

ASA
GUIDE
TO
STUDY
ABROAD

For Parents and Students

In this guide:

- Contact Information
- Payment and Financial Aid
- Passport
- Keeping Your Important Documents Safe
- Vaccinations
- Prescription Medication
- Medical Insurance
- Money and Banking
- Travel Arrangements / Airport Pick-up
- What to Pack
- Orientation
- Safety
- Homesickness and Culture Shock
- Reverse Culture Shock

Please read our Location-Specific Guide
for information about:

- Student Visa
- Helpful Local Information
- Host Institution & Housing
- Medical Care
- Cell Phones
- Mail, Computers, Internet

Contact Information

Academic Studies Abroad
4 Belgrade Ave.
Suite 5
Roslindale, MA 02131
Office hours: 9 am – 5:30 pm EST, Mon-Fri
Tel: 617-327-9388 / 888-845-4272
Fax: 617-327-9390
Lee Frankel, Emergency Cellular: 413-221-4559
Email: info@academicstudies.com
Web: www.academicstudies.com

Payment and Financial Aid

When is payment due to ASA?

Now that you've been accepted to the ASA program, we have sent an invoice to the student and/or their parents. ASA's **Forms & Payment Deadline** for each program is **2 weeks after the Application Deadline**. The deadlines and prices for all of our programs are listed on our website at <http://www.academicstudies.com/costs.html>.

Your payment deadline is listed on your invoice. The following are *generally* ASA's Forms & Payment Deadlines, but check your invoice to be sure, as it varies by program.

For South America programs:

Fall – Forms & Payment Deadline:	April 15 / May 15 (depending on program start date)
Spring – Forms & Payment Deadline:	October 15/ November 15 (depending on program start date)
Summer – Forms & Payment Deadline:	April 15

For all other programs:

Fall – Forms & Payment Deadline:	June 15
Spring – Forms & Payment Deadline:	October 15
Summer – Forms & Payment Deadline:	April 1 / April 15 (depending on program start date)

What forms of payment does ASA accept?

- 1) Mail a personal check, cashier's check or money order to the address on the first page, made payable to Academic Studies Abroad.
- 2) Transfer the funds from your bank account to ours (e-check) at www.academicstudies.com/pay.html.

◆ HOUSING DEPOSITS:

Because some of our partners abroad require a deposit up front in order to secure your enrollment and housing, certain programs require a **non-refundable Housing Deposit (down payment) to be paid *within 2 weeks of being accepted to the ASA program***. Once paid, your Housing Deposit will be deducted from your balance due. Because we will be able to enroll you in classes and housing as soon as we receive your Housing Deposit, we recommend paying it as soon as possible after you're accepted to have the best possible housing and course selection.

The following programs require non-refundable Housing Deposits. For these students, your space on the ASA program is not 100% secured until we receive your Housing Deposit.

All **France** programs: \$750

All **Italy** programs: \$1,000

Students going to **Barcelona, Sevilla or Madrid** who choose the shared student apartment housing option: \$1,000

Full payment or verification of financial aid is still due by the Forms & Payment Deadline, as described in the above FAQs.

◆ DAMAGE DEPOSITS:

The following programs require a damage deposit, which is returned to students after the end of the program as long as nothing is missing or damaged in their living space:

- Florence, Italy: \$350, paid to ASA prior to departure
- Buenos Aires, Argentina: \$250, paid to ASA prior to departure
- Sevilla, Barcelona and Madrid, Spain: \$500, paid to ASA prior to departure (applicable only to students who choose to live in a shared student apartment)
- Rome, Italy: damage deposit in the amount of €100 and key deposit in the amount of €50, to be paid in cash upon move-in to John Cabot University housing.

◆ **FINANCIAL AID:**

Many of our students already receive federal financial aid at their home school and use that to help pay for the ASA program. ASA will accept any type of financial aid, grants, scholarships, or loans that you receive to help pay for our programs. However, it is ultimately up to the aid provider to decide if they will allow you to use it to go abroad. For example, most colleges/universities will allow you to apply your federal grants or loans to go abroad, but not your scholarships or university grants. **Students may defer the portion of the program fees that is going to be covered by their financial aid and pay it within 10 days of receiving their disbursement, as long as we receive written verification of your financial aid award by the Forms & Payment Deadline. Any portion of the fees NOT covered by financial aid is due by the Forms & Payment Deadline.**

How can I use my financial aid to study abroad?

For complete information about how to use your federal financial aid and answers to all your questions about financial aid and studying abroad, please visit www.academicstudies.com/finaid.html

Passport

All students must have a valid passport that does not expire for at least 3 months after their proposed return date from abroad. Please check your passport's expiration date to make sure. **If you don't yet have a passport, you must apply for one immediately.** Please have your valid passport in hand several months prior to departure!

Passports take about 6-8 weeks to process by regular service, so students should plan accordingly. For an additional fee, you can also have your passport expedited. Expedited service usually takes 2-4 weeks. To apply for a passport, go to http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

◆ **All students should leave a photocopy of their passport at home with their parents.** A photocopy of your passport is essential for obtaining a new passport, should yours be lost or stolen.

◆ **You may need to apply for a STUDENT VISA at least 60 days prior to departure. Please read our Location-Specific Guide to find out if you need to apply for a visa.**

Thankfully, medical emergencies are an extremely rare occurrence among study abroad students. Nevertheless, parents need to be prepared to travel abroad if such an event occurs. In a serious medical emergency, a parent's presence abroad may be needed. **All parents should have a valid passport by the time their son or daughter departs. If you already have one, please check the expiration date to ensure that it does not expire within at least 3 months of your son or daughter's return date from abroad.**

Keeping your Important Documents Safe

Students should make photocopies of all their important documents, such as passport, visa (if applicable), credit cards (front and back), ID cards, medical insurance cards, etc. Bring one set of photocopies abroad and leave another set at home with your parents. In addition, you should pack a photocopy of your passport in each of your suitcases.

Students should bring their driver's license to use as a form of everyday ID while abroad and carry a photocopy of their passport at all times. It's not a good idea to carry your passport with you unless you are traveling. While you're not traveling, keep your passport locked in your suitcase.

Vaccinations

No specific immunizations are *required* to go to Western Europe, Chile or Argentina. However, students going to **Chile** should make sure their **tetanus** shots are up-to-date. If you're planning to travel to *remote* areas of Argentina, Typhoid and Yellow Fever vaccinations are recommended.

Although the Meningitis and Hepatitis vaccines are not required, please make sure these vaccinations are up-to-date before traveling abroad. Be sure to get any new vaccinations 4-6 weeks before departure, to allow time for them to take effect.

If you plan to travel outside Western Europe, Chile or Argentina, you need to research the immunization requirements for those countries.

Prescription Medication

If you take prescription medication, you must bring enough to last the duration of your program. It may be difficult and expensive, or impossible to fill prescriptions while abroad. Students may not be able to find the exact equivalent of their medication. Medicines shipped abroad may be blocked by customs, making it impossible to retrieve them. **Medications such as Ritalin, Cylert, Adderall, Wellbutrin, Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and others are often not available outside the U.S.**

****ADDERALL is a Class B controlled substance in the UK, making it illegal to possess without a prescription. Students who take Adderall MUST bring their prescription with them and a letter from their doctor.****

All prescription medication and copies of the prescriptions should be packed in your carry-on luggage, in case your checked luggage is delayed. Prescription medication must always be carried in the original container so it can be clearly identified as belonging to you.

♦ *If you have any special medical needs, please notify ASA immediately.*

Pharmacies abroad sell all over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin, cold medicine, antihistamine, Dramamine, etc. which students can purchase without a prescription. It is a common myth that pharmacies in other countries can administer prescription medication without a prescription (such as antibiotics); this is not true.

Medical Insurance

ASA includes Medical Insurance for all of our students through **ACE American Insurance Company**. You do not have to do anything to activate this insurance. Students' coverage begins on the first official day of the program and ends on the official last day of the program. **Please see the Description of Coverage for full details on what is covered.** Students will receive a claim form and their medical insurance card approximately one month prior to departure.

What medical insurance coverage will students have while they're abroad?

Your medical expenses (i.e. doctor visit, hospitalization, etc.) are covered for up to \$500,000, and you have an Emergency Medical Evacuation Benefit with coverage up to \$250,000. Emergency Medical Evacuation means that your condition warrants immediate transportation from the place where you are injured or sick to the nearest medical facility or hospital where the appropriate medical treatment may be obtained. **One benefit that is of interest to parents is the Emergency Reunion Benefit.** In the event that a student will be hospitalized for an extended period and the doctor feels it would be beneficial to have a family member present, or is the victim of a felonious assault, the parent(s) will be reimbursed for travel and lodging expenses up to \$12,500, with \$300 per day for lodging and related expenses, for a ten-day duration.

Other benefits of interest:

Trip Interruption Benefit (\$2,500 maximum): ACE American will reimburse the cost of your round trip economy air and/or ground transportation ticket up to the Benefit Maximum (with 7-day interim maximum), if your trip is interrupted as a result of 1) the death or unforeseen injury or illness of a close family member (parent, sister, brother, husband, wife, children or grandparent); 2) Substantial destruction of your principal residence by fire or weather related activity; 3) a medically necessary, covered Emergency Medical Evacuation returning you to your home country.

Trip Cancellation Benefit – Terrorism (\$5,000 maximum): ACE American will reimburse you for the amount of non-refundable money you have paid for your trip, up to the Benefit Maximum, if you are prevented from taking your trip as the result of Terrorism. See the Description of Coverage to see what constitutes an act of terrorism.

Political Evacuation and Repatriation Benefit (\$2,500 maximum): If, due to political or military events in your host country, a formal recommendation from the appropriate authorities is issued for you to leave the host country, or if you are expelled or declared persona non-grata by the host country, ACE American will pay the usual and customary charges incurred for transportation to the nearest place of safety and for repatriation to your home country/country of residence, up to the Benefit Maximum. Evacuation and Repatriation must occur within 10 days of any such event.

(This does NOT cover you if you have violated laws of the host country or failed to maintain or obtain required travel documents such as passport/visa, or if there is a Travel Warning in effect on or within 6 months prior to your date of arrival in the host country.)

How do students get reimbursed for medical expenses?

1. **Students must pay for their medical care up front. Be sure to get an itemized receipt once you have paid for your medical care.** The insurance company will reimburse you for *medical expenses covered under the insurance plan*, as long as you mail the completed claim form and itemized medical receipts to the insurance company within 30 days.
2. COMPLETE THE CLAIM FORM IN ITS ENTIRETY before sending it. *Be sure to put your permanent U.S. address on the claim form and NOT your foreign address.* At the top of the claim form, you'll have to fill in your ID number and Policy number. Please contact the ASA Boston office to get your ID number. Your policy number is GLMN00175584. The policy number is the same for all ASA students; however, each student has his/her own ID number which you can get from the ASA Boston office.
3. Make photocopies of your receipts and claim forms before sending them!
4. Mail everything to the address listed on the top of the claim form; use a service that can be tracked, such as FedEx.
5. Typically the insurance company will take about 6 weeks to reimburse you.
6. You can print out extra claim forms and check on the status of your claim online at <http://www.visit-aci.com/>.
7. *Please note:* You will most likely be required to pay for your medical care upon being discharged from the hospital or medical facility. If you're not required to pay before leaving, you should expect to receive a bill in the mail. If you do receive a hospital bill at a later date, you have 2 options. You can pay the hospital directly and then submit a claim. Or, you can mail the original bill to the insurance company along with a completed claim form, and the insurance company will pay the hospital directly. (For example, if you receive a bill in the mail after you return home, you'll want to use the 2nd option.)

Can I extend my insurance coverage since I'll be traveling after the program ends?

Yes. We can arrange this for you *as long as you notify us at least one month prior to departure.* Contact ASA for details such as cost. *You can extend your insurance for a maximum of one month past your official program dates.*

If you are an academic year student, please keep in mind that the ASA program is not in session between semesters/terms. Medical insurance and all other ASA services are NOT included during the break between semesters, so if you plan to stay abroad during winter break and want to keep your medical insurance, you have to purchase it through ASA at least one month prior to departure.

Global Rescue

All ASA also have access to emergency medical assistance and evacuation services through GLOBAL RESCUE (www.globalrescue.com) for the official dates of their program. Global Rescue is available to students 24/7/365. All ASA students receive the following benefits:

- Access to a database of over 3,000 hospitals, clinics and English-speaking physicians worldwide, including 70 "Center of Excellence" hospitals that are affiliated with Johns Hopkins Medicine or Harvard Medical School.
- Emergency medical assistance and evacuation from wherever you are located to the closest Center of Excellence hospital for evaluation, treatment and in-patient hospitalization. (*While Global Rescue would cover your emergency medical evacuation, you would pay for any treatment and/or hospitalization you receive after being evacuated and then file a claim with ACE American insurance company, as described above.*)

If you are seriously ill or injured, simply call Global Rescue at 617-459-4200, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Collect calls are accepted. Just give your first and last name. Students will receive a Global Rescue membership card approximately one month prior to departure.

Above are the benefits that all students automatically receive. ASA will also give parents the option of upgrading their son/daughter's Global Rescue membership to include emergency medical evacuation to the student's U.S. hospital of choice for an additional fee.

When to use ACE American's benefits / Global Rescue?

For regular medical care (doctor visits and hospital bills), students should file a claim with ACE American in order to be reimbursed. If you become extremely ill or seriously injured and need to be hospitalized, call Global Rescue and they will refer you to the most appropriate facility or if medically necessary, transport you to the nearest "Center of Excellence" hospital (or if you choose to upgrade your coverage, Global Rescue will transport you to your U.S. hospital of choice).

Money and Banking

What is the currency and the exchange rate to the U.S. dollar?

Please go to <http://www.XE.com> to find the most current exchange rate of your host country's currency.

How will I get cash while I'm abroad?

1. **ALL STUDENTS should bring an ATM card and a credit card (for emergencies).** We also recommend bringing some traveler's checks (about \$200-300), but save them to use in an emergency. If your ATM card is lost or stolen, it may take a couple weeks to get a replacement card and you can use the travelers checks to get cash while you're waiting for your new card.
2. **The best and easiest way for you to get cash on a regular basis while you're abroad will be to use your ATM card.** Withdrawing cash with your ATM card gives you a better exchange rate than exchanging travelers checks or U.S. cash. Purchases made with your credit card or ATM/debit card will get you the best exchange rate of the day.

The ATM withdrawal fee is usually higher abroad and depends on your bank, so check with your bank before you go. Also, **you must notify your bank that you'll be using your card abroad**; sometimes banks have to remove a hold on the card to make this possible. And, sometimes banks simply cancel your card if they see purchases or withdrawals from outside the U.S. because they've assumed your card has been stolen.

Tips on using your ATM card abroad...

Make sure your ATM card has a 4-digit PIN number. Foreign ATM machines usually do not accept 5-digit PIN numbers. Your bank can issue you a 4-digit PIN, but be sure to request this at least 4-6 weeks before departure. If your ATM card says **Cirrus, Plus, MasterCard or Visa**, it should work at foreign ATM machines that display these logos.

Check with your bank AND credit card company to see if they charge a foreign transaction fee. This is also called a currency conversion fee and is usually 1-3% of your purchase. Ask your bank if you can avoid this fee by making purchases using the debit function.

To locate ATM machines worldwide (even if you don't have a MasterCard or Visa):

1. Worldwide MasterCard ATM Locator: <http://www.mastercard.com/atmlocator/index.jsp>
2. Worldwide Visa ATM Locator: <http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp>

Tips on using your credit card abroad...

Credit cards are widely used abroad; Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted. American Express is also accepted but not as frequently as Visa or MC. **DISCOVER CARDS ARE USUALLY NOT ACCEPTED ABROAD. Check with your credit card company to see if they charge a foreign transaction fee (see above).**

Tips on traveler's checks...

Don't rely on traveler's checks as your only source of cash because exchanging them can be inconvenient, and you will get a better exchange rate by withdrawing cash using your ATM card. You are usually charged a commission for exchanging traveler's checks.

However, traveler's checks may be useful in case of emergency, i.e. your credit or debit card is lost or stolen, because it can take several weeks for you to get a replacement card. Traveler's checks can always be used as American dollars upon returning home. Keep your travelers checks a safe place at your residence, with the receipts and photocopies of checks in a different place than the actual checks.

◆ **Parents: Don't send your son/daughter personal checks or U.S. cash while they are abroad** because it could cost more to get a check cashed than the value of the check itself. Giving an American Express pre-paid gift card, making a pre-payment on a credit card, or transferring money into their bank account would be better ways to send money.

How much money should I bring?

Recommended amount PER WEEK OF YOUR STAY:

Barcelona, Salamanca, Sevilla, Madrid Summer, and London students: \$200-250 per week

France, Ireland, Italy, Oxford, and Madrid semester students: \$250 per week

Viña del Mar students: \$150 per week

Buenos Aires students: \$150 per week for students who opt for a homestay; \$200 per week for students who opt for a shared student apartment

Please note that these are general guidelines based on what past students have reported spending. Some students spend less and others more. The above figures do not allow for traveling every weekend, eating out a lot, or shopping every day. These figures may seem high to you, but keep in mind they include spending money for necessities such as local transportation, laundry, and meals (if meals are not included with your program), as well as leisure activities. Finally, those figures also take into account the exchange rate.

What expenses should I budget for that aren't included with the ASA program price?

Go to www.academicstudies.com/costs.html and click on the price of your program to see a list of what is and is not included.

Travel Arrangements / Airport Pick-up

When should I depart?

You should depart the United States on the first day of the program. This means that you'll arrive abroad on the second day of the program: this is called the official arrival date. *Example program dates:* August 27 – December 19. In this *example*, you should depart the U.S. on August 27 and arrive abroad on August 28. August 28 would be the official arrival date. **Please check your acceptance letter for your specific program dates!** The official dates for all of our programs can also be found on our website at www.academicstudies.com/costs.html.

When should I return home?

Students are free to leave on the last day of the program, which using the above example is Dec. 19. We schedule the last day of every program to be a travel day. All students will have final exams up until the second to last day, so you may not leave the program until the very last day. Of course, if you plan to travel after the program ends, you should make your flight arrangements accordingly.

◆ **Students are NOT allowed to move into their program housing before the official arrival date, nor may students stay after the official last day of the program.** If you want to arrive early or stay late, you must make your own lodging arrangements for any extra days.

How should I go about making travel arrangements?

*You must book your flight and email your flight itinerary to ASA **6 weeks before departure.*** ASA has access to discounted student airfare. You can request an airfare quote from our staff at <http://www.academicstudies.com/Airfare.html>. You are under no obligation to book your airfare through ASA.

◆ **You will need to book a round trip ticket.** If you're applying for a student visa, you will need to show proof of a round trip ticket in order to get your visa. Even if you're not entering your host country with a student visa, you should still book a round trip ticket. When you pass through Immigration upon entering your host country, the Immigration officer may ask to see your return ticket (to make sure you plan to leave the country).

◆ **ASA provides an AIRPORT PICK-UP for students who arrive at the correct airport on the official arrival date, by the designated time.**

◆ **PLEASE FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES TO ENSURE YOU ARE PICKED UP AT THE AIRPORT. THE ARRIVAL TIMES LISTED BELOW REFER TO YOUR FLIGHT'S SCHEDULED ARRIVAL TIME. We realize it will take you additional time to clear Immigration and retrieve your luggage before you reach the arrivals lobby.**

Aix-en-Provence students must arrive at Marseille airport (MRS) by 5pm on the official arrival date.

Avignon students must fly into Paris Charles DeGaulle (CDG) and then take the TGV train directly from CDG to the Avignon TGV station, arriving at the Avignon TGV station between 10am and 6pm on the official arrival date. Your recommended arrival time at CDG is by 10am; please allow 2-3 hours between your flight's arrival time and your train's departure time.

Barcelona students must arrive at Barcelona airport (BCN) by 2pm on the official arrival date.

Buenos Aires students must arrive at Buenos Aires airport (EZE) by 2pm on the official arrival date.

Dublin students must arrive at Dublin airport (DUB) by 12pm (noon) on the official arrival date.
Florence students must arrive at Florence airport (FLR) by 2pm on the official arrival date.
London students must arrive at London Heathrow airport (LHR) by 7:30am on the official arrival date.
Oxford students must arrive at London Heathrow airport (LHR) by 7:30am on the official arrival date.
Paris students must arrive at Paris Charles DeGaulle airport (CDG) by 2pm on the official arrival date.
Rome students must arrive at Rome airport (FCO) by 2pm on the official arrival date. University housing check-in closes at 7pm on arrival day. If your flight is delayed, you may miss housing check-in, so the earlier your arrival time, the better.
Salamanca and Madrid students must arrive at Madrid airport (MAD) by 2pm on the official arrival date.
Sevilla students must arrive at Sevilla airport (SVQ) by 8pm on the official arrival date.
Viña del Mar students must arrive at Santiago airport (SCL) by 10am on the official arrival date

Students who do not arrive in time for our airport pick-up are responsible for their own transportation. If this is the case, we can provide detailed instructions on where to go when you arrive. Students not joining the ASA airport pick-up are also responsible for contacting our staff to arrange a time and place to meet up with the rest of the group.

What if I have a missed connection or flight delay? Will you still pick me up?

If your flight has been delayed, we will make every effort to wait for you until you arrive. However, it is the YOUR responsibility to notify ASA immediately if you will not be arriving as scheduled by calling the emergency phone number for your program location. This phone number will be found in your pre-departure guide, which you'll receive approximately one month prior to departure.

What to Pack

About a month before the program begins, students will receive a detailed pre-departure guide. It contains extensive information about what to pack, what NOT to pack, and loads of packing tips and suggestions.

♦ **The most important thing for students to bring with them is an open mind and flexible attitude!** One thing we tell students to leave at home is impatience and the expectation that services and amenities will be as they are in the USA! Students should expect things to not always go as planned and consider it a blessing when they do!

♦ **Luggage delays do happen, so be sure to pack at least one change of clothes, essential toiletries and prescription medication in your carry-on!**

Check out www.magellans.com for virtually any travel necessity you can think of, including luggage, travel alarm clocks, voltage adaptors, money belts, luggage locks, luggage tags and lots of other useful travel gear.

Orientation

In addition to our pre-departure orientation guide, students will also have a detailed on-site orientation shortly after arrival.

Safety

Thankfully, incidence of violent crime against our students is rare. The most common type of crime that students encounter is **pick-pocketing** and it's rarely violent. The most common scenario is for someone to grab your purse/backpack after you've set it down, or to take your wallet, passport, iPod, etc. out of your clothes pocket or bag when you're not looking. Thieves sometimes use creative techniques to distract their victims, like spilling food/drink on your clothing, asking for directions, or otherwise diverting your attention while their accomplice robs you.

Most importantly, students must USE COMMON SENSE!!! Be aware of where you and your belongings are and what is going on around you at all times. Always remember that you are in a CITY. It is easy to feel that you are immune to the dangers of the city, but when you let your guard down too far, you can become a target. **Act as you would in any city in the States: with caution.**

Is it safe to drink the water?

Yes. But you will find that in many other countries, it is more common for people to drink bottled mineral or still water rather than tap water.

SAFETY TIPS: Do's and Don'ts

▶ **Drug use of any kind and inappropriate alcohol use are strictly prohibited under the ASA Code of Conduct. Violation of the Code of Conduct may result in expulsion from ASA housing and/or from the ASA program, with no refund or academic credits. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to ITS laws!**

- ▶ **Do** carry your driver's license and a copy of your passport and VISA with you *at all times*.
- ▶ **Do** keep photocopies of your passport in a safe place! If your passport is lost/stolen, it will be much more difficult to get a replacement passport without the photocopy!
- ▶ **Do** make TWO sets of photocopies of your important documents, such as: passport, VISA, driver's license, credit cards & ATM cards (front and back!), travelers checks, etc. Bring one set with you and leave one at home with your parents.
- ▶ **Do** use ATM machines during daylight hours when plenty of people are around. ATM machines attract thieves and pick pockets who watch for tourists. Use an ATM inside a bank, if possible, and bring a friend to be your lookout. Internet café—it's easy for someone to take it without you even noticing.
- ▶ **Do** put your money safely away and zip up your purse/backpack BEFORE leaving a cash register or ATM.
- ▶ **Women:** **Do** carry a purse that can be worn across the body. **Men:** **Do** carry your wallet in your front pants pocket or use a money belt. Coat pockets, handbags/backpacks with open pockets, and back pockets of jeans/pants are particularly susceptible to theft.
- ▶ **Do** inform your roommates, parents and on-site staff of any trips you're going on, where you'll be, when you'll be back, and how to reach you!
- ▶ **Do** carry your money, credit cards, passport, etc. in a security belt or a neck pouch while you're traveling.
- ▶ **Do** make sure that all external doors and windows are closed and locked when staying in a hotel.
- ▶ **Do** leave your valuables locked inside your suitcase when you leave your hotel room (this includes your wallet, travelers checks, iPod, camera, passport). Or, if your hotel room has a safe, USE IT.
- ▶ **Do** ask your hotel or someone you know to recommend a cab company and keep the driver's card for future use.
- ▶ **Do** be extra careful with your belongings if you're in a large crowd, on the subway/bus, at a tourist attraction, or if surrounded by groups of "gypsy" children.
- ▶ **Do** be cautious when approached by any stranger – even if they seem harmless.
- ▶ **Do** take a taxi home after 10 pm. Spending that relatively small amount of extra money is worth it to be safe!
- ▶ **Do** report the loss or theft of your passport immediately by contacting the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy.
- ▶ **Do DRINK IN MODERATION!** Alcohol, plus the feeling of invincibility that many students feel while they're abroad can result in poor judgment.
- ▶ **Do** avoid alcohol if you take any prescription medication, as alcohol can interact with certain medications.
- ▶ **Do** leave your college fraternity or sorority shirts at home, as well as clothing with the American flag or sports teams on it, and baseball caps—they will only highlight the fact that you are American, which may draw unwanted attention.
- ▶ **DO KNOW THE EMERGENCY NUMBER FOR YOUR HOST COUNTRY.**

- ▶ **Don't** carry your passport with you everywhere unless you are traveling.
- ▶ **Don't** leave your purse or backpack open, as this makes it supremely easy for someone to reach inside and take your wallet, cell phone, iPod, passport, etc.
- ▶ **Don't** leave your purse or backpack hanging on the back of your chair or sitting on the floor at a bar, restaurant or Internet café – this makes it easy for someone to walk by and take it without you noticing.
- ▶ **Don't** answer the door in a hotel room without verifying who it is.
- ▶ **Don't** consult your map or travel book on the street if you are lost – duck into a restaurant or business.
- ▶ **Don't** invite new "friends" you have made to your hotel room, dorm room, apartment, etc!
- ▶ **Don't** carry large amounts of cash or draw unwanted attention by wearing expensive jewelry.
- ▶ **Women:** **Don't** go out alone after dark and **don't** walk home alone at night. Females should travel in groups of three or four, or with a male escort.
- ▶ **Don't** go out in large groups (6+), especially if you're speaking English together, as this will draw unwanted attention.
- ▶ **Don't** let a stranger walk you home or accept rides from newly made "friends!"
- ▶ **Don't** go to unfamiliar places or neighborhoods alone, especially at night.
- ▶ **Don't** ride the subway alone after dark. If you will be taking the subway after dark, try to travel in groups of 3-4 people and avoid eye contact with strangers.
- ▶ **Don't** make yourself a target—try to dress like the locals.
- ▶ Students sometimes encounter anti-American sentiments outside of the U.S. The best way to react to this or any other aggressive behavior is to **NOT** act like the "ugly American" that some people expect. **Don't** be loud or obnoxious. **Don't** travel in large groups and attract attention by speaking loudly.
- ▶ **DON'T ATTEND DEMONSTRATIONS, STRIKES, OR OTHER POLITICAL OR CONTROVERSIAL GATHERINGS.**

► **These precautions will help you prevent problems before they happen. There's no need to be paranoid – just be aware of your surroundings and USE COMMON SENSE!**

Homesickness and Culture Shock

Tips for Adjusting to Life abroad:

◆ **Keep an open mind** – In all respects, things in other countries will rarely happen the way you expect them to. For practical matters (standing in line, filling out forms, registering or waiting for various things), many things take longer or require extra steps that would be considered superfluous in the U.S. You must be flexible and patient in order to get the most out of your study abroad experience!

◆ **Be respectful of the local culture** – Sometimes Americans are labeled as inflexible, ignorant of other cultures and unwilling to adapt to the host country's environment. Although this reputation is not always justified, it is important to try to follow the social cues around you. For example, if you are in a public place that is relatively quiet, avoid speaking loudly. If you go into a local grocery store and notice that customers do not handle the produce themselves but instead make a request to the shop assistant, do the same. You will find that most people are very gracious when they see that you are behaving in a way that respects their social values and customs and will often be willing to help you.

Do students get homesick?

Virtually all students experience homesickness/culture shock to varying degrees, as this is a completely normal reaction to going abroad. Some students become more homesick than others, since the adjustment period to a new culture and new surroundings varies by the individual. Some students report feeling homesick only for a few days, and others longer. The good news is that virtually all students eventually adjust and begin to feel comfortable with their new surroundings—it just takes some time and patience!

The difficulties and challenges that lead to culture shock are very real. The climate change, the unfamiliar food, different ways of getting things done, and different concepts of time can all result in a feeling of isolation. Eventually, the student will adapt to the environment and change their attitude, which of course, helps them enjoy and get the most out of their experience.

What can be most frightening about a study or travel abroad experience is that the student's self-esteem and security may be threatened. But, with time, most students do adjust and see the experience as the great opportunity that it is. It is important to realize that the feelings they are experiencing are normal, and will eventually subside. In doing so, you will be better able to adjust and will come away from the experience with a greater understanding of your host culture and, most importantly, of yourself.

◆ **After first arriving overseas, students often feel physically sick, due to the climate change, time change, etc. This normally lasts only a few days. Rest assured that you will recuperate, and don't hesitate to seek support from the on-site staff!**

Symptoms of Culture Shock:

- Sadness, loneliness, melancholy, homesickness
- Aches, pains, allergies or other physical illness
- Insomnia, desire to sleep too much or too little
- Changes in temperament, depression, feeling vulnerable, feeling powerless
- Anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others
- Identifying with your home culture or idealizing your home country
- Trying too hard to absorb everything in the new culture or country
- Unable to solve simple problems
- Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity
- Developing stereotypes about the new culture
- Developing obsessions such as over-cleanliness
- Longing for family
- Feelings of being lost, overlooked, exploited or abused

Stages of Culture Shock:

1. Excitement

- Feel very positive about the culture
- Are overwhelmed with impressions, possibly feelings of euphoria

- Find the new culture exotic and are fascinated
- Are passive, meaning they have little experience of the culture

2. **Withdrawal**

- Find the behavior of the local people unusual and unpredictable
- Small problems or annoyances seem insurmountable
- Begin to dislike the culture and react negatively to the behavior
- Feelings of anxiety
- Start to withdraw
- Begin to criticize, mock or show animosity to the local people
- Frustrations with the country may be based on stereotypes

3. **Adjustment**

- Feelings of isolation lessen
- Understand and accept the behavior of the people
- Realization that the situation may be difficult, but it's not hopeless
- Regain your sense of humor

4. **Enthusiasm**

- Enjoy being in the culture
- Functions well in the culture
- Prefer certain cultural traits of the new culture rather than their own
- Adopt certain behaviors from the new culture
- Feel you're an authority on the host country; share your knowledge of country with others in a knowing fashion

5. **Re-entry to Home Country**

- Frustration with home country, reverse homesickness (*See "Reverse Culture Shock" section for more information*)

How to Cope with Culture Shock

- First and foremost, don't hesitate to seek support from your on-site staff!
- Establish simple goals and evaluate your progress
- Develop a hobby
- Don't forget the good things you already have!
- Remember, there are always resources that you can use
- Learn to be constructive. If you encounter an unfavorable environment, don't put yourself in that position again. Be easy on yourself.
- Include a regular form of physical activity in your routine to help combat depression. Exercise, run, walk, swim, take an aerobics class, etc.
- Relaxation and meditation are proven to be very positive for dealing with stress
- Maintain contact with the new culture. Volunteer in community activities. This will help you feel less stressed and useful at the same time.
- Take advantage of services that your university, church or community offer
- Allow yourself to feel sad about the things that you have left behind: your family, your friends, etc.
- Find ways to live with the things that don't satisfy you 100%.
- Maintain confidence in yourself. Follow your ambitions and continue your plans for the future.

Reverse Culture Shock

Students may have a hard time adjusting when they return home...

Regardless of the length of time you were abroad, you will undoubtedly experience some differences in self, family and friends, and surroundings. Life at home has moved on, and you have moved on as well, but in a different way. You may have had expectations about returning home that were not met. All of these changes can result in feeling a little out of place at home, as if you're a stranger in a familiar land. This is normal and is called "reverse culture shock." It may be counterintuitive to think that a student could experience a difficult "transition" upon returning home. But re-entry, or reverse culture shock, is actually a very common reaction to returning home from studying abroad. The reactions surrounding re-entry vary and may include the following:

- ◇ Reverse homesickness: missing the people, places, attitudes or lifestyle of the host country
- ◇ Changes in goals and priorities
- ◇ Negativity or intolerance towards the U.S., including American behavior, attitudes, customs, and social practices.
- ◇ Depression, restlessness, boredom

- ◇ Uncertainty, confusion
- ◇ Isolation, wanting to be alone

Suggestions for Coping with Reverse Culture Shock:

- ◇ Attend a Study Abroad Re-Entry conference or meeting! Many study abroad offices at U.S. colleges and universities now arrange these in an effort to promote study abroad on their campus.
- ◇ Get involved with international students on your home campus and offer to help with pre-departure orientations and Study Abroad Fairs for future students.
- ◇ Continue writing in your journal that you used abroad, or purchase one. It will help you keep your experience fresh in your mind while keeping things in perspective.
- ◇ Know that you are not alone in your feelings. Most students experience reverse culture shock to some degree. Usually, the students who were the most immersed in the host culture have the most difficulty re-adjusting to life at home.
- ◇ Understand that you may not come home and find everything just as you left it. Likewise, you may have changed, and you need to learn how to assimilate back into U.S. culture.
- ◇ Talk to both former and future study abroad students on your campus. Relaying your experience to others will be valuable to both you and them.
- ◇ Stay in touch with the people you met while studying abroad!