of disenchantment with the United States that many experience after being abroad. Students who study abroad usually re-examine their priorities, values, and identities as Americans. They often idealize the U.S. and how life will be when they return. They expect to feel totally familiar with their surroundings and hope that nothing has changed while they were away. But some things may have changed: their friends and family have their own lives, and things have happened since they've been gone. Home may seem unfamiliar, and the disinterest of family and friends may result in misunderstandings, and feelings of frustration and alienation. The realization that life back home is not as remembered may make some returning students start to miss their host country.

Re-entry can also give way to a sense of loss. Students remember the sense of adventure they felt abroad. Compared to that, life in the U.S. can seem dull and uninteresting.

Reverse culture shock can be more difficult than the shock you felt when first abroad, in part because it is more unexpected. The difficulty of readjustment varies from person to person. The more integrated a student was into his/her host culture, the harder it is to adjust on return.

### ***Tips for Dealing with Reverse Cultural Adjustment:***

- Find an audience that will listen to you. Ask your college's study abroad office for names of previous participants or departing students.
- Use your experience by tutoring and mentoring other students. After returning from Spain, one student used her improved knowledge of Spanish to tutor Elementary Spanish I students.
- Make yourself available to departing study abroad students. The study abroad advisor(s) at your college and/or the GEO Center would love you to participate in study abroad fairs, information sessions, and orientations!
- Seek out international students from your host country. Your understanding of culture shock can help them to adjust to life in the U.S.
- Find restaurants and cook foods that remind you of your study abroad experience.
- Go camping to deal with the time change and ease into the culture differences of the U.S.
- Volunteer at an organization that works with people from your host country.
- Plan a trip back to visit so that you have a goal and maintain your connection to the culture and the wonderful people you met abroad.

Share additional tips with your college's Office of Study Abroad so that we can add to this list!

**Be sure to attend the Boston Area Re-entry Conference held in October. You can share your experience with other Boston-area study abroad participants, speak with career counselors about maximizing your resume and learn about post-undergrad opportunities abroad. Details available from your college study abroad contact or the GEO Center.**

## IV. Resources

### Guide to Boston Area Language Resources

Practice your foreign language skills in Boston, before you go abroad.

#### Chinese

- Chinatown Boston
- [www.sampan.org](http://www.sampan.org) Boston's Chinese-English newspaper

#### French

- [www.bostonfr.com](http://www.bostonfr.com)
- French Cultural and Scientific Services/Alliance Française 31 St. James Ave Ste 750 Boston, MA 02116 Tel. 617.292.0064
- French Library and Cultural Center, 53 Marlborough Street Boston, MA 02116 Tel. 617.266.4351
- Radio France International (740 AM) 7-9AM Monday -Saturday
- The International Channel, Francophone news and programming each evening (cable)
- TV5 24 hour French language programming on some cable systems and via satellite.

#### German

- Goethe Institute 170 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02116 Tel. 617.262.6050

#### Italian

- [www.italianamericannews.com](http://www.italianamericannews.com)
- North End of Boston
- Dante Alighieri Center Cambridge <http://www.dantealighieri.net/cambridge>

#### Japanese

- Showa Boston 420 Pond St. Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 Tel. 617.522.0080
- [web.mit.edu/misti/mit-japan](http://web.mit.edu/misti/mit-japan)
- [www.nippon-foundation.or.jp](http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp)
- Porter Exchange (Japanese Grocery and restaurants, Porter Square Cambridge)
- Japanese Grocery in Central Square on Prospect Street.

#### Spanish

- Spanish Consulate 545 Boylston St. Boston, MA 02116 Tel. 617.536.2506
- Hispanic-American Chamber of Commerce 67 Broad St. Boston, MA 02109 Tel. 617.261.4222
- 97.3 FM Spanish/Portuguese Programming (from New Bedford)
- 890AM WBPS Spanish Programming
- Various TV Stations on Cable

#### Portuguese

- New Bedford, Ma/Fall River, MA & East Cambridge have large Portuguese Populations with stores and newspapers in Portuguese
- Framingham, MA & Union Sq Somerville have large Brazilian populations, Products and newspapers can be found there
- 97.3 FM Spanish/Portuguese Programming (from New Bedford)

#### Books, Magazines, Music

- Tower Records (Harvard Sq.)
- Borders Books (Downtown Crossing)
- Barnes & Noble (Kenmore Sq./Downtown Crossing/Prudential Center)

- Out of Town News (Harvard Sq.)
- Schoenhof's Books (Harvard Sq. on Mt Auburn Street behind the Holyoke Center) Best resource for Foreign Language Books in greater Boston

**Foreign Films:**

- Kendall Square Cinemas, Cambridge
- Brattle Theater, Harvard Square
- Harvard Film Archives, Harvard University
- Coolidge Corner Theater, Brookline
- Sony Theaters, Harvard Square (Church Street)

**Note:** Various resources, including on-demand radio and video, available on the web for all languages.

**Travel Resources: Everything You Need to Know and Then Some**

Here is a brief listing of books and web resources to help you research and plan travel. You can learn about local hotspots, cheap activities, where to find good eats and a much more. Share the information you learn with friends and peers in your program. Most of these books can be found at bookstores in metro Boston.

**Budget Travel Guidebooks**

- Let's Go guidebooks, [www.lets-go.com](http://www.lets-go.com): Let's Go guidebooks are written by Harvard students, and these are the most student-oriented of currently available guidebook series. This website is pretty basic, and seems designed primarily to sell the books. The site does offer a collection of links for student travel.
- Lonely Planet guidebooks, [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com): Lonely Planet publishes guidebooks for independent and inexpensive travel, with truly worldwide coverage. Their website provides extensive country-by-country facts along with links to other sources of online information. Lonely Planet also produces television shows on travel.
- Rick Steves Europe Through The Back Door guidebooks, [www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com): Rick Steves, a long-time contributor to *Transitions Abroad* and producer of travel shows for PBS, writes guidebooks (for Europe only) which attempt a balance between famous and lesser-known destinations. He's also authored a self-guide to European museums, *Mona Winks*, and *Europe 101: History & Art for the Traveler*. His site has lots of great tips and links for the budget traveler.
- Rough Guides guidebooks, [www.roughguides.com](http://www.roughguides.com): Rough Guides publishes guidebooks for independent and inexpensive travel—known for astute political and social commentary—for locations worldwide, though for fewer destinations than Lonely Planet. Rough Guides claims to have the complete contents of their guidebooks online, but the menus to access the texts are clunky—it's probably cheaper and handier to buy the books (our rating of \*\* applies to the books). Rough Guide also produces television shows on travel, and the book *Women Travel* (not online).

### Travel Tip Websites

- Frommers Budget Travel Online, [www.frommers.com](http://www.frommers.com): This website is not as low-budget oriented as the others listed here, but contains much useful information—and those who think of Arthur Frommer as the dean of travel may be surprised to read his “Testy Comments” about conventional tourism.
- Tourism Offices Worldwide Directory, [www.towd.com](http://www.towd.com): Links to the websites of official tourist offices, country-by-country. Not budget-oriented, but usually an excellent source of information for cultural events, museums, and more.
- Transitions Abroad magazine, [www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com): *Transitions Abroad* magazine is unique in its coverage of all education abroad options, from study and work abroad to educational travel. Not a guidebook series, but a guide-to-the-guidebooks. Online version includes very extensive coverage of print and internet resources for travel abroad, such as recent articles, annotated guides to resources, and country-by-country annotated guides to web and print resources and travel programs. Search functions available for entire site. The major sections of this site include:
- Glimpse Magazine, [www.glimpseabroad.org](http://www.glimpseabroad.org): Great source from news and information written by students currently abroad and recently returned.
- Eurotrip - Backpacking in Europe, [www.eurotrip.com](http://www.eurotrip.com): An extensive site on shoestring travel in Europe, hostels, cheap airfares, etc.

### Hostel/Hotel Information

- Hostelling International: American Youth Hostels, [www.hiayh.org/homenew.shtml](http://www.hiayh.org/homenew.shtml) US branch of the non-profit International Youth Hostel Federation. Their web site provides links to hostels worldwide. HI-AYH is the sole distributor in the US of International Hostel Memberships, valid at IYFH hostels worldwide. Reservations can be made online.
- Hostelling International (IYHF), [www.iyhf.org](http://www.iyhf.org): Worldwide site of the non-profit International Youth Hostel Federation. Web site provides links to member hostels worldwide. Reservations can be made online.
- **Hostels.com & Hostelworld.com**: These two sites are owned by Web Reservations International [www.webresint.com](http://www.webresint.com). Both include information and articles about private youth hostels. Contact information is not provided; reservations must be made through these sites.
- **Hostelz.com**: This site has a searchable database of hostels worldwide. There is also a directory that can be browsed by region, country, and city. Complete contact information is provided for each hostel. Many also have reviews and photos.
- The Hotel Guide, [www.hotelguide.com/](http://www.hotelguide.com/): Not necessarily low-budget, this site lists tens of thousands of hotels worldwide.
- United States Servas, [www.servas.org](http://www.servas.org): For those interested in staying at others' homes while traveling, Servas is a key international organization. As their website states, “Servas is a volunteer movement of caring individuals, not a budget travel service. Travelers are encouraged to participate fully in the lives of their hosts.”

### Currency Converters and ATM Finders

- Currency Converter—Oanda, [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic): The Oanda converter allows for factoring-in different rates typical of credit-card and cash exchanges.
- Currency Converter—Universal (Xenon), [www.xe.net/ucc](http://www.xe.net/ucc)

- MasterCard / Cirrus ATM finder, [www.mastercard.com/cardholderservices/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/cardholderservices/atm)
- Visa / Plus ATM finder, <http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/>

### **Diverse Populations Traveling Abroad**

- Journeywoman, [www.journeywoman.com](http://www.journeywoman.com): Site has extensive information, articles, and links for women traveling abroad.
- Rainbow Special Interest Group of NAFSA, [www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/](http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/): By Kathleen Sidel. A very comprehensive web site on issues of concern to lesbian and gay students and travelers. For student perspectives, see the first-hand articles in <http://www.indiana.edu/%7Eoverseas/lesbigay/student.htm>.
- Michigan State University's web resources for students of color abroad: <http://studyabroad.msu.edu/people/studentsofcolor>
- Mobility International, [www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org): Non-profit organization provides information on education and travel abroad for people with disabilities. Site includes extensive links to related organizations worldwide and to providers of travel services for people with disabilities.

### **Countries and Events**

- Kasbah, The Travel Search Engine, [www.kasbah.com](http://www.kasbah.com): Not only about "travel". Country-by-country searches bring up vast numbers of links for everything ranging from news, academic and official links to practical travel information.
- Tourism Offices Worldwide Directory, [www.towd.com](http://www.towd.com): Links to the websites of official tourist offices, country-by-country. An excellent source of information for cultural events, museums, and more.
- Travel Document Services, [www.traveldocs.com](http://www.traveldocs.com): Site of this commercial service gathers together lots of country-by-country information from official and academic sources, along with basic entry information for US citizens (for student and work visas, the site refers one to the respective country's embassy). Note that using this service to obtain passports or visas will result in extra charges.
- US State Department's Background Notes (country information), [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/): Overviews compiled by the US diplomatic services.
- Visit Europe, [www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com): Comprehensive guide to cultural events and travel in Europe (including some Eastern European countries) by the European Travel Commission.

### **Languages**

- Travlang's Language Resources, [www.travlang.com/lang.html](http://www.travlang.com/lang.html): Website provides links to the most useful sites related to languages, such as a guide to what languages are spoken in which countries, online language-learning sites, online dictionaries, and more. See also the University of Washington site in the NEWS section.
- U. of Washington Languages on the Web, <http://depts.washington.edu/lc/main/links/world.php>: Site provides links to online language-learning resources both in the US and abroad, and to worldwide media.

### **Maps**

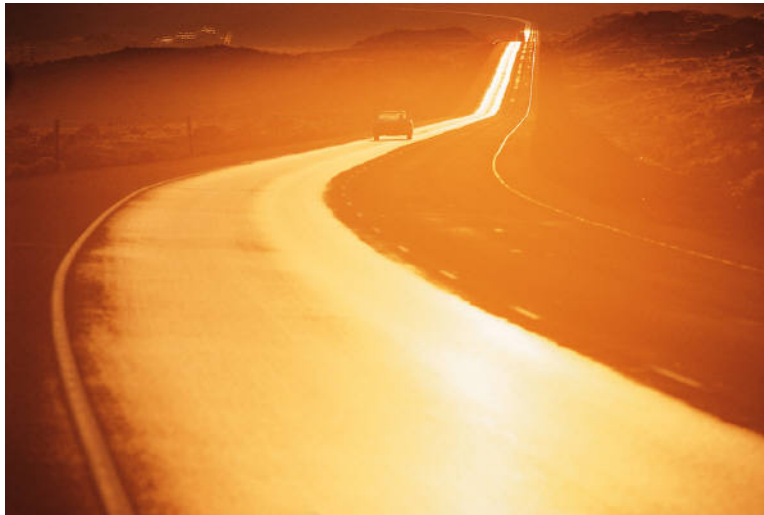
- MapQuest, [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com): Click on “Maps” to be able to choose country, city and street maps worldwide. Site is fast and has a convenient zoom feature.
- National Geographic’s Map Machine, [www.nationalgeographic.com/maps](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps): Offers maps, satellite images, and basic facts, but not street maps; slow.

### **News and Media**

- BBC World News, [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world): Outstanding international coverage organized according to six world regions.
- University of Washington Languages on the Web, [depts.washington.edu/lc/main/links/world.php](http://depts.washington.edu/lc/main/links/world.php): Site provides links to newspapers, magazines and other media worldwide, as well as language resources.
- The New York Times: International, [www.nytimes.com/pages/world](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world): Outstanding international coverage organized according to five world regions. Also provides maps and 5-day weather forecasts.

### **Weather**

- Weather Channel (US), [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com): Worldwide three-day forecasts, fast site.



**Bon Voyage & Safe Travels!**