



ARKANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Study Abroad Handbook

This handbook has been created in part with materials adapted from, and with the full written permission of, Towson University and Purdue University, along with the materials of Arkansas State University.

Congratulations!

You have made a decision that will change your life. Your study abroad experience will be one of the highlights of your academic years at Arkansas State University, and we are confident that its influences will stay with you long after you complete your studies.

You have invested days researching a program that best fits your needs. You have spent hours and sleepless nights preparing your application and going to different departments to ensure approval of your study abroad courses, and finally, submitting your application to the Study Abroad office. Take this opportunity to make the experience a worthwhile investment. Doing so would mean being prepared and conscientious with your pre-departure preparations, taking advantages of the resources that are available to you here at A-State and at your host institution. This would also mean anticipating challenges and developing effective coping mechanisms while traveling and making friends with people from all over the world, and then reaping the rewards of cross-cultural learning.

Undoubtedly, there will be road blocks and ups and downs as you get acclimated to your new environment, but don't give up or lose heart. Remember your goals when you decided to embark on this journey. Remember when you first left everything to come to college: persistence, perseverance and trust in your can-do ability will help you to overcome any situation along the way.

It will take getting out of your comfort zone, being willing to be laughed at, being referred to as the "other," laughing at yourself and learning from each mistake or embarrassing circumstance to fully reap the fruits of your study abroad. You will come back with a story to tell; a story that is unique to you, a story that only you can tell - Your A-State Study Abroad Story.

It is almost impossible to know everything you need to know before you board your flight. With this booklet, we strive to help you prepare for your sojourn abroad. It provides information about securing travel documents, packing efficiently, staying healthy and safe, handling finances, keeping a journal and other important information you need to know before departing. We hope you will find it useful. Do not hesitate to contact the Study Abroad office should you have any questions after the pre-departure orientation.

Safe travels!



   ***/AStateStudyAbroad***



Alexandria Haley

Little Rock, Arkansas

Studying abroad was something I never thought I would get to do. In between staying on track with my major and other activities I just didn't see how I would be able to fit it into my college career.



However, in Spring 2016 during my junior year, I was blessed with the opportunity to study abroad in Huelva, Spain. During my four months abroad, one word comes to mind - adaption. I had to learn to adapt to a completely different culture, which opened my eyes and helped me to see my life in a different perspective. It made me appreciate all of the things I took for granted. It was a fun adventure indeed, but more of a growing season in life.

"I'll forever be grateful for the little town in Spain that shaped me into the person I am today."



Share Your Study Abroad Story with us!

#MyASTATEStudyAbroadStory #YouTooCanStudyAbroad





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In the past two years, nearly 150 Arkansas State students
have chosen to make their mark by traveling across

twenty-six countries!

Anywhere from Peru to France, it's up to you!

A-State Study Abroad students can travel to
any of the 150 available countries.





Pre-Departure Preparation Checklist

Self-Orientation Checklist

Documents to have with you in your **Carry-On Bag**:

- ☐ Passport (*Make several copies. Leave one with Study Abroad office, one with your parents and a couple in your suitcase. Once overseas, make sure you leave a copy in your room.*)
- ☐ Visa (*if applicable*)
- ☐ Official transcript in a sealed envelope (*if applicable*)
- ☐ Letter of invitation (*if applicable*)
- ☐ Insurance card, brochure, claims form
- ☐ Required medications and accompanying documentation
- ☐ Emergency contact names and phone numbers for your host university
- ☐ Emergency contact names and phone numbers for A-State

Things to complete for your **Study Abroad Office Application**:

- ☐ Pre-approval for course work
- ☐ Insurance form
- ☐ Export Control Forms
- ☐ While Abroad-(Foreign residence information, host family contact information)

Other arrangements (**You are responsible for these on your own**):

- ☐ Complete medical and dental check-up
- ☐ Collect any special medications, prescription or other
- ☐ Travel arrangements (*air, rail, etc.*)
- ☐ Do you know how to get to your destination? Where will your hosts meet you?
- ☐ Are your housing arrangements at your host university confirmed?
- ☐ Do you know your luggage limitations? (*If you can't carry it, you don't need it!*)
- ☐ How will you deal with financial matters: ATM? Credit card? Traveler's checks?
- ☐ Have you arranged to have the mail from your P.O. Box forwarded?
- ☐ Power of Attorney for parents/whoever is looking after your affairs in your absence.
- ☐ Where will you live when you return to the United States?
- ☐ Absentee ballot arrangements (*if applicable*)
- ☐ Have you arranged with your academic advisor as to how you will get pre-registration advising for the semester following your return? You might need to pre-register via the internet from your study abroad location, or designate someone to do this for you. It is **NOT** the responsibility of the Study Abroad office to register you or arrange your advising.

Practical Basic Checklist

Simply put, make sure you have all of your bases covered.

- ☐ Meet with a study abroad advisor and your financial aid counselor to finalize your financial aid/scholarship
- ☐ Pay your study abroad program fees
- ☐ Academic accommodation
- ☐ Get your Study Abroad courses pre-approved and turn in your course approval form
- ☐ Get the A-State Study Abroad insurance
- ☐ Get required or strongly recommended vaccinations for your destination(s)
- ☐ Obtain your passport and visa
- ☐ Purchase your airline ticket
- ☐ Money matters
- ☐ Making a budget
- ☐ Research your new home
- ☐ Communication abroad
- ☐ Other important matters



Financial Aid & Scholarships

Financial Aid

For the most part, you are able to use your financial aid or scholarship to help cover the cost of your study abroad expenses.

If you wish to apply for aid for study abroad, you must fill out a Study Abroad Budget Worksheet from the Study Abroad office. The Study Abroad Budget Worksheet is a compilation of all expected expenses related to your studies overseas. It provides an estimated cost of attendance that the Office of Financial Aid will use to determine your study abroad award. You must meet with a Financial Aid officer to discuss financial aid eligibility.

Scholarships

The Study Abroad office has study abroad travel voucher funds available for qualified students participating in study abroad programs. You should submit an application to the Study Abroad office to be considered for the travel voucher. You may also be eligible to apply for additional scholarship funds from outside sources. Information on scholarship resources is available on the Study Abroad office funding website. (<https://www.AState.Edu/a/Study-Abroad/Study-Abroad-Funding/>)

Study Abroad Program Fees & Payment

All students participating in an A-State Study Abroad program will be charged a \$50 non-refundable study abroad administrative fee. The fee allows the office to support advising, program development and enhancement, marketing and publicity. This is part of your application and will be charged to your student account at the time of application.

Your program tuition and fees depend on the program type. You will be enrolled in and charged the A-State study abroad medical insurance unless it is included in your program, such as ISEP.

A-State Bilateral Exchange Program

Your student account will be charged your normal A-State tuition and fees according to the number of credit hours you will be taking abroad. You are responsible for the cost of housing and meals when you arrive at your host university.

A-State Faculty-Led Programs

Faculty-led program cost varies. Program deposit and final payments are due prior to departure as scheduled on the program application. For the most part, faculty-led program costs do not include A-State tuition and fees. A-State tuition and fees are charged separately to your student account after you enroll in the course linked to the program.

ISEP Exchange Program

You will pay your normal A-State tuition and fees and the cost of room and meals at A-State. The amount is based on a semester residency in the Quad and a seven-day meal plan plus \$200 per semester. ISEP-exchange students will pay a \$100 ISEP-exchange application fee and \$325 ISEP-exchange placement fees.

ISEP Direct Program

Contrary to ISEP-exchange, ISEP-direct has a different fee structure. You are responsible for the program cost as set by ISEP. Some programs include tuition and fees, housing and meals, whereas others may include tuition and housing, or tuition only. ISEP will invoice A-State your program costs owed to ISEP as included in the program benefits. You will be responsible for any other fees (housing and or meals) if they are not included in the program benefits. The \$100 application fee is included in the ISEP-direct program fee.

The Study Abroad office will receive an invoice from ISEP, pay your fees directly to ISEP, and then charge your student account for regular payment. There is a mandatory ISEP study abroad health insurance plan for all ISEP participants. See the ISEP website for more information. Students pay directly to ISEP. (<https://www.isepstudyabroad.org/guides-and-tips/health-safety/isep-student-health-insurance>)

A-State Affiliate Program and other Programs

You will pay all program costs to the program provider. Normally, payment in full is required before the program starts. You are able to work with the provider and Financial Aid office to establish a payment plan if available.

Academic Accommodations

You are asked to self-disclose any disability (chronic medical or psychological condition, learning disability, ADHD, an autism spectrum disorder, or a mobility, vision or hearing disability, etc.) to the Study Abroad office as early as possible after admission to your program. This information is collected after you have been admitted and reviewed by a Study Abroad advisor once submitted. Our office will share this information with the program leader and host coordinator only if necessary as it becomes available.

Appropriate arrangements will be made to the extent possible including, but not limited to, housing, transportation, field trips, excursions, cultural activities, and classroom or test accommodations. If a student does not disclose any disability, accommodations cannot be provided on the basis of a disability.

Arrangements for most academic accommodations (note-taking services, recording devices, smart pens, extended testing time, etc.) are typically made by the program leader just as if you were taking a course on campus. Accommodations pertaining to non-academic components of the program (housing, transportation, additional on-site support) will be assessed and organized by the Study Abroad office in consultation with Disability Services, the student, the program leader, and the host coordinator (if applicable).



Don't forget! Information related to a student's disability is confidential and protected under FERPA. We want to provide you with the opportunity to meet with a Study Abroad advisor, and/or your faculty leader privately to discuss disability-related matters.



Academic Credits

*It Is Called **Study** Abroad After All*

Like everything else you encounter while abroad, your academic experience will be significantly different than it is at A-State. Teaching styles, classroom dynamics, student-faculty interaction, assessment and grading vary widely across the globe, so it would be impossible to differentiate them all here. However, you might expect to find one or more of the following differences:

- 1. Teaching style and classroom dynamics (pedagogy):** A very common pedagogy in many college and university classes is the lecture-discussion format. The professor begins class with an overview, a summary, or commentary on the day's topics and then opens the floor for discussion, in which students and faculty ask and answer questions, interrogate the idea or theory at hand, or debate the merits of the approach to the topic. In many countries, however, class discussion flows one way: from the professor to the student. The class hour is not conceived as an exchange of ideas but a place for the presentation of one perspective on a subject (often the perspective of the professor).
- 2. Faculty-student interaction:** As the above paragraph suggests, the degree of interaction you have with your professors abroad may be very different than what you are accustomed to here. Many students feel that professors abroad are more "distant" than they are in the United States. Another difference is that disagreement with the professor may be taken as a sign of disrespect. Professors may or may not be willing to providing feedback on a paper draft or be willing to "explain" your exam grade.
- 3. Course organization:** In most classes in the United States, the first thing you receive is a syllabus, which provides a reading and exam/paper schedule, a list of texts, and a breakdown of how the final grade will be determined, among other things. You may never receive such a document in your classes abroad, or not one that includes all the same information. You may receive a reading list with the expectation that you read widely from this list or drill down on a topic of particular interest to you, or even read texts related to the subject but not on the list. You may or may not have a reading assignment for class day and if you do, the lecture may not be on the text you were assigned but on another text related to the subject.
- 4. Assessment:** In most United States classes your performance is evaluated by a series of regular and cumulative exams and papers: a midterm and a final, a short and a long paper, or a series of short exams and papers. And each of these is followed by feedback from the professor in the form of interim grades and comments. A common assessment practice abroad is a single exam or paper at the end of the course.

If any or all of the above strike you as wacky or unfair, you may already be feeling a slight pang of culture shock. And the slight shock you're feeling results from the fact that your closely held norm about the creation and transmission of knowledge has been violated, when in fact it is culturally determined.

Less philosophically and more practically, what the above paragraphs suggest is that the responsibility for learning is placed more squarely on students' shoulders in classrooms abroad. And sometimes, this can have negative results. Without daily reading assignments and with only one written assignment at the end of the term, some students have done little during the semester and then find themselves overwhelmed at the end. The local expectation was that the work would be done during the term. Again, adaptation is the key to having a good experience in the classroom abroad.

Ensuring Your Academic Credit

Are you concerned with receiving the credit for your studies abroad?

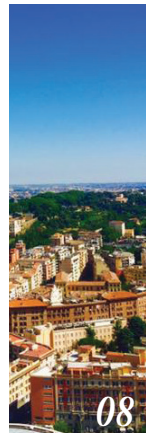
As part of your application for study abroad at A-State you are required to obtain pre-approvals for the courses you plan to take abroad. The Study Abroad office will enroll you in a Study Abroad place-hold course according to your situation. This will keep your A-State student status active while you are abroad. You are expected to transfer the number of credit hours you were enrolled in from your program overseas. Failure to do may result in loss of financial aid or scholarships. Most faculty-led programs will not receive transfer of credits, but normal A-State course credit. Regular A-State credits are based on official grades and are not pass/fail.

- Study Abroad advisors will evaluate transcripts and course approval forms and send them to the Registrar's office to input approved transfer credits into the university system upon transcript receipt.
- Grades for courses taken abroad will be entered as letter grades.
- Transfer credit WILL impact your GPA.
- You will need to obtain the equivalent grade of C or above to receive transfer credit.

Should your classes change after you arrive, immediately contact your academic advisor and discuss your change of plan and secure approval of any new courses from him/her and the appropriate A-State department chair. To be absolutely safe, you should follow the steps below:

A. Keep EVERYTHING related to your course work: course descriptions, syllabi, class notes, texts, papers, tests, etc. It's also a good idea to keep a record of how much time you spent in class and how much time was required outside class. Organization on your part will pay off if there is ever any question about credit.

B. Find out from your on-site coordinator at the beginning of your program if there are special processes you must follow to assure that a transcript will be issued for you. You should find out what is required, so you can rest assured a transcript will be issued. You should also double-check with your on-site coordinator just before departure to make sure everything is in order for transcript issuance. It is your responsibility to ensure that your official transcript is mailed to the Study Abroad office at Arkansas State University.





Health Insurance & Health Issues

Your health and safety abroad is our priority at A-State. To support a healthy and safe experience, Arkansas State University works with CISI to provide a comprehensive health insurance plan and travel assistance to all students as well as faculty participating on A-State administered study abroad programs. This is not optional – every participant in an Arkansas State University-administered study abroad program is required to enroll in the A-State study abroad health insurance. The only exemptions to this requirement are students participating in a faculty-led program offered through one of the A-State partner third party providers.

CISI Emergency Assistance: AXA Travel Assistance Services Center

Assist America is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Contact information Inside the U.S: 1 (800) 872-1414 (Toll Free)

Outside the U.S: 1 (609) 986-1234 (Collect Calls Accepted)

Email: medservices@assistamerica.com

Email: medassist-usa@axa-assistance.us

A-State study abroad health insurance includes medical expenses and hospitalization as well as the following:

- Referral to medical providers (English-speaking providers are available upon demand), referral to the nearest, most appropriate medical facility and/or provider; arranging and coordinating emergency medical evacuations, emergency reunions and repatriation of remains; emergency travel arrangements for disrupted travel as the consequence of a medical emergency; referral to legal assistance; assistance in locating lost or stolen items including lost ticket application processing.

The insurance costs \$44 per month per student and is subject to change. Program leaders/assistants, students, and parents are strongly advised to become familiar with the Arkansas State University study abroad benefits and features.

Family members/companions may not participate in a study abroad program and may not have any official duties (chaperone, driver, assistant, etc.). Family members/companions are not protected by Arkansas State University liability insurance for any actions taken abroad. Family members/companions independently traveling abroad, are urged to discuss applicable liability protection with an insurance agent to ensure that adequate coverage is in place for his/her overseas activities.

Certain behaviors and activities cannot be condoned or implicitly supported by Arkansas State University because they carry potential unacceptable risk both to the individual and to the university. You need to be alerted to the dangers of such activities (see below) for the duration of your stay overseas because neither the university, your host institution, nor your program leader can control or is liable for your actions. Such activities include, but are not limited to:

- Bungee jumping
- Participating in political demonstrations
- Scuba diving
- Renting and operating motor vehicles of any type
- Solitary travel
- Other "extreme sports"

Study abroad is an *academic* experience. The academic responsibilities take priority over your personal interests. As an A-State student, you represent the university and The United States of America overseas; you are an A-State ambassador. In addition, violations of the A-State Student Code of Conduct while abroad may also have ramifications when you return to campus.

Your *behavior* reflects on A-State and/or your program leader to their local colleagues. The viability of A-State's relationship with a partner or of a program rests in your hands, as offensive or indifferent behavior resulting in negative evaluations by colleagues abroad could affect our partnership or lead to the discontinuation of a program in the future.

Therefore, as a “Good Ambassador:”

- Be polite and listen to others
- Respect others, host coordinators, program leaders, and other local people affiliated with the program
- Honor diversity and differences
- Fight fair and attack the problem, not people
- Look for compromises

Local culture receptiveness to:

- public displays of affection
- gays and lesbians
- Public use of alcohol and substances

In addition to posing a health and safety risk, alcohol abuse is the primary source of behavioral problems and personality conflicts between group members.

Alcohol and drug misuse can lead to behaviors such as the following:

- Tardiness or poor attendance at classes and activities
- Negative student interactions as a result of alcohol-induced bad behavior
- Animosity/break down of community among members due to such behavior
- Poor reflection of group to local community/faculty/A-State/contacts/program leader
- Undue stress to the A-State community/program leader or local coordinator that requires excessive attention and time

Health Issues

Common concerns about health conditions in your intended destination include the purity of drinking water, recommended vaccinations, and food and bug-borne illnesses. Review the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's travel website for information about health conditions in, and recommended vaccinations/immunizations for, your destination: www.cdc.gov/travel. Though reading the CDC's information about your country can sometimes be alarming, bear in mind that the CDC very much errs on the side of caution and some of those cautions apply only to specific areas of the country. If you have not done so, it is not too late to schedule a checkup with your family or personal doctor to inquire about updating vaccinations such as tetanus and receiving recommended vaccinations.

Even though you are feeling just fine, getting a checkup before you leave is important for various reasons.

- Armed with the information you learned from the CDC site, you will want to discuss with your doctor the CDC recommendations and any other health issues specific to your destination.
- A checkup is an opportunity to discover a medical issue that has the possibility of arising only after you leave the United States.
- If you currently have a prescription for any reason (from diabetes to birth control), there are a range of things to put in place before you leave.

A special note on prescriptions:

Should you currently be under the care of a physician or require regular medication or injections such as insulin or allergy shots, be sure to check with your personal physician for any advice or recommendations concerning your welfare while abroad. It is a good idea to notify the on-site coordinator of any special needs you may have.



Packing for Your Time Abroad

Keep in mind that common medical supplies and over-the-counter medications may not be easily accessible, or may be written in a foreign language. If you need medications regularly, take an adequate supply with you, if possible, for your entire time abroad. Do not buy medications “over the counter” while you are overseas unless you are familiar with the product: over-the-counter drugs abroad are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Ask your physician for a clearly written prescription that identifies the generic, rather than the brand, name of the medicine (brand names for the same drug can and frequently do vary abroad). If you are not able to take an adequate supply of your medications to last the entire time abroad, make arrangements in advance with your physician, your family, or your on-site coordinator to obtain an uninterrupted supply of your medication. For a full list of recommended over-the-counter medicine, please visit the CDC’s website at:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/pack-smart.aspx>



Remember, if you have diabetes, are allergic to penicillin, or have any physical condition that may require emergency care, carry some type of identification - a tag, bracelet, or card - on your person at all times indicating the specific nature of the problem, and spelling out clearly what must, or must not be done should you be unable to communicate this information yourself (e.g. in case of unconsciousness).

Prescription medicines should be accompanied by a letter from your physician. This letter should include a description of the problem, the dosage of prescribed medications to assist medical authorities during an emergency, and the generic name(s) of medicine listed. If you are required to take a medicine containing habit-forming or narcotic drugs you should carry a doctor’s certificate attesting to that fact. It is also advisable to keep all medicines in their original and labeled containers. To avoid potential problems and because laws may vary from country to country, if you need to carry such medicines you should consult the embassies of the countries you will visit before departing the U.S.

Schedule a checkup with your dentist. You may not know that you have a tooth that is getting ready to melt down but your dentist just might see that in your immediate future during a check up. Better to take care of any foreseeable dental work in an environment you’re familiar with.

Schedule a meeting with your psychologist/psychiatrist/mental health counselor. If you are currently in counseling or have been recently, ideally you will have had conversations far in advance of your departure, and possibly even before you applied for the program, about your preparedness to participate in an extended study abroad program. Among other things, those conversations will have included contingency plans to cope with any changes and possibly arrangements for assistance on site. It would be best to reaffirm those plans before departure.

More Health Recommendations

- Bring a copy of your medical records with you to show any allergies to medicine, previous treatments, etc. This is very important when visiting a doctor or in case of an emergency. Know what you are allergic to so you can respond to a medical situation in the country you are visiting.
- Take the number and email address of your U.S. health care provider with you to contact in case of difficult medical situations.
- Have pre-existing medical problems? Carry a letter from the attending physician describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including the generic name of prescribed drugs.
- Medications being carried overseas should be left in original containers and clearly labeled.
- Check with the foreign embassy of the country you are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics.
- Know the generic names for all prescriptions you are taking.

Safety & Security Issues

Safety is a prime concern of all who are involved in study abroad ventures – participants, their families, advisers, host institutions, program leaders, Study Abroad office staff and any other A-State personnel associated with our programs. A-State recognizes the importance of establishing policies and procedures in an effort to protect the safety and well-being of study abroad participants. We acknowledge that no single plan can address all crises and emergency cases abroad. Listed below are a few of the ways A-State strives to keep study abroad as safe as possible, before and during the term abroad.

Arkansas State University offers an international health insurance and a travel assistance plan to all students participating on Arkansas State University Study Abroad programs. Furthermore, the Study Abroad office monitors a variety of sources to ensure that we are aware of any potential or current problems in countries where we have students. These include but are not limited to:

- Information from partner institutions
- The U.S. Department of State
- Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC)
- CNN, USA Today, CNBC
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- United Nations Global Travel Advisory
- CISI Travel Assistance Services Center

The Study Abroad office also conducts a pre-departure orientation with all students prior to departure. Orientation will address topics including health, safety and security issues. The following requirements are enforced:

- All students required to purchase comprehensive study abroad health insurance from CISI or provide proof of study abroad insurance of a similar or higher coverage (applicable to non-bilateral and non ISEP programs)
- All participants are required to attend a pre-departure orientation session that covers safety issues and cultural understanding.
- All program leaders and assistants purchase comprehensive international insurance that includes evacuation and repatriation insurance.
- The Study Abroad office has opened a Study Abroad Emergency Line available 24 hours a day/365 days a year: 1-870-680-2535. The office maintains good communication with all necessary parties in cases of emergency.
- Advise all participants to enroll in the U.S. State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) prior to departure. <https://step.state.gov/>
- The Study Abroad office strongly advises against any travel to or through any location where tensions exist and travel may be dangerous.

Safety while abroad

Under the university's policy, faculty/staff leaders have an obligation to report all study abroad incidents. If a crime should occur, partner institutions, program leaders, or participants must alert the Study Abroad office immediately. Program leaders are required to complete the A-State Study Abroad online incident report form whenever a serious incident takes place.

<http://www.astate.edu/a/student-conduct/incident-report/index.dot>

Emergencies abroad

The Study Abroad office is responsible for coordinating the university's management of emergencies affecting participants in Arkansas State University Study Abroad programs.



Safety & Security Issues

Illness, accidents, thefts, assault, or mugging may happen abroad. You may find yourself caught up in potentially violent political situations or fail to return on time to your programs after a weekend away. While it is impossible to plan for all contingencies, the Study Abroad office needs to follow procedures that will allow for reaction in a responsible and level-headed way when emergencies do arise.

Responding to Emergencies

Emergencies range from the irritating but benign (a lost or stolen passport, for example) to the imminently dangerous (motor vehicle accidents, political coups). Each situation must be assessed in its own context.

However, in all cases:

- Contact your family and respond to texts, emails and calls from the A-State Study Abroad office to assure them of your safety and whereabouts. Stay abreast of the situations by monitoring your embassy's website and listening to global news. Contact your embassy or consulate when you arrive abroad.
- Program leaders must alert the Study Abroad office and also complete an A-State Study Abroad incident report form for each occurrence. Program leaders will maintain daily contact with the Study Abroad office and with host country informants.
- Your program leader's first responsibility is to safeguard the safety and well-being of program participants. They will take steps to ensure this, whether this means obtaining prompt and appropriate medical attention, U.S. Embassy intervention, or police protection.
- A Study Abroad office staff member can be reached through the study abroad emergency hotline at 1-870-680-2535. During an ongoing crisis, program leaders, host institutions and students must keep the Study Abroad office staff informed on a regular basis through telephone, text or e-mail until the crisis has passed.
- During a political crisis or some other emergency during which foreigners in general or U.S. citizens in particular may be at risk, keep a low profile, avoid demonstrations, avoid behavior that could call attention to yourself, avoid places where Americans are known to congregate, and avoid using luggage tags and wearing clothing which identifies you as an American.
- It is highly unlikely that you will need to be evacuated from a site abroad. In many situations, it is much safer to lie low than to draw attention to yourself or the group through an evacuation process. The Study Abroad office will however, bring students and program leaders home if a situation were to deteriorate to the point where the degree of potential risk to participants was deemed unacceptable. If this unlikely event were to happen, the director of the Study Abroad office, in consultation with the insurance company, your program leader, the U.S. Embassy and State Department, and the A-State Study Abroad leadership team, would develop an evacuation plan in as much detail as possible.

If the host country emergency services are not readily available and you feel there is a threat to your personal safety, you should follow these procedures:

1. Call or text the A-State Study Abroad Emergency Line at 1-870-680-2535.
2. Identify yourself as an A-State study abroad student and give the country where you are currently located.
3. State your name.
4. Clearly relay the nature of the emergency.
5. Tell the person how to contact you.
6. Respond to questions and listen carefully to any instructions.
7. KeynectUP

Obtain Your Passport & Visa

If you do not already have a passport, apply for one immediately. You can apply for a passport at a United States Post Office, including the office located on the A-State campus or on Race St. in Jonesboro. Download the DS-11 application form online at www.Travel.State.Gov. The routine processing time is 6-8 weeks. Expedited processing is available for a fee and takes 2-3 weeks.

You will need a passport application form DS-11, proof of U.S citizenship, a color passport photo, a copy of your certified birth certificate (with raised seal), driver's license or other form of identification and the application fee, which is currently \$135 for first-time applications.

You may have your passport photos taken at the university post office. Passport photos must meet certain requirements and photos not meeting those requirements will not be accepted. Information regarding photos and renewal applications may be found in the FAQ section of www.Travel.State.Gov. If you are applying for your first passport, or your first passport over the age of 16, you must apply in person. If you are renewing a passport that was issued after your 16th birthday and you can provide your previous passport, you may apply by mail.

If you already have a passport, check that it has not expired and that it will be valid for at least six months beyond your planned return to the United States. Some countries will not issue you a visa (see next section regarding visas) if your passport has less than six months remaining before expiration.

It may take four to six weeks to receive your passport, so apply early!

Be sure to make several copies of your passport and other important identification cards and give one set to your family or legal guardian, and take the other sets with you abroad.

Visas

Visa policies and requirement vary depending on host countries, duration, and the nature of the visit. Study Abroad advisors are here to assist when you have questions. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have researched visa requirements and procedures for your host country. If you are traveling abroad for more than 90 days, you will most likely need a visa to enter your host country. U.S. passport holders usually do not need a visa if the duration of the program is less than 90 days. For some countries, however, this may not be true. If you plan to travel to a country other than the one you will be studying in, it is your responsibility to check that country's visa requirements. You should expect to pay a visa application fee.

What is a visa?

A visa is a stamp of approval placed inside your passport that gives you permission to enter the country for a specified length of time. There are different types of visas; the most common are study, work and tourist. Be sure that you understand the type of visa you need. Generally you will require a student visa for an exchange or study abroad program. The visa may require you to leave the country after a specified date or forbid you from working for money. Fees and procedures for visas vary from country to country. You will first need a valid passport in order to apply for a visa.



Check the entry requirements with the nearest consulate of your country of destination as soon as you submit the applications with the Study Abroad office. Information regarding foreign consulates and embassies may be found on the U.S. Department of State website at *www.Travel.State.Gov*. You are also advised to contact the nearest consulate of the country you will be visiting to obtain the visa application documents and relevant information.

Because of constant changes in visa requirements, the Study Abroad office is currently unable to provide country-specific visa information. It is your responsibility to research and obtain this information ahead of time.

Important: If you are not a United States citizen, check the entry requirements that are specific to your country of citizenship with the nearest consulate.

Please allow a minimum of 90 days to obtain a student visa from the nearest consulate. You will likely need a letter of admission from the host institution, proof of study abroad insurance and other documents to apply for your student visa. Study Abroad advisors will supply a letter confirming your status as an A-State student, if required for your visa application. All study abroad materials should be complete and submitted before requesting the confirmation letter.

Many of the consulates will inquire if you have paid in full for the program before you are granted a visa. The Study Abroad office will furnish a letter to confirm payment of program costs for exchange students if requested. It is the exchange student's responsibility to request proof of payment of program costs from the Study Abroad office. Many consulates may also require proof of funds, beyond payment of program costs, to support yourself during the period you will be studying abroad. Some may also ask for documentation of round-trip airfare.

Due to increased security issues, do not wait until the last minute to apply for a visa. The process can be very time consuming.

Purchasing Your Airline Ticket

Travel arrangements between the United States and your destination abroad are generally your personal responsibility, although some programs such as faculty-led programs do make the arrangements for the students. It is extremely important that you make your flight reservations in advance. If you start planning early, you will have more time to be on the lookout for special fares and good deals. Seat availability can also be a problem, especially if you are traveling during high season, such as, Europe during the summer. This advice is applicable to planning your travel abroad as well as to planning your flight home.

You have the option of purchasing a round-trip airline ticket or an open-ended round-trip ticket. Your optimal choice depends on the price of the ticket, the number and length of layovers en route, and the length of your stay abroad.

Round-trip tickets are usually the least expensive, but you must specify your return date at the time of purchase. Travel must be completed within one year. Take this into consideration if you are unsure of when your courses or exams will be over, or if you plan on doing any post-program travel. Most airlines will charge you a fee if you change the date of your flight.

Open-ended, round-trip tickets are another popular choice of students studying abroad. Open-ended means that you are not required to specify the date of your return flight at the time of purchase. Because of this convenience, open-ended tickets are usually more expensive than regular round-trip tickets. Like round-trip tickets, open-ended tickets require travel to be completed within one year. Each airline will have its own conditions and restrictions that apply. If you buy an open-ended return ticket, you should book your return flight home as soon as you know your return date.

One tip for making airline reservations: You can always make a reservation, and then cancel it if you find something better. Keep in mind, however, you may be assessed a penalty by the airline company. If you think you might cancel a reservation, ask about it first. A-State has partnered with travel companies Student Universe and Select Travel Services to help facilitate your travel arrangements.

Student Universe

130 Turner Street, Suite 530
Waltham, MA 02453

Tel: 1 (800) 272- 9676
(Toll-free within the U.S and Canada)
www.studentuniverse.com

Select Travel Service

Riverside House, 160 High Street
Huntingdon Cambridgeshire, PE29 3TF England

Tel: +44 1480-455850
Fax: +44 1480-433514
www.selecttravel.com/home.asp

There are several other options including Expedia, Travelocity, Cheap Tickets and Priceline. You may also purchase your ticket directly from the airline itself.

If you prefer not to use a travel agency, you may begin by calling different airline companies yourself. The phone numbers of airline companies may be found by simply Googling the airline name. Ask about flight schedule, policies on open-ended return tickets, prices, baggage allowance and penalty fees for ticket cancellations or changes in return dates. Don't forget to mention you are a student as some airlines offer student discounts.

Student travelers should consider having travel insurance to cover at least the partial loss of money because of trip interruption or cancellation, as well as loss of baggage and personal effects either while traveling or living abroad. Note that many home-owners insurance policies contain a clause about this coverage extending worldwide. Normally, a copy of a police report filed at the time of loss or theft is required by the insurer before any claim will be considered.

Money Matters

You must carefully consider how you will manage your funds while you are abroad and reach out to several different sources to arrive at a workable plan. Your options will depend on where you are studying, what arrangements (if any) your host institution or program provider has put in place, and your current financial and banking situation. No single arrangement applies everywhere. If possible, talk to previous participants about how he or she managed money abroad. If the information is not part of your program provider's pre-departure orientation, be sure to ask.

In most developed countries, managing your money is often most easily accomplished by using an ATM card. Often, the exchange rate is better than other options. Be sure to deposit money into your U.S. account to "top up" your available funds.

Prior to departure, ask the bank that issued your ATM card these questions:

- What is the transaction fee on cash withdrawals abroad? Is this a flat fee or a percentage of the amount withdrawn?
- Is there a daily limit on the amount you can withdraw? In the event that your card is lost or stolen, what is the procedure and the turnaround time for obtaining a new card?

In some cases, and especially if you are spending a year abroad, it may be best to open a bank account at the study abroad site. This is particularly the case if you expect to have routine local payments such as rent, utilities, etc. If you anticipate that the bulk of your larger expenses will be pre-paid or paid by your provider, and that your cash outlays will be limited to personal and travel expenses, an ATM card may be more convenient.



If you anticipate having routine, local expenses, you need to find out whether it is even possible for you to open a local bank account at your study abroad site, and what documentation you will need to open an account. Many banks are not interested in providing accounts to what they consider short-stay visitors. Your program provider/leader or a previous program participant can be an excellent source of information.

In developing countries, ATMs may be less common, especially outside of the larger cities. In these situations, traveler's checks may be your best option. Cashing traveler's checks usually requires payment of a commission and the exchange you receive may be slightly higher than for hard currency or ATM withdrawals, but traveler's checks are safe and can be replaced. Do your research before buying traveler's checks. Learn the location of the nearest in-country office where you would be able to replace your checks if they are lost or stolen.

Cash may be the best option in many kinds of transactions, but is not a good idea for extended travel. The stress of keeping watch over your cash and the trauma of it being lost or stolen would be a major distraction. That said, you should have a small amount of cash (\$100) with you for emergency purposes. It is a good idea to have an equal amount of cash in the local currency for any immediate expenses you encounter on arrival. Often, your bank can obtain foreign currency for you with some advanced notice. Otherwise, you should consider exchanging a small amount of money on arrival at the airport. Don't plan to exchange a large amount of money at the airport, where exchange rates are typically much worse than you can get elsewhere.

No matter which of the above options you decide will work best for you at your study abroad location, you should have at least one other way of obtaining cash in an emergency. For example, if you lose your ATM card and it will take a day or two to replace it, having funds available in the form of traveler's checks will see you through until your replacement card arrives.

Formulating a Budget

Often, a student abroad will find him/herself unexpectedly out of money. Usually, this situation will arise toward the end of the program but sometimes it happens much earlier. Most often, this results from not planning, or following a study abroad budget.

Although you can never know exactly what your expenses will be before you leave, you can get a rough idea by searching the web for the cost of living in your planned countries, and using websites such as Numbeo - www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/. However, what you do know is how much money you will have to spend during your time abroad. To begin formulating a budget, divide your total available funds by the amount of weeks you will be abroad. You will need to adjust this weekly budget once you arrive, and check your weekly spending periodically, but you should be able to avoid the pitfall of speeding through your available funds too quickly.

You should also become familiar with the history of the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar and the currency of the countries you will be visiting. Websites such as www.X-Rates.com are an excellent source of information. Knowing whether the exchange rate has been volatile or relatively stable will allow you to make an educated guess about how far your dollars will take you. It will also help you arrive at a strategy for converting your funds into the local currency, and help you decide whether to change a larger sum on days when the exchange rate is favorable (for volatile currencies) or to change at will (for stable currencies).

Research About Your Host Country

Do not be a student who leaves for their studies abroad without preparing yourself in advance for what lies ahead. We strongly suggest that you research your country thoroughly before you leave. Knowing the history of a country and its people will most likely provide you with some insight to every question you ask. We can't cover every country in our orientation, so below you will find some ways to find the information on your own. Some resources to help you get started:

1. The Internet. Right at your fingertips is perhaps the most up-to-date source of information for your country. Check out the U.S. Department of State country background notes for current information on the people, history, government and economy of a country. Look online for the major English newspapers in your host country.
2. The library. Read old articles from major newspapers and magazines, such as *The New York Times* and *Newsweek* to catch up on the current events of your host country and the U.S.
3. The Study Abroad office. Your main point of contact for any questions related to study abroad. Your A-State email (@mail.astate.edu) may not always work while you are abroad, depending on your international location. If you do not already have an alternate email account such as Gmail, Hotmail or Yahoo then set one up prior to departure. Always keep our office updated with your current mailing address and your email address abroad.

Living With a Host Family

One of the most rewarding experiences of studying abroad is staying with a host family. This is one of the best ways to totally immerse yourself in the culture. You will eat native foods and listen to popular music. In conversation at meals, and even by watching television, you'll learn much that is not in textbooks. The experience may be frustrating and difficult at first at first, but once you get to know your host and show interest in being a part of the family, they will help immensely. Don't be afraid to speak another language. Accept corrections and don't worry about your mistakes. Try to speak with the family as often as possible.

Other suggestions for living with a host family:

- Be natural and be yourself.
- Always keep an open mind and observe, observe, observe.
- Spend time with your host family/students in your residence from the start. Recognize that some families are going to be more open than others, just as they are in the U.S.
- Pictures are a great icebreaker and lead to great conversations. Pack some with you or send them in advance of your arrival.
- Don't run up to your room after dinner. Help clean up and get involved. Stick around and chat with the family/students.
- Ask a lot of questions - take an interest in your host city and country.
- Try to be as flexible as possible and your anxiety will decrease.
- Always remember that your family is in the same position as you are.
- Don't be tense. The first week will seem hard and you may be petrified, but just ask questions no matter how inconsequential they seem to you.
- Talk openly with family members/students, especially if there is a problem.
- Be assertive. Don't wait for them to ask you everything. Ask them questions too.
- Try to feel at home.
- Be conscious of the way your hosts like to live and be considerate of that.
- Remember that you are always a guest in your hosts' home, and treat them with respect.



- Don't be bothered by first reactions or tone of voice. Inflections in certain languages could seem stern or disapproving.
- Remember that other cultures have different facial or body expressions which may seem rude by American standards, but may be perfectly normal in their own culture.
- Avoid conflict. Observe a lot the first few days and try to adapt or fall into the host's way of life. Try to adapt to their eating times and habits, sense of humor, etc.

Culture Shock

In addition to packing, taking care of paperwork and saying goodbye to family and friends, you will need to mentally prepare for this experience. You may think that because you are only going abroad for a short period of time, or because you are going to an English-speaking country, you do not need to worry about culture shock. However, no matter what you do to prepare before leaving the U.S., most of you will experience some form of culture shock. (Don't worry—it's exciting!) Researching about your host country will help prepare you.

Stages of Culture Shock:

1. Honeymoon/Tourist Stage: You feel very happy about all of the new experiences.
2. Tough Times/Crisis Stage: Crisis arises, communication issues occur, etc. There will be feelings of dissatisfaction in trying to adapt.
3. A Little Understanding/Adjustment/Reorientation/Gradual Recovery Stage: A new feeling of pleasure and humor is experienced. There is less of a sense of being lost, more balance.
4. Realization/Adaptation/Resolution/Acculturation Stage: You see that the culture has both good and bad to offer. There is more sense of belonging and defining who you are and what you are doing.

Severe Symptoms of Cultural Shock

- Withdrawal and excessive sleeping
- Compulsive eating and drinking
- Excessive irritability and hostility
- Marital and family conflicts
- Loss of work effectiveness
- Unaccountable episodes of crying

Some Methods to Manage Culture Shock

- Pre-departure meeting: Assessment of one's ability to adapt to a new culture. Preparing for problems. Using resources that promote coping adjustment.
- Transition adjustments: Food and security
- Personal and social relations: Do things that you like to do such as reading, cooking, walking or dancing. Do physical exercise, relax or meditate.
- Cultural and social interaction rules: Maintain contact with the culture. Learn even a little of the language. Go to events. Allow yourself to feel sad, but accept the new country.
- Conflict resolution and intercultural effectiveness skills: Focus on getting through the transition. Establish simple goals and check your progress. Maintain confidence in yourself. Look for a little help. We all reach a place where we need some assistance sometimes. Do a reality check: What is the real situation? Time out. It is easy to focus only on the difficulties. Step away from it for brief periods. Build support networks.

Reverse Culture Shock

Interestingly enough, you will experience another kind of shock upon your return home. Return shock or reverse culture shock includes feelings of annoyance, difficulty reestablishing relationships and even depression. Many students have a hard time finding others who will listen to their tales from abroad, look through pictures or have their same view of the world. It is normal to feel upset or annoyed at the changes when you return home. Here are some tips to help you adjust when you come home:

1. Stay involved in the international scene on campus (cultural centers, the CIE, your foreign language club, International Film Series, etc.).
2. Keep in touch with your friends that you made abroad.
3. Try to become part of society instead of just dwelling on what you left behind.
You can live anywhere and be happy. You are a global citizen!
4. Come to our office and hang out. We always love to hear about your adventures.
5. Use your newly acquired skills, either language or cross-cultural adaptation ability.
6. Remember, you are not the same as when you left, so do not expect your friends here to be either.
Be understanding and listen to their stories as well.
7. Look for the positives from both your new culture and your home culture.
8. Make goals to incorporate your personal growth into other areas of your life. Make goals to return abroad, too.
9. Include your study abroad experience on your resume.

Legal Requirements Abroad

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to local laws. There are no exceptions, so use common sense. Develop a cultural and political awareness of your area to avoid inadvertent misunderstandings and political difficulties.

When you enter some countries and when you register at hotels, you may be asked to fill out a police information card listing your name, passport number, destination, local address and reason for traveling. In some countries you may be asked to leave your passport at the hotel reception desk overnight so it can be checked by local police officials. These are normal procedures required by local law, so always have copies of your passport photo page with you when you travel.

Be aware that many countries have laws under which you can be held guilty by association. It is wise to avoid others who are in possession of illegal goods of any sort. Below are some useful pointers to avoid legal trouble.

- Deal only with authorized outlets when you exchange money. Do not exchange money on the black market.
- Avoid areas of unrest and disturbance, such as protests or riots.
- Do not deliver packages for anyone unless you are certain they do not contain drugs or other prohibited items.
- Become familiar with local regulations before you sell personal items such as clothing, cameras and jewelry.
- Don't assume what is legal in the United States is also legal in other countries. Adhere strictly to local laws.
The penalties you risk are severe.



Discrimination Issues Abroad

A-State does not tolerate discriminations on the part of its member institutions or participants; however, racial, sexual and religious prejudice does exist in many countries. When dealing with such issues, keep your own cultural assumptions in mind before jumping to conclusions. It is possible that actions or questions that upset you may simply reflect the peoples' curiosity about you and your country. Also, remember that you have choices in how to deal with these issues. Should extreme incidents arise, speak to your program leader/host coordinator. If this does not resolve the issue, contact the A-State Study Abroad office.

Alcohol Consumption

Attitudes toward alcohol consumption vary greatly from country to country. Whatever the local rules and customs, use moderation and good judgment. Drinking may place you at risk because it reduces your awareness and ability to judge potential dangers. Excessive drinking has been identified as the single greatest risk factor for study abroad students.

Drug Offenses Abroad

Every year, several hundred Americans are arrested abroad on drug charges. Persons caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country are subject to the drug laws of that country, not those of the U.S. As always, ignorance of the law is no excuse. In many countries, the burden of proof is on the accused to show that he or she is innocent of the charges. Some Americans take advantage of an offer of an all-expenses-paid vacation abroad in exchange for carrying a small package in the luggage. When they are caught, the fact that they did not know that there were drugs in the package will not reduce the charges against them. Every aspect of a drug arrest abroad can be different from U.S. practice.

Remember the following:

- Few countries provide a jury trial.
- Many countries do not permit pre-trial release on bail.
- Pre-trial detention, often in solitary confinement, can last several months.
- Prisons may lack even minimal comforts, such as beds, toilets, and washbasins.
- Diets are often inadequate and require supplements from relatives and friends.
- Officials may not speak English.
- Physical abuse, confiscation of property, degrading treatment and extortion are possible.
- Persons convicted may face sentences ranging from fines and jail time, to years of hard labor and even the death penalty. Penalties for drug possession and for drug trafficking are often the same abroad, so possession of one ounce of marijuana could result in years in a foreign jail.

Avoiding Danger Abroad

Social Situations

- Stay alert and trust your intuition when you feel you may be in danger. If you feel you may be getting into an uncomfortable situation, try to get to a safe place as soon as possible.
- Learn the emergency number(s) in your host country and use it when needed.
- Don't be afraid to call attention to yourself or ask for assistance if you're in trouble. When calling for help, be specific about what you need.
- Be aware of the effects of alcohol and drugs. These effects include impaired judgment and increased violent behavior.
- Never leave your drink unattended.
- Know your own limits and be supportive of other people's limits.
- Do not go off alone with someone you don't know well or who makes you feel uncomfortable. Suggest staying with a group or going to a public place. Don't leave friends alone at parties, bars or clubs.
- Always bring money for taxi fare to a safe place. Change for a phone call in case of emergency can be helpful as well.
- Be aware that signals may not be interpreted clearly across cultures. If someone is pressuring you to have sex when you don't want to, say NO. Be direct and assertive.
- Avoid walking or traveling alone at night. The buddy system is always a great alternative.
- Do not leave your bags or belongings unattended at any time. Security staff in airports or train stations are instructed to remove or destroy any unattended luggage. Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Make sure no one puts anything in your luggage.
- Never keep all of your documents and money in one place or one suitcase. If possible, do not keep large amounts of cash on you or in your room. If it is economically and practically feasible, obtain money as you need it.

Help from your Consular Officer

The consular officers at the embassy, or consulate in your host country are there to advise and help you, especially if you are in serious trouble. Duty officers are on call around the clock. They cannot serve as attorneys or give legal advice but they can help you find adequate legal representation. See your country-specific information for embassy and consulate contact information.

- If your passport is lost or stolen, report the loss to the local police and go to your nearest embassy or consulate on the next business day to apply for a new one. If you have a police report, photos and proof of identification, or someone who can identify you, bring them with you.
- If you need emergency medical care, the consular officer will help you get in touch with a doctor or clinic.
- If you are arrested, ask permission to notify the consular officer at your nearest embassy or consulate. If you are turned down, keep asking politely but persistently. The consular officer will visit you, advise you of your rights according to local laws and contact your family and friends if you ask them to.
- If you become destitute abroad the consulate will help you get in touch with your family, friends or bank so you can arrange to have funds sent to you.



Communication While Abroad

Making telephone calls home from other countries can be very expensive; usually more expensive than calling from the U.S. to these countries. There are many ways to stay in touch with friends and families at home.

- You can use free online services such as Yahoo Messenger with Voice, Facebook, Skype, Viber, IMO, WhatsApp or other free online services to stay in touch with your family and friends. Skype is a voice-over internet protocol, and you can use a webcam as well as a microphone to talk to anyone overseas using Skype.
- You can also buy international phone cards online and save money. Some companies will not send you an actual card, but email you a code or pin number to use.
- It is not recommended that you use your U.S. cell phone calling plan abroad. Even though your cell phone will work overseas, calling rates can be expensive. Additionally, text messages are typically charged at \$1 or more per message. Check with your carrier for details about international calling or texting.
- If your U.S. cell phone uses sim cards, it is possible to use your current mobile phone with a local sim card. This is generally a cheaper option, as you don't have the cost of buying another phone. If you choose this option make sure you unlock your U.S. phone through your provider before you leave the U.S. or the new sim card will not work in the phone.
- In many places and at many of the institutions you visit, your access to computing facilities and the internet will be more limited than it is at A-State. You are also likely to find fewer wi-fi hot spots. In these circumstances, you will frequently find a vibrant cyber café culture that has arisen to meet peoples' desire to be connected. One way, perhaps the best way, to approach these facts is to view it as an opportunity. Use this as an opportunity to spend less time in front of a screen and an opportunity to understand the relationship between connectivity and culture. This can also require you to plan your day and your assignments more closely than you do here.
- Students often wonder whether they should take their laptops abroad or buy a laptop to take with them. There isn't a single answer. The utility of a laptop will depend largely on the environment at your study abroad location, the type of communication strategy you have put in place and the kinds of academic work you will need to produce. If you do decide to take a laptop with you, remember that laptops are small and valuable items and therefore a frequent target for thieves, and plan accordingly. Remember to complete and submit the export control forms for your laptop.
- The Study Abroad office will be your main point of contact for any questions related to study abroad. Your A-State student email (@smail.astate.edu) may not always work while you are abroad depending on your international location. If you do not already have an alternate email account, then set one up prior to departure. Always keep the Study Abroad office updated with your current mailing and email addresses.

Other Important Matters

Absentee Voting

Before you may vote from abroad, you must be registered to vote at home. Check with your local city or town hall to obtain information on procedures for voting by absentee ballot. Remember to make note of your party, ward, district and voter registration number.

If necessary, your absentee ballot can be notarized at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

Income Tax Information

If you are participating in a spring semester or the full-year program and are required to file federal and state income tax returns, remember that if you will be out of the country between Jan. 1 and April 15 you have until June 15 to request an extension or file from abroad. If necessary, make arrangements with your parents to send state and federal tax forms and other documents. The Study Abroad office does not provide such service.

Power of Attorney

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal documents, such as financial aid monies, you should make arrangements for power of attorney to be held by an appropriate person to act in your behalf. You can do this by writing out in detail the specific duties that the person you choose will execute. This document must be notarized.

Packing

The first thing you should do is check your airline website and find out the exact luggage restrictions. On many airlines, you will be allowed two checked bags of no more than 44 to 50 pounds each, one carry on and one personal item, but you absolutely should call and find out the exact limits for your flight and your ticket. You do not want to get to the airport and find out that you have to re-pack your bags or pay for excess weight.

Your first urge will probably be to pack everything you own. *Two words of advice: **PACK LIGHT!***

One strategy is to pack everything you think you need a few days before you leave and then walk your baggage around the block once or twice. If that proves to not be a fun or enjoyable experience, repack your bags with exactly one half of the items you packed the first time. Yes, that is easier said than done but here are some tips:

Clothing: In your research you no doubt looked at the average temperatures during the time you will be at your location. Plan to take only the clothing that is appropriate for that climate. If your time abroad will span a period with both hot and cold months, pack items that you can layer. Layering allows you to get the most use out of any one item and is a great way to stay warm. You might also consider having bulky things, like sweaters and coats, sent to you in the mail. Only take clothes that go with a number of your other clothes. Packing an item that goes only with one other item or a series of single outfits uses space that could otherwise be used for more versatile items. Avoid clothing that requires special care; your laundry options may well be more limited, or more expensive, than you are accustomed to in the U.S. You may want to consider taking one “nice” outfit for any special events you might end up attending.

Appropriate clothing: Consider where you are going and what the cultural norms of dress are in that country. In many countries, halter and tank tops, shorts or short dresses, sleeveless blouses, etc. are not considered appropriate attire for women, or may send the wrong message about you or what you do. Similar, though generally fewer, items can be inappropriate for men. You may want to avoid packing clothing that announced loud and clear that you are an American. It is true that you will most likely not be mistaken for a local, but you do not want to advertise yourself as an American or a tourist.

Shoes: Take as few pairs as you can manage, as they are bulky and don’t pack well. Be sure, though, that at least one of those pairs are comfortable walking shoes. Water-resistant or waterproof shoes are even better. No matter where you go, you’ll end up doing a lot of walking.

Personal items: Most of what you will need will be available in one form or another at your study abroad site, so don’t try to cram a semester or year’s worth of soap, shampoo, deodorant, etc in your luggage. If there is some make or brand you absolute cannot live without, you can make an exception, but for the most part, you will find adequate substitutes abroad. A good rule of thumb about valuables is, if you can’t imagine losing something for sentimental or financial reasons, leave it at home. It will be there when you get back.

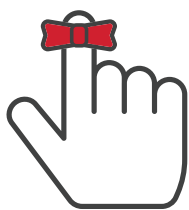
Electronics: The electrical voltage varies from country to country. In the U.S. and Mexico the power is 110 volts, whereas in England and many other parts of the world it is 240 volts. This means that any electrical appliances that you use in the U.S. will not work in a foreign country. This includes hairdryers, stereos, TVs, alarm clocks, electric razors, etc. Department stores, travel agencies, office supply stores, and electronics stores sell electricity converter kits for about \$45 that will allow you to use your 110-volt appliance in another country. These converters are not designed for extended use, and they tend to break and not protect your electronics if they are used continuously. The good news is that almost all cell phones, mp3 players, and laptops are designed to be dual voltage. Check your charging unit for these devices. If the small print reads “110-240v” it is designed to work with both voltages. For many other items such as hair dryers or alarm clocks, you would be best served by purchasing inexpensive, small electronics abroad.



Considering taking a backpack is a really good idea for anyone spending time abroad, and it serves well as a carry-on bag. Backpacks are lightweight, comfortable, and leave your hands free. A backpack will also prove to be very useful for traveling on weekends and during vacations once you are abroad. Similarly, a collapsible, nylon bag that can be packed into your checked luggage is a good idea for weekend travel or for bringing home those items you purchased abroad, especially if you're sensible and take only one checked bag with you when you leave the U.S.

Again, travel light! You'll be glad you did.


One frequent comment of returning study abroad students is, "I wished I had taken less stuff with me."



REMINDER: Do not pack your passport in your checked luggage! You'll need it both for departure and arrival. Also, carry with you an acceptance letter from your host institution or any other document that shows you will be staying as a student. Pack the copies of your passport and other vital documents in a separate place in your carry-on luggage, and not in the same place as your passport. Remember that the copies are useful for replacing a lost passport and those copies cannot do their job if they disappear with your passport.

Upon Your Return

- ☐ Complete an evaluation of your study abroad experience. Your feedback will help A-State students to make good choices concerning their interests and available opportunities. Your evaluation will also assist the Study Abroad office as it works with its existing partners abroad to improve programs and to establish new opportunities.
- ☐ Be on the lookout for the evaluation. It will be posted on the Study Abroad website soon after you return.
- ☐ Tie up any loose academic ends.
- ☐ Check with the Study Abroad office as soon as you are back on campus to see if your transcript from the foreign institution has arrived. If it hasn't arrived, keep checking back via email every couple of weeks.
- ☐ The amount of time different institutions need to generate transcripts varies greatly. You must initiate the process of having your study abroad credit applied to your A-State transcript; it is NOT automatic.



If you completed the courses that you had pre-approved, your part of the work is complete at this point. However, if you took different courses or if the course titles don't exactly match what is on the pre-approval form, you will need to have the new courses approved before credit can be posted to your transcript. (This is when you might need the documentation you so carefully collected while you were abroad.) Once you have made the rounds and secured approval from all appropriate departments, return the form to the Study Abroad office. The hours will be totaled and the form, together with the original transcript, will be copied and sent to the registrar, who will enter the courses on your A-State transcript. You may request a copy of the transcript from the Study Abroad office at A-State. After giving enough administrative time for all these things to fall into place, you should check your transcript online. When the credit appears on your transcript, the process is complete.

Don't wait until a crisis about graduation credits or the number of hours you've earned occurs. This can affect when you are allowed to pre-register for upcoming semesters. Make it a point to have the process complete before the pre-registration period for your first semester back at A-State, if not before.

Talk to your academic advisor

What you have studied abroad and learned outside the classroom has changed you. Often, it has suggested new subjects that you would like to explore further. Sometimes it has shifted your focus within your chosen major or minor. It may even have reshaped your thinking about what you would like to do after you graduate. Your academic advisor can help you sort through these changes and point you to classes that will allow you to delve deeper into the topics that engaged you abroad, or give you advice about the ways you can adapt your academic career to your new interest.

You may also want to talk with your academic advisor about continuing to study the language you may have spoken on your study abroad program. You may discuss the possibility of adding a language minor to your course of study.

Visit the Career Development Center and the Internship Office

The Career Center can help you include your study abroad experience in your resume and provide you with advice about ways you can present your overseas experience in your job search.

Continue the journey

Don't close the door on your international experience. Continue your engagement with the issues, the people and the cultures that have been such a huge part of your life. To keep your study abroad experience alive, you'll want to get involved, just as you did when you were abroad, with the international community at A-State. The following is a list of suggestions to help you stay involved:

Study abroad ambassadors are students who have studied abroad and can share their insights, enthusiasm, tips and advice about the process of finding a study abroad program. They provide a great source of support for students working through the many options for study abroad. For more information contact jgomis@astate.edu.

Join a language club to give yourself an opportunity to continue using the language you studied and used abroad. Your language abilities will fade if you don't keep them polished.

Your study abroad program has given you a valuable and intensive experience of navigating another culture and stepping outside of your own. Stay engaged and involved; that is the way to enhance your *A-State Study Abroad Story* and impart it to others, so they know they too can study abroad and tell a story of their own.



Helpful Websites

It is a good idea to keep an eye on your country's travel advisory both before and after you leave the United States. Their site also has invaluable phone numbers and emergency advice. You might even print out some of their pages to take with you.

Safety Information:

U.S Department of State: <https://www.state.gov/travel/>

Links to embassies and consulates worldwide: <https://www.usembassy.gov>

Travel safety for students: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/studyabroad/>

How consular officers can help in an emergency: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies.html>

Health Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov>

Travel Health Online: <https://tripprep.com>

Travel and Other Information

U.S Department of State Background Notes: <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

Armchair World: The Well-Informed Traveler: <http://www.armchair.com/info/netinfo.html>

Association for Safe International Road Travel: <http://www.asirt.org>

Traveling with Disabilities: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/disabilities.html>

A study abroad guide written by a student, for students: <https://www.studyabroad.com/student-guide-study-abroad-introduction>

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York keeps a current *list of exchange rates*.

The U.S. State Department advises that it is a good idea to keep an eye on your country's travel advisory both before and after you leave the U.S. Their site also has essential phone numbers and emergency advice. You may wish to print out some of their pages to take with you.

Other Sources of Information for Students

International Student ID Card: <http://www.statravel.com/student-discount-card.htm>

Peace Corps: <https://www.peacecorps.gov>

Study Abroad office contact information:

Jeanne d'Arc Gomis

Director of Study Abroad

jgomis@astate.edu

Office: 870-972-3734

Fallon Jenkins

Study Abroad Administrative Assistant

fjenkins@astate.edu

Office: 870-972-3734

A-State Study Abroad Hotline:
1-870-680-2535 (Emergency Line)



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