

# International Student Center



## Education Abroad Student Handbook



**SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

*"Minds That Move the World"*

Dear Student:

Congratulations on your acceptance into a San Diego State University education abroad program! During this exciting time you will learn a great deal, not only about other cultures and peoples, but about yourself. You will get up close and personal with new languages and cultural traditions and develop a deeper understanding of global citizenship.

You are joining the ranks of an elite group in the United States: Only two percent of the United States university student population studies abroad. International experience, global awareness and foreign language skills are very important qualities to have in this new century, qualities highly sought after by employers.

As part of our efforts to assist you with your sojourn, we have created this handbook to answer common questions about education abroad. Please read it *carefully* NOW, before you go. Then make sure you have access to it while you're abroad. It provides valuable information about travel and study abroad and provides answers to questions you will likely have.

Detailed information about the specific location where you are headed can best be answered by speaking with your faculty coordinator and researching travel guides or such websites such as the U.S. Department of State or the national Centers for Disease Control. We strongly suggest that you make every effort to communicate with SDSU alumni or international students of the country, institution and/or program you will be attending. Remember, it is YOUR responsibility to take the initiative and inform yourself.

The single, best piece of advice former study abroad participants want to pass on to students who are about to embark on this experience is "to keep an open mind". Flexibility, a sense of humor and a willingness to learn are key ingredients for a successful program abroad.

Whether you are going for two weeks, two months or a full year...Don't forget to enjoy yourself!

Sincerely,

Education Abroad Office Staff

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# I. Preparing To Study Abroad

## Academics

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Whatever else the experience of living abroad will mean to you, as a degree-seeking student at San Diego State University, earning academic credit for the courses you complete abroad is a primary goal. This is, after all, *study* abroad, not just *travel* abroad.

Ideally, you will be able to receive credit toward meeting graduation, General Education, elective, or major or minor degree requirements. Receiving credit for your work is not automatic, however, and depends on several criteria:



1. Whether or not you complete your studies abroad at an ACCREDITED INSTITUTION which issues you a TRANSCRIPT
2. The COMPATIBILITY of the classes you take abroad with your academic program at SDSU
3. The QUALITY OF YOUR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE ABROAD, as evaluated by instructors at the host institution where you study, and
4. The assessment of evaluators and academic advisors at SDSU as to whether the QUALITY OF THE COURSES YOU TAKE AND your performance meet SDSU standards.

## Credit

### Resident Credit

The international institutions that partner with SDSU through the SDSU Exchange, ISEP-Exchange, CSU-IP and SDSU Faculty-led programs are considered to have close affiliations with SDSU and have already been determined to satisfy criterion #1 above (accreditation). The classes these institutions offer are approved for SDSU credit *in principle* by SDSU evaluators. Credits SDSU students earn while studying at these schools will be

considered **resident units**, qualitatively the same as units taken in residence at SDSU.

In practice, however, whether or not *you* will be able to receive credit for the specific classes you take at these schools is going to depend on criteria 2-4 in the list above.

### Transfer Credit

Generally speaking, if you enroll in an “independent”/“third party provider,” or “ISEP-Direct” program, or if you enroll yourself directly at a university abroad (“direct enroll,”) any units you receive for your work abroad will be **transfer units**, as these programs have no affiliation with San Diego State University. The Office of Advising and Evaluations

(undergraduates,) or Graduate Division (Graduate students) will need to determine whether or not the institution where studies are to be completed meets accreditation (#1) requirements. If accreditation is approved, then criteria 2-4 will come into play in the question of whether or not you will receive credit for your work in the program.

If you transferred to SDSU from a community college, or otherwise have brought nearly 70 units of transfer credit with you to SDSU, you will need to consult your departmental academic advisors and the Office of Advising and Evaluations to verify that you may bring additional transfer units into your SDSU transcript.

### Getting Courses Approved Before Going Abroad

Students who work with the Education Abroad Office and participate in SDSU Exchange, ISEP Exchange, ISEP Direct or independent/third party providers will submit a completed Academic Approval Form (undergraduates) or Academic Approval/Petition to Transfer Credit Form (graduate students) *before they go abroad*. This signed form is your guarantee that

you will receive credit for the classes listed on the form, provided you complete them successfully. The signatures of international advisors in the Office of Advising and Evaluations (or the Graduate Division, for graduate students,) attest to the accreditation of the international, transcript issuing institution. The signature of the Assistant Dean for the Undergraduate Division is required for any classes abroad that will meet **upper division General Education** requirements, and the signatures of academic advisors for the student's **major** and **minor** are required for classes that will be taken to satisfy requirements for those programs. Approval for **elective courses** outside the major or minor requires the signature of the academic advisor for that department.

Before affixing their signatures to the Academic Approval Form, academic advisors will want to see your Degree Evaluation (Plan of Study for graduate students,) as well as detailed descriptions of the courses you plan to take at the host institution. If the course descriptions are written in a language other than English, you will need to provide the advisors with short summaries in English

Students participating in **CSU-IP** exchanges will also complete an Academic Approval Form but the form and the procedures for completing it will be provided by the coordinators in the CSU Chancellor's Office.

### **Credit for Service Learning and Internships**

There are some colleges and departments on the SDSU campus that are willing to give you academic credit for service learning programs or internships completed abroad. You will need to work closely with these departments beforehand to clarify the terms for participating in these programs and requirements for getting credit. Be prepared to comply with requests by the department that you keep a journal, write reports, complete readings, conduct interviews and otherwise demonstrate that you have done some serious reflection on the meaning of your activities. In short, credit will not be granted simply because had the experience; advisors will want to know what you learned from it and how you will apply that knowledge.

### **Grades**

In most cases credits for classes you take abroad will be integrated into your SDSU transcript on a Credit/Non-Credit basis. That means you will receive units for work you complete successfully, but no letter grade will appear on your SDSU transcript. Classes you take abroad and do not pass will not appear on your SDSU transcript at all. This type of "grading" will not affect your GPA, not help it, nor hurt it.

There are some exceptions to the Credit/Non-credit policy: Students participating in SDSU Faculty-led programs or the CSU-IP programs *will* receive letter grades that *will* be calculated into your GPA. Some independent program providers will also issue letter grades through a US-based university.

### **Registering For Classes**

Students participating in SDSU Exchange, ISEP-Exchange, CSU-IP Exchange, ISEP-Direct and independent/third party provider programs will **NOT** register for classes at SDSU. You will register for your classes at the host institution where you will be studying.

While abroad, you will be expected to enroll in the equivalent of at least 12 SDSU units, which is considered fulltime status.

### **Absence From San Diego State University**

Students who work with the Education Abroad Office<sup>1</sup> do not have to file a leave of absence for programs of 1 or 2 semesters in duration. Your name will included on a list of students studying abroad that the Education Abroad Office submits to various offices on campus, including the Registrar, Financial Aid, and the Cashier.

Please be aware that once your name is submitted on the list of outbound students, you will NOT be able to register for classes at San Diego State. It is very important,

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<sup>1</sup> International Students: Please check with your immigration advisor at the ISC.

therefore, that you notify the Education Abroad Office immediately if you have a change of plans and will not be going abroad after all in order that this information can be communicated to the Registrar and other relevant campus offices.

## **Costs of & Study Abroad, Financing**

In the best of cases, the cost of studying abroad will be roughly equivalent to the cost of studying at SDSU plus the fundamental expenses of travel. But many different factors figure into the total cost. Program expenses vary by a) type, b) sponsor, c) location, d) duration and e) financial aid policies and eligibility. We have provided a budget worksheet at the end of this document to assist you in planning for your expenses abroad.

### **Payment of Tuition and Fees, Housing**

Students who participate in **SDSU Exchange** and **ISEP Exchange** will pay their standard semester tuition at SDSU. The bill will be posted in Web Portal accounts and must be paid by the indicated deadline. Students participating in **CSU-IP** exchanges will pay all their program fees (tuition, housing, insurance) directly to the CSU Chancellor's Office.

In addition to paying SDSU tuition, students participating in **ISEP Exchange will pay for housing (including meals) at SDSU**, just as if you were going to be living in Villa Alvarado. This bill will also be posted in Web Portal. Ask your Education Abroad advisor for the current cost of housing and meals.

Students on **SDSU Exchange will pay for housing in-country**, at their host institution, if it offers accommodations, or rent accommodations on their own.

Students participating in **CSU-IP Exchange will be assessed fees for housing and other expenses** by the CSU Chancellor's Office.

Students participating in **independent/third party provider or ISEP-Direct programs do not pay tuition or fees to SDSU.**

Program expenses, including tuition and housing, are typically bundled into a package that will also include meals, insurance, excursions or other add ons.

There is a broad range of prices for independent/third party provider and ISEP-Direct programs. Programs may have more or fewer services (e.g., a fulltime, on-site program coordinator, tours and excursions, and bells and whistles such as a cell phone); the costs of tuition and room and board at the institutions where the program takes place may be higher or lower than at other institutions.

### **How Much Will it All Cost? Semester, Year or Summer (Short Term) Programs**

Read program materials *carefully* for disclosures about costs. The materials may show an aggregate program cost, and

perhaps even a breakdown of some discrete expenses, but be sure to read the fine print and get clarification on exactly what is and is not covered. Be alert to the official dates of the program, the start and end of program benefits, and how those dates relate to your arrival and departure plans. Look for information about vacation and holiday periods: will you receive housing and meal benefits during those times? Following is a short

list of not-so-obvious costs to be aware of:

- Housing and meals before and after official program dates and during holiday periods
- Instructional materials (e.g. books, supplies)
- International and in-country domestic transportation, to/from your program destination, and any daily commuting costs to get to/from your host campus



- Excursions and other cultural enrichment activities
- Visa, passport, and other costs of required documents
- Medicines, inoculations, etc.
- Insurance

Then there is the entire category of personal expenses: your social life, purchasing clothing and souvenirs, mail, phone and other long-distance communications, vacation travel. Program alumni or representatives can provide guidance on estimating these costs.

Obviously many expenses will vary according to the duration of a program; other costs, like travel to/from the study destination, are fixed; they do not change significantly whether you stay two weeks or 9 months. So the cost of a full-year program will likely be less than double the cost of a single semester. Similarly, summer/short term programs, while cheaper at first glance, when analyzed on a per monthly basis, can cost almost as much as a semester program. Further, it is generally difficult to get financial aid to support summer or short term programs.

As costs of living vary around the world, in-country expenses will vary as well. The cost of living in Western Europe is significantly higher than the cost of living in Latin America or Africa, meaning that your cup of coffee in Munich is going to set you back more than one in Valparaiso. Costs of living even vary within a country or region: It is more expensive to live in Paris, for example, than in a village in Provence.

Use the Budget Worksheet in the Appendix section to help you analyze what studying abroad is going to cost you and the resources you have available to help finance it.

### **Financial Aid**

**If you already receive financial aid**, you should consult the Financial Aid Office as soon as you start making plans to go abroad. Staff will clarify what types of aid you will be eligible to use for your program.

Students using financial aid are required to enroll in the equivalent of a minimum of 12 SDSU units per semester at their host institution in order to receive their complete financial aid allocation.

### **SDSU Exchange, ISEP-Exchange, CSU-IP Exchange Programs**

As a general rule, students receiving financial aid who participate in SDSU Exchange, ISEP-Exchange or CSU-IP programs, that is, programs for which they will receive resident credit, will be able to use all the different types of funding in their financial aid package to finance their study abroad: federal and state grants, Veterans' Benefits and loans.

A list of outbound students participating in the programs listed above will be submitted to the Financial Aid Office. These students are not required to file any additional paperwork with the Financial Aid.

### **Independent/third party provider, ISEP-Direct, Direct Enroll Programs**

Students receiving financial aid who participate in programs for which they will receive transfer units (independent/third party provider, ISEP-Direct, direct enroll) will be able to use most types of aid, but not others. Excluded are State University Grants (SUG) and Veterans' benefits.

Students on these programs will need to work with the program provider to complete either a Contractual Agreement or a Special Enrollment (Consortial) Agreement, depending on the status of the transcript issuing institution. The program provider is required to submit a detailed budget of program expenses. The form and budget are then submitted to the Financial Aid Office. Questions about the Contractual/Special Enrollment Agreement should be addressed to the Financial Aid Office.

### **Students Not Usually Qualifying for Aid**

Students who do not normally qualify for financial aid but plan to participate in independent/third party provider, ISEP-

Direct, or direct enroll programs may discover that they do in fact, qualify for some types of aid because the costs of these programs are generally significantly higher than the costs of a semester at SDSU. The first step is to complete the FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid – at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Information about the student’s financial situation will be forwarded to the Financial Aid Office at SDSU. While the financial aid package may not include grant monies, student and/or parent loans may be made available to help finance study abroad.

### **Aid Disbursement**

#### **→ After You Are In Residence Abroad!**

At the present time, financial aid will only be disbursed to students AFTER THEY ARE IN RESIDENCE AT THE HOST INSTITUTION and a staff person at the institution – not the student - submits a verification of enrollment to SDSU’s Disbursement Office.

### **Scholarships**

All SDSU students are eligible to apply for the Associated Students Study Abroad Scholarship. Awards are between \$500 and \$1000. All types of study abroad programs are eligible, but preference will be given to students participating in SDSU affiliated programs, students whose academic program requires them to study abroad, and programs that award academic credit. Students must have a minimum 2.5 GPA.

Students who receive Pell Grants are eligible to apply for the Gilman Scholarship. And students who are going abroad to study critical languages and cultures, as defined by the National Security Education Program, may apply for a Boren Award.

Check the SDSU Scholarship Office website – <http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/scholarship/index.html> - for more information about these and other scholarships.

There are many other scholarship opportunities, awarded by international institutions and organizations. Consult the [scholarship page](#) on the Education Abroad office website.

### **Banking & Money Matters**

Be sure to notify your bank and credit card company that you will be abroad, where you are going, and for how long. In this era of personal identity theft, banking institutions are on the look out for suspicious activity and might deactivate your credit and debit cards when they spot uncharacteristic transactions.

### **Credit & Debit Cards**

While you’re abroad you should have no trouble using a credit or debit card that is part of the Cirrus (associated with MasterCard) or Plus (associated with Visa) networks for transactions at banks, ATMs, stores and other establishments that accept them. (Note: Smaller stores, boutiques, bazaars and markets are often not equipped to handle card transactions and deal on a cash only basis.)



You should be able to use your debit/ATM card to withdraw money in local currency from most bank machines around the world. A foreign transaction fee is common. You need to confirm with your bank that your current PIN will function abroad. Some countries require 6-digit as opposed to 4-digit PINs, or a PIN that does not begin with “0”.

Alternatively, you may also be able to present your Visa or MasterCard at the teller’s window in local banks to make a cash advance on your credit card. The bank will want your passport and credit card numbers in order to get authorization from the network to advance you the cash. Again, be prepared to pay a fee for this service.

Just like at home, it’s handy to have a credit card for financial emergencies or when you want to make purchases but don’t want to use cash. Take one along, but USE IT WISELY. It’s easy to lose track of your spending and foreign transaction fees and credit card interest can really add up. Take

good care of your credit card! Loss or theft can be a huge inconvenience!

It can be to your advantage to use your credit card in situations where the local currency is consistently losing strength against the dollar. The amount charged to your card is based on the exchange rate at the time your financial institution processes the transaction, usually several days after you've made your purchase, so you end up paying a little less!

#### **CHECK WITH YOUR BANK/ CREDIT CARD COMPANY**

- ✓ **Can you use your credit and ATM cards abroad? For what kinds of transactions? Cash withdrawals or advances?**
- ✓ **What fees will the bank charge for each kind of transaction?**
- ✓ **Does your bank have an "in network" relationship with a bank abroad that minimizes fee? Which one(s)?**
- ✓ **Will your current PIN function abroad?**

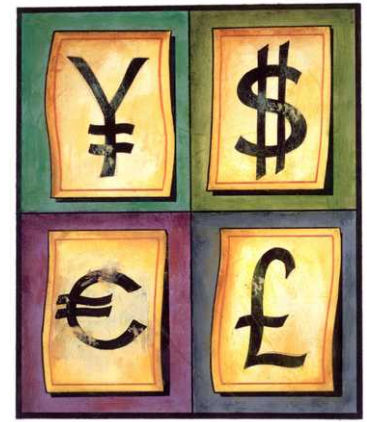
#### **Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's checks are the safest way to carry money while abroad. You can't replace cash that is lost or stolen but traveler's checks can be refunded. It is advisable to take at least some funds in the form of traveler's checks. They are available in various denominations and currencies (e.g. American dollars, Euros, British pounds, etc) and can be purchased at most banks, credit unions and the American Automobile Association (AAA.). Generally there is a 1% commission charged for the purchase. Buying checks in small denominations means carrying a bulkier packet of checks, but you will find it easier to cash or make purchases using a \$20 check than with a \$100 denomination check.

Should your checks be lost or stolen, you're going to need the serial numbers to get a refund. Create three lists of your checks. Leave one list at home with family. Carry a second with the checks themselves and pack the third separately with other belongings. As you use your checks update the lists traveling with you. Keep your traveler's checks separate from the receipt for their purchase.

#### **Currencies and Exchange Rates**

A fundamental part of living and traveling abroad will be learning to handle transactions in different currencies – Euros, British Pounds, Pesos, Crowns, Francs, etc. Rates of exchange between currencies fluctuate daily.



Websites like [Trav Lang](http://www.travlang.com/money/) (<http://www.travlang.com/money/>) and [Oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com/) (<http://www.oanda.com/>) provide instantaneous currency conversions at real time rates. Start familiarizing yourself with the different currencies, coins and bills you'll be using while you're abroad. For practice, research how much a cup of coffee and other items are going to cost you in the currency of your host country and how those prices convert to US dollars.

It's a good idea to travel with a small amount of cash - enough for buses, taxis, a cup of coffee and a snack - in the currency of your host country. Your local bank may be able to get the currency for you, provided you request it at least 10 days to 2 weeks in advance. Thomas Cook Travel and the American Automobile Association also sell international currencies.

US airports usually have a currency exchange, but their rates of exchange and service fees are not the best. You're probably better off waiting until you get to your destination. Most international airports and train stations have currency exchanges or even banks that give better rates than in the US.

Try to avoid exchanging currency at hotels, restaurants, or retail shops as the rates of exchange they offer are invariably poor.

Banks offer the fairest exchange rates but you can expect to pay a commission every

time you exchange currency. Sometimes the commission is based on a percentage of the amount you exchange, or it may be a flat fee regardless of the amount of the transaction. Flat fee transactions make it appealing to exchange larger sums at a time and make fewer visits to the bank. A disadvantage is that you will be carrying more cash on you than might be prudent.

## **Travel and Immigration Documents**

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### **Passports**

All travelers between countries must have a passport. The passport is your official identification as a citizen of a specific nation. You must show a valid passport to border and customs authorities when you enter or leave the United States, cross most other national borders, or at other times when official verification of citizenship is required. There are some exceptions, e.g. travel between various European nations. But one never knows for sure, as controls are tightened in times of heightened security, so it is best to assume you should have your passport available to show to authorities.

Passports are issued at any office of the U.S. Passport Agency or through one of the federal or state courts or U.S. post offices authorized to accept passport applications. A US passport is issued by the Department of State, and is good for a period of 10 years (5 years for those under 18). For information about applying for a first-time passport, or a passport renewal, consult the [passport office \[http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\\_1738.html\]\(http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\_1738.html\)](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html), of the US Department of State.

**The US passport application process takes a minimum of four to twelve weeks, longer during peak times.**

**DON'T WAIT - APPLY NOW!**



If you already possess a passport, check the date of expiration and compare it to your dates of travel. **The passport should be valid for at least 6 months after your anticipated return to San Diego.** If it is not, refer to the websites above for information about how to renew it.

If your passport is lost or stolen while you are in the United States, you should report it to US passport services (contact information above.) If you should lose your documents while abroad, you will need to notify the nearest US consulate or embassy and local police IMMEDIATELY (see the section, "On Your Way: Traveling and Living Abroad.")

### **Multiple (Dual) Citizenship**

If you are a citizen of more than one country (a dual citizen,) it is vital that you contact the consulate or embassy of the country where you will be studying abroad, as well as the consulates/embassies of the countries for which you hold citizenship, to inquire about travel and residency regulations that may apply to you.

### **Visas**

Visas are issued by the government of the country(-ies) where you will be traveling. The visa grants its bearer official permission to visit and/or live in the country. Visas come in lots of different formats, from a simple stamp on one of the pages in your passport to an official document and photo affixed inside your passport. **Requirements regarding the need for a visa, when and how to obtain one, vary widely.** The country where you plan to study may require you to process your visa before you leave the US, or it may require no visa at all. There are different types of visas as well, such as tourist visas and student visas. Some countries do not require students to get a visa per se, but they do require a residency permit.

Students will frequently need an official letter of acceptance from their program

provider or the host institution abroad in order to process their visa or residency permit.

It is critical that you research the visa requirements of the country where you plan to complete our study and any other countries you plan to visit while you are away.

The best source of information about visas is the official pages of foreign embassies/consulates located in the US. You can find contact information at <http://www.embassy.org>. The US Department of State also hosts the [Foreign Entry Requirement](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1229.html) page on its website, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures\\_1229.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1229.html) where you can research information about visa requirements

### **Students Who Are Not U.S. Citizens**

You will be subject to the passport and visa requirements that exist between the country for which you hold citizenship, the country where you will be completing your study abroad, and countries that you plan to visit. Notify your study abroad advisor if you are not a US citizen and do not have a US passport. Sources for information about visa requirements that apply to you will be the embassy/consulate of your country of citizenship here in the US (<http://embassy.org>), and the embassy/consulate of the countries where you plan to study and travel.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE US, consult the US Department of Homeland Security, “[Crossing US Borders](http://www.dhs.gov/files/crossingborders/travelers.shtml),” <http://www.dhs.gov/files/crossingborders/travelers.shtml> about regulations governing your return and re-entry into the United States.

If you are an international student studying at SDSU on an F-1 or other type of visa, you will also need to consult with immigration advisors at the International Student Center.

### **International Certificate of Vaccinations**

The [Travelers’ Health web pages](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx#C) of the US Centers for Disease Control (<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx#C>) will help you determine which, if any, immunizations are required for the locations you

plan to visit and tell you whether or not you will be required to show the International Certificate of Vaccinations or Prophylaxis (often simply referred to as the “yellow card”) to enter the country. Your immunizations should be recorded on this card and certified by the administering health care worker. SDSU Student Health Services, health care providers like Kaiser, Sharp, and clinics where you can receive immunizations can provide you with the card. It is a good idea to carry the card with you when you travel, even though the country(-ies) you visit may not require you to do so.

### **Other Recommended or Suggested Documents**

#### **International Student Identity Card (ISIC)**

Most countries grant students special privileges and discounts on things like public transportation, admission to museums, theaters, and historical sites.



The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is the most widely accepted verification of your student status. Check out the official [ISIC website](http://www.isic.org/home.aspx) (<http://www.isic.org/home.aspx>) for a complete description of the card’s benefits. At the price of just \$25.00 (valid for sixteen months from the beginning of the academic year,) the card will pay for itself in savings many times over.

The ISIC can be purchased on the SDSU campus at STA Travel located in Aztec Center, <http://www.statravel.com>

#### **Hosteling International**

Hostels provide friendly, clean, secure and inexpensive overnight accommodations for travelers. They offer dormitory-style rooms with separate quarters for men and women.

If you plan to stay in hostels during your travels, it's a good idea to purchase a Hosteling International (HI) card before you depart the US. In some countries, HI membership is required to stay in hostels. In other locations, members of HI enjoy discounted rates. The HI card generally must be purchased in the country where you hold residence. Consult the [Hosteling International USA](http://www.hiusa.org) website for information about membership, benefits and costs: <http://www.hiusa.org/membership>

### **International Driving Permit**

Public transportation in most countries is efficient and inexpensive, but if you think you might need to drive during your study abroad, check with the embassy/consulate of your countries of destination to find out what the regulations are for drivers who do not have a national driver's license. There may be age restrictions; you may be required to show proof of insurance coverage. Some countries recognize a US driver's license; others may require a translation of the license, while still others may not accept your US license at all. The American Automobile Association (AAA) issues the [International Driving Permit](http://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpf.html) (IDP) which often may be used in conjunction with your US license: <http://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpf.html>. Cost: \$15.00

### **Get Healthy – Stay Healthy**

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At least three important factors will play a role in whether or not you become ill while you're abroad:

1. Taking stock of your physical and emotional health and preparing yourself appropriately before you leave.
2. Familiarizing yourself ahead of time with the health and safety risks specific to your destination
3. Following medical advice

Living away from the cultural, geographic, social environments to which you are accustomed can cause mental and emotional stress which can in turn trigger physical, psychological, or emotional illness. As you go about making other preparations to go abroad, you also need to take into consideration the impacts travel study will have on your general state of health (do you have physical pre-existing

conditions for which you are taking medications?,) mental and emotional health (do you have a learning disability, anxiety, depression or other type of psychological issue?) and relationships with significant others, family members and friends.

It is highly recommended that all students going abroad get a physical, make sure they are up-to-date on all their immunizations, and visit their dentists!

### **Researching Health Conditions for Your Destinations**

In countries and regions such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Western Europe, health risks may be no greater than comparable risks for travelers in the United States. In lesser developed parts of the world such as Africa, Asia, South and Central America, the South Pacific, the Middle and Far East, living conditions and standards of sanitation and hygiene can vary greatly. Urban settings and tourist areas generally provide safer and healthier environments than rural and more remote areas, but this is not always the case. The key to maintaining good health is to research your destination, know what to expect, and make preparations in advance to deal with the conditions you are going to encounter.

#### Resources:

1) An excellent place to start is the national [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/) (CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/>), specifically the [Traveler's Health pages](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx) (<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>.) The CDCs provide health information for more than 200 travel destinations, track outbreaks of contagious disease the world over, and provide guidance about vaccines, medications, and other measures necessary to prevent illness and injury during international travel.

2) [Country Reports](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.htm) on the US Department of State website: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.htm](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.htm)

1 Each country specific report includes the topic, "Medical Facilities and Health Information.

3) The [International Travel and Health](http://www.who.int/ith/en/index.html) publication by the World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/ith/en/index.html>). Individual chapters can be downloaded, the hard copy publication can be ordered from the website.

2) SDSU's Student Health Services has a [Traveler's Clinic](http://shs.sdsu.edu/shsImmunization.asp#TravelClinic) (<http://shs.sdsu.edu/shsImmunization.asp#TravelClinic>) where a health care provider can review your travel itinerary with you and make recommendations about immunizations or other measures to safeguard your health. They recommend you visit them no later than 6-8 weeks prior to your departure.

3) Some health management organizations (HMOs,) such as Kaiser and Scripps Medical also provide special services and clinics for prospective travelers. Check with your health care provider to find out what services they offer.

4) You might want to register with the [International Association of Medical Assistance to Travelers](http://www.iamat.org/index.cfm) (IAMAT) before you go: <http://www.iamat.org/index.cfm>. Membership is FREE, but it is a not-profit organization and appreciates donations. One of the services they provide is an annually updated list of international health (including mental health) service providers.

### **Special Needs, Health Conditions**

It is highly advisable to disclose any special needs or health conditions on the Medical Self Assessment Form (in the Agreement Packet,) to Student Disability Services (if appropriate,) and to coordinators at your host destination for the sake of your personal well-being and safety. Accommodations for special conditions or disabilities can often be arranged. The [prospective students](http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/study_abroad/nontraditional-disabilities.html) section ([http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/study\\_abroad/nontraditional-disabilities.html](http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/study_abroad/nontraditional-disabilities.html)) of the Education Abroad Office has more detailed information.

Information you disclose will be kept strictly confidential.

### **Some Not-Uncommon Diseases**

**Diarrhea** is a common traveler's affliction. Any change in water or diet can trigger diarrhea; these cases usually occur soon after arrival in a new location, last only a few days, and do not generally require treatment beyond increasing liquid intake to prevent dehydration. More severe cases can strike any time and are usually attributable to consumption of contaminated food or water. This latter type may be associated with intestinal infection and require medication. If you are going to a location where water and food hygiene are known to be problematic, talk to your health care provider about giving you prescription and over-the-counter medications to combat intestinal discomfort and illness.

**Tetanus**, commonly known as "lockjaw," is an infection of the nervous tissue and results from the contamination of a wound or injury. Tetanus immunization is available, often in combination with the diphtheria vaccine. Tetanus boosters are recommended every ten years after the initial series of three. Make sure your tetanus shot is current!

**Hepatitis A Virus (Infectious Hepatitis, HAV)** is most prevalent in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. However, it is possible to contract the disease anywhere (including the US) living conditions are crowded and unsanitary. Hepatitis A is transmitted orally through the ingestion of contaminated food or water. Clams, oysters, and other shellfish, especially if eaten raw, are common sources of the disease in contaminated areas. Infection can be prevented through vaccination with the Hepatitis A vaccine, available from your health care provider.

**Malaria**, a mosquito-borne disease, is common to parts of the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Prophylactic anti-malarial medications are available by prescription; they be required for students participating in some programs.

The medication regimen generally begins BEFORE departure, is continued for the duration of travel and for a few weeks after return to the US. It is critical that instructions for taking the medication are followed carefully. Consult your health care provider.

### **Prescription Medications**

If you are currently under a physician's care, require regular medication or injections (e.g. insulin or allergy shots), make an appointment with your doctor to discuss your travel plans and how you can best keep yourself healthy while abroad.



If you are on a regular regimen of medications, there are several things you need to do:

- 1) Make sure that it is legal for you to take those medications into your countries of destination. (Contact the embassy(-ies)/consulate(s) of those countries.) 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.
- 2) Take an adequate supply of your medications with you. It is advisable to keep all medicines in their original, professionally labeled containers.
- 3) Take copies of prescriptions with you. Have your physician include not only the brand names of medications, but the names of acceptable generic substitutes as well. You should also carry a letter from your doctor that describes your condition and the treatment regimen.

If you have a potentially life threatening condition such as diabetes, allergies to drugs (e.g., penicillin,) or insects (e.g., bee stings), etc., carry or wear medical alert identification --a tag, bracelet, or card --at all times. The alert should indicate the specific nature of the problem and spell out what measures should or should not be taken in the event that you might be unable to communicate this information yourself (i.e., should you be unconscious).

### **Eye Glasses and Contacts**

If you wear glasses or contacts, include a visit to the eye doctor on your list of "Things to Do" before going abroad. Make sure your prescriptions are up-to-date. Pack an extra pair of glasses and take sufficient contact lenses to last your entire trip. Make sure contact cleansing solution will be available where you're going, otherwise, you'll have to pack a sufficient supply. And don't forget to take copies of your lens prescriptions with you.

### **If You Require Regular Injections**

The Centers for Disease Control recommend that "Diabetics or other persons who require routine or frequent injections should carry a supply of syringes and needles sufficient to last their stay abroad." It is possible to pack needles for your own use. However, be aware that carrying needles and syringes without a written prescription may be illegal in some countries. Make sure you have a letter from your doctor documenting your need to transport needles and syringes.



In some countries it's possible to purchase disposable needles and syringes at pharmacies for your personal use.

### **AIDS**

The following is excerpted from a brochure prepared by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) regarding AIDS and International Travel:

*Everything you already know about what AIDS is and how it is contracted is as deadly true overseas as it is at home. Knowing this and taking all advised precautions is the only way to protect yourself. In some countries AIDS is considerably less of an epidemic than it is in the U.S., and considerably greater in others. Whatever the situation in the country you are going to, you are not more likely to contract AIDS there than here--IF you act sensibly and*

*refrain from unprotected sex and other behaviors and habits that carry the risk of infection. As The World Health Organization states: "AIDS is not spread by daily and routine activities such as sitting next to someone or shaking hands, or working with people. Nor is it spread by insects or insect bites. AIDS is not spread by swimming pools, public transportation, food, cups, glasses, plates, toilets, water, air, touching or hugging, coughing or sneezing." This is as biologically true abroad as it is in your hometown.*

### **Blood and Blood Products**

Be aware that some countries simply do not have the resources to adequately screen blood products or use disposable needles and syringes. You could be at risk should you need a blood transfusion, intravenous fluids, or simple injection in one of these countries. Again, you're going to need to do your homework about conditions in the country (-ies) you'll be visiting. Use the resources in the previous section, "Researching Health Conditions for Your Destinations."

### **If You are Sexually Active**

Take your own supply of birth control products with you. And while abroad ALWAYS USE A LATEX CONDOM during sex. Again, take a supply with you as the quality of manufacturing and storage of condoms in other countries may be not be reliable.

### **HIV (Human Immune Deficiency Virus)**

#### **Antibody Testing**

Some countries require foreign visitors, including students, to take the HIV antibody test. This is usually required only for long term stays. Check the embassy/consulate website of the country(-ies) where you are going to see if HIV-testing is required. You may need to carry a "doctor's certificate" showing the results of the HIV antibody test among your travel documents.

Knowing your HIV status is not just a matter of compliance with international immigration regulations. The reality is that the health of those

who are HIV positive is at greater risk in parts of the world where medical facilities are inadequate or where the infection cannot be monitored and treated. If you suspect that you might be HIV positive, the HIV antibody test will give you the answer you need to help you plan your travel appropriately.

If you decide to undergo HIV testing, do so at a center that offers pre- and post-test counseling (many centers offer this service.) Allow yourself two weeks for the testing process. Consider getting tested twice:

anonymously, the first time, so you can decide privately what you want to do if your result is positive, then a second time for the purpose of obtaining the doctor's certificate.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES should you use or allow yourself to be injected with contaminated, unsterilized syringes or needles. This holds for needles/syringes used for drugs, tattooing, acupuncture, or medical/dental procedures.

### **Insurance Requirements**

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By Executive Order of the CSU Chancellor's Office, students participating in study abroad programs are required to have adequate worldwide health and accident insurance coverage. This insurance must cover the expenses of serious illness or accident, accidental death and dismemberment, emergency evacuation, and repatriation of remains and meet, at a *minimum*, the following:

- *Medical expenses resulting from an accident: no less than \$50,000 coverage,*
- *Treatment of mental or nervous disorders, including alcohol and substance abuse: coverage for 50% of expenses incurred up to a maximum of 20 visits per policy year*
- *100% of expenses incurred for inpatient treatment for up to 10 continuous days, then 50% thereafter for up to 35 additional days*

**Note:** Insurance coverage provided by the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) alone does **NOT** satisfy the minimum requirements.

Students participating in **ISEP** or **ISEP-Direct** programs will have to purchase ISEP insurance. Students participating in **CSU-IP** exchanges will purchase their insurance through the program's coordination offices in the CSU Chancellor's Office.

Students participating in **SDSU Exchange** or **Independent/Third Party Provider** programs have the following options:

- You may enroll in the San Diego State University STUDY ABROAD STUDENT MEDICAL INSURANCE PLAN provided by Renaissance Insurance Company. This comprehensive medical benefit plan meets the required levels of coverage (health/medical, emergency evacuation and repatriation of remains) and covers the student from the beginning date through the end date of the student's program (but not before or after.)
- You may use Kaiser, HealthNet, Blue Cross etc., **IF** your plan provides international medical/health coverage and reimburses expenses for any emergency, illness, accident or hospitalization that occurs while you are out of the country. These policies must also cover loss of life abroad at \$10,000 and loss of limb at \$5,000. If the policy does not cover the full cost of medical evacuation for injury or sickness authorized by an attending physician, including the cost of transport home (up to \$10,000.) you will need to purchase supplemental emergency evacuation/repatriation of remains coverage.
- You may purchase insurance of your own choice as long as it meets the basic requirements as outlined above.

See the [insurance section](#) of the Education Abroad Office website ([http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/study\\_abroad/health-insurance-prosp.html](http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/study_abroad/health-insurance-prosp.html)) for more detailed information about insurance and how to purchase it.

### **Optional Insurance: Trip Interruption & Cancellation**

You might want to look into optional trip interruption and cancellation insurance as well. In the event of unforeseen, compelling circumstances (acts of terrorism, natural disasters, death of a family member,) that interrupt travel, or force you to cancel your travel altogether, this policy will allow you to recover a significant part, if not all, of paid travel expenses, such as airline tickets, hotel reservations, tour bookings, etc. STA Travel on the SDSU campus offers this insurance.

### **What To Take (& What Not To Take) With You**

#### **Packing**

Don't know what or how to pack? Some basics are provided below, but you might also want to check out travel guides (many are available in the resource center) and the US Department of State's [Students Abroad](http://studentsabroad.state.gov/) (<http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>) website (Smart Travel > Packing.)

#### **Clothing**

Educate yourself about the seasons (remember, the southern hemisphere is the opposite of the northern hemisphere,) climate, and local customs regarding dress where you are going. By most standards Californians are very casual in their dress, and what is common and acceptable here (e.g., flip flops, Ugg boots, T-shirts and shorts,) may be inappropriate and frowned upon where you're going. You will feel much less obvious and more at ease if your attire blends in with the locals.



If you will be visiting religious sites – churches, mosques, etc. – you will need to dress modestly, including covering bare

arms, shoulders, legs and heads. Be prepared.

It's smartest to pack low maintenance clothing; you might not have easy access to washers, dryers and ironing boards, much less dry cleaners. You can get multiple wearings out of dark colored clothing; permanent press or wrinkle-free fabrics eliminate the need for ironing. Take clothes that you can mix and match to give yourself lots of options. Pack plenty of changes of socks and underwear; go lighter on outer wear. Most of what you take should be appropriate for everyday, but be sure to take one dressier outfit for special occasions.

For winter temperatures think layers rather than packing multiple bulky jackets or coats. You'll save on suitcase space if you take clothing that can be adapted for a variety of climates. For extreme cold, wear lightweight silk underwear closest to your skin, then layer on the shirts and sweaters. Research the price of clothing at your destination. You might discover that the boots and coat you need are less expensive and of better quality than what you can purchase at home, and you won't have to lug them half way around the world. A hooded raincoat with a zip-in lining is ideal for more temperate climates.

### **Bicycles, Skateboards, Snowboards**

What about taking your bicycle, skateboard, surfboard, snowboard, musical instruments, etc., with you? Obviously, the shorter the program the less it makes sense to take one of these items along. The airline will charge you to transport the additional carrying case or oversized item; your prized possession could be damaged during transport; and storage space at your destination is likely to be limited. Realistically, how many times will you use the item? Once? Twice? If so it would probably be better to rent equipment or purchase the item second-hand in your host country.

### **TSA Regulations:**

#### **Carry on and checked baggage**

The Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) establishes the regulations regarding items travelers may carry onboard aircraft or pack in their checked baggage. Go to the [TSA website](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm) (<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm>) for the most up-to-date information and extensive lists of items that may and may not be transported via aircraft.

Liquids, gels and aerosols transported in your carry on luggage must be stored in individual containers of no more than 3 ounces each. All containers must be placed inside one 1-quart zip-lock closure bag. The 1-quart bag must be placed in the plastic bin provided for travelers when going through security.

### **Luggage Specifications**

Suitcases and bags with sturdy wheels will serve you best for long walks through airport and train terminals, and on sidewalks, and streets. Make sure your bags are double stitched, have heavy duty wheel wells, and strong straps for pulling and carrying. Removable luggage straps that can be cinched around the outside of suitcases will save the zipper on your suitcase from excessive wear and tear.

Sending a trunk ahead may or may not be practical. If you choose one of the cheaper methods of shipping, the trunk may not catch up with you until just about the time you're ready to come home.

### **THE GOLDEN RULES OF PACKING**

- Pack lightly – Take about half of what you think you need
- Take clothes that mix and match and layer
- Leave your valuables (expensive jewelry, etc.) at home!
- Make copies of key documents and carry them in different locations
- Travel with as few pieces of luggage as possible

### **Appliances & Electronics: Converters, Adapters**

Electricity in the United States is 110 volts AC (Alternating Current) at 60 cycles. Most of the rest of the world operates on 220 or 100 volts AC at 50 cycles. If you plug your computer, hair dryer, etc., directly into one of these outlets you



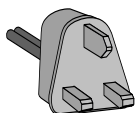
could damage or ruin it. You need both an adapter and converter to be able to use your standard US appliances and electronics abroad.

Converters cut the 220 volts flowing into your appliance in half to make the current compatible with standard 110 volt US current. There are two types of converters: lightweight (up to 50 watts) for low wattage equipment like radios, calculators, razors, etc. and heavy duty (from 50 to 1600 watts) for high wattage appliances such as hair dryers and irons.

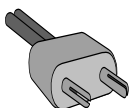
Adapters are a simple plug attachment with the correct configuration of prongs to fit the local electric outlet. An adapter alone does NOT convert voltage. Different countries use many different prong configurations. There may be three prongs instead of two (the third is ground) or the prongs can be different shapes and angles. Sometimes the same country will use different types of plugs.

If you plan to travel in several different countries, you might want to purchase a set of different adapters.

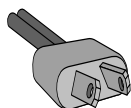
Both converters and adapters can be purchased in travel or hardware stores, or ordered through travel magazines and catalogues.



England  
Africa



Europe  
South  
America



Australia  
New Zealand

### Register Your Electronics Before You Leave

Thinking ahead to your return to the U.S., register your camera, personal computer, (particularly new and foreign-made items,) etc., with US Customs *before* you leave. This way you'll avoid any questions about whether or not you acquired those items abroad that would make them subject to US duty (taxes) when you re-enter the US. Consult the US Customs [Travel Tip: Register Items](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbygr/register_items.xml) ([http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbygr/register\\_items.xml](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbygr/register_items.xml)) and the [Know Before you Go](#) brochure for more information

[egister\\_items.xml](#)) and the [Know Before you Go](#) brochure for more information

If you do make major purchases abroad that you intend to bring back to the US, be sure to save sales slips/receipts. US Customs will want to see them when you re-enter the US.

### Copies of Important Documents, Lists of Emergency Contacts

You will carry the originals of your vital travel documents on your person while you are traveling. You should also pack copies of the following items in your checked baggage and leave a set of these documents with family at home:

- **Passport** - two copies in separate locations in your checked baggage, together with a certified copy (not just a photo copy) of your birth certificate or an expired passport. In the even your current passport is lost or stolen, you have back up documents to facilitate replacement.
- **Tickets** and your **travel itinerary**: all flights, the names of the airlines and flight numbers, name and address of the issuing agency
- **Traveler's checks**
- **Credit/ATM cards**, along with contact information to report loss/theft and get replacements
- **Insurance papers**, for all types of insurance you carry, including policies for coverage at home (renter's insurance, car insurance,) as well as policies for your travel and stay abroad (health/medical and emergency evacuation, trip interruption/cancellation coverage – if you purchased it.) You need policy numbers, contact information for insurers and information about how to file a claim.

### Miscellaneous items to bring along

- camera, batteries and memory cards/film
- a few pictures from home (friends, family)

- travel alarm
- headset & mike for Skyping
- back pack
- rain gear
- small first aid kit
- money belt or neck pouch
- a gift for your host family
- travel combo-lock
- cell phone or phone card (research what is cheapest for your destination!)

## Organize Your Baggage

### What To Carry On Board With You

- Your **essential travel documents (passport, ticket, itinerary, emergency contacts** both at home and at the host institution, etc.)
- **medications** -- anything you could not do without. NEVER put these items in your checked luggage. Keep them with you at all times.
- A **list (inventory) of what you've packed** in each of your bags – keep it with your other important travel documents
- Just enough **cash** – some US currency, some of the currency of your destination – to get you through the first couple of days of travel. NEVER carry large amounts of cash.
- DO carry your **traveler's checks** with you.
- **ATM & credit cards** you will use on the trip; leave ALL others at home.
- **Insurance information:** Health/medical & emergency, trip interruption & cancellation. You need policy numbers, agent contact information (names, phone, e-mail,) and information on how to file claims.

### Your Bags:

- Put **identification tags** with your name and address on all of your bags/luggage, one tag on the outside, and a second one inside. Put a copy of your travel itinerary inside each bag as well.
- **Mark your bags** in some distinctive way, so that you can recognize them easily.
- **Count all your pieces of luggage** - Know exactly how many you have and **COUNT THEM EACH TIME YOU MOVE!** The fewer the better: it's safer, less cumbersome and cheaper as most airlines now charge for checked

and overweight bags. Find out your airline's policy *before* you get to the airport.

### THE BAGGAGE TEST

Pack up the bags and belongings you plan to take with you. Without assistance, carry your bags outside. Now walk around the block with your belongings. You should have at least one of your hands free to juggle tickets and passport.

How'd you do? Want to re-think what and how you packed?

## Getting Ready for Cultural Differences

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### What is culture?

Robert Kohls, former Director of Training and Development for the United States Information Agency, describes culture as “an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society, [it reflects] the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes--its customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation.”

Culture is not simply national in character. Reflect on the United States for a moment. Most of us would agree that there are regional cultures, there are ethnic subcultures, we even talk about how the culture of San Diego State University is different from the culture of UCSD or USD. Social groups have their own cultures, too. Think about the different cultural cliques at the high school you attended. To which one(s) did you belong?

Although we have many things in common with other cultures around the world, each culture has characteristics that distinguish it from others. Some differences are obvious (e.g., language, dress, foods, political organization, etc.). Other differences are more profound and subtle (e.g., values and beliefs.) Newcomers may not be able to articulate these differences until they have much more experience with the culture. In the interim, the newcomer may feel significant discomfort as he or she doesn't know what the cultural “rules” are.

### Cultural Stereotypes

A stereotype is the over-generalized application of cultural traits to describe what an entire group is like. You've probably heard about the “Ugly American” stereotype: the boorish tourist who wears loud shirts, shorts, socks with his sandals and a camera around his neck and expects people to speak English wherever he goes.

Here are some more examples of the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others around the world associate with the “typical” American:

- ❖ outgoing and friendly
- ❖ informal
- ❖ loud, rude, boastful
- ❖ immature
- ❖ hard working
- ❖ helpful
- ❖ extravagant and wasteful
- ❖ sure they have all the answers
- ❖ lacking in class consciousness - disrespectful of authority
- ❖ innovative
- ❖ racially prejudiced
- ❖ ignorant of other countries
- ❖ wealthy
- ❖ generous
- ❖ promiscuous
- ❖ always in a hurry

Do you see yourself in that description? In some ways yes, but not others? That is exactly the point. As gross generalizations, stereotypes may possess some grain of truth, but differences emerge quickly as we examine individuals. While abroad it will be up to you to behave in a manner that shows your hosts you don't fit the negative stereotypical images.

Stereotypes work both ways, of course. What are your ideas about the Germans, the Japanese, Brazilians or the host culture where you're going? One of the pitfalls when we go abroad is taking too much of our own “cultural baggage” with us: we construct our expectations of what things will be like based on images from movies and television, things we've read, contact with people we've met who come from that location, or on hearsay from acquaintances who have traveled there. Do your best to inform yourself about the culture where you're headed, but don't over-generalize and keep an open mind.

### Fitting In

We always feel more comfortable when we “fit in.” “Fitting in” abroad goes hand in hand with learning the rules of the host culture that were mentioned earlier. Following are some areas of culture-specific behavior that you should be conscious of

while abroad. Be yourself, of course, but always keep in mind that you're a guest in someone else's culture.

### **Courtesy**

Make a conscious effort to be more courteous than you would be at home; it will be appreciated and you can't go wrong. Learn and use the local words for "hello," "good morning/afternoon/evening," "please," "thank you," "excuse me" and "good bye," as fast as you can. Observe the locals and the way they greet, take leave and open doors for one another, friends and strangers, and do likewise.

### **Humor**

Wit and humor can be very culturally specific concepts. Don't assume that American ideas of kidding are shared by your host culture. While you intend your comments to be funny, they may not be received that way.

### **Speaking the Language**

Most people will be pleased by your attempts to communicate in their language, so don't feel shy about trying to practice. Use the more formal or polite forms of address until you understand what is appropriate in each social context.

Do not use slang, swear words or off-color expressions in your new language. Research shows that native speakers find such language completely inappropriate and offensive when used by non-natives.

When you do have to speak English, speak slowly and clearly, but do not raise your volume to unnatural levels. That will not help your interlocutor understand you any better. And when speaking English with companions, do not make rude comments or observations about others. You NEVER know who does or does not understand what you're saying.

### **Physical Contact**

Do you shake hands? Embrace? Kiss one cheek, both cheeks? Not touch at all? What is culturally appropriate is a real slippery slope until you understand the different sets of rules governing



physical contact between men and women, men and men, women and women, young and old, casual acquaintances, close friends or relatives in your host culture. Similarly, personal space – how close we get to one another when speaking or sitting - is another culture-specific concept. In both cases, it is much safer to observe and let the party from the host culture take the lead until you learn what is acceptable.

### **Personal Questions**

Don't be taken aback if your host brings up topics that are considered taboos in the US, e.g., how much money you make, your age, your religion, why you do or do not have a girl/boyfriend, are not married, etc. These may be perfectly normal and accepted topics of conversation in your host culture. Go with the flow.

At the same time, learn what topics are not appropriate to discuss. In general, it is natural for Americans to share information about themselves and ask others about their families, but this may be considered rude in your host culture. Let your host steer the conversation when engaging in "small talk."

### **Drinking and Drunkenness**

Global customs relating to consumption of alcohol range from unabashed alcohol-based celebrations such as Oktoberfest in Germany to complete bans on any alcohol consumption whatsoever in some traditional cultures. Know the norms where you're headed and behave accordingly. Drinking, much less drunkenness and raucous drunken behavior, is frowned upon everywhere and in some locations-illegal! Know your limits, the local customs and laws.

### **Bargaining over Prices**

In some cultures, haggling over prices is not only appropriate but expected. As a general rule of thumb, bargaining is not appropriate in stores and shops where items bear price tags, but is quite common in open air markets and bazaars. Take your cues from the locals. Or test the waters by letting the merchant know that you like an item very

much, but the price is a bit higher than you had anticipated spending. If the merchant wants to bargain, she or he'll take the lead.

### Talking Politics

In many societies, politics, current events and international relations are common topics of conversation. Prepare yourself to be challenged by well-informed, articulate members of your host culture who want you to explain and justify US policies and actions. You do not need to modify or apologize for your own convictions, but try to keep your cool when you respond and deflect the feeling that it is a personal attack on you. If necessary, politely agree to disagree.

### Photo Etiquette

Most travelers want to record their experiences in photos. Make sure it is permissible to take pictures in churches, museums, or at government or military sites before snapping shots. Some cultures do not permit taking pictures of people at all for religious and other reasons. Ask permission before taking someone's picture; be courteous whether or not you get the person's approval, and don't forget to say thank you. You might even offer to give your subject a copy of the photo in return, if at all feasible to do so.

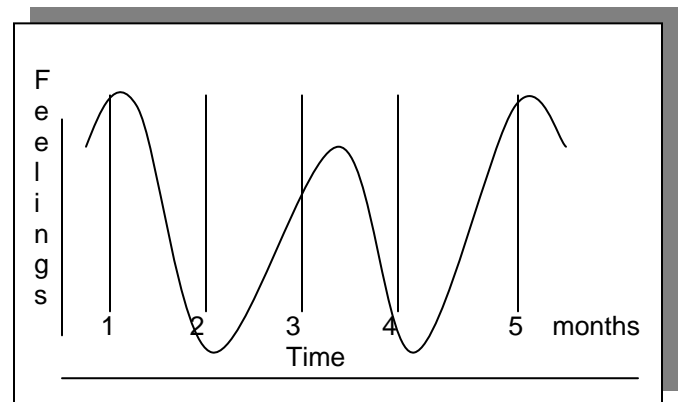
### Culture Shock

There is a very real cycle of cultural adjustment that affects travelers who go abroad for a significant length of time. The first stage is euphoria and excitement: you find yourself in a completely new environment, there are so many fun things to explore and experience. Within a few weeks the sense of wonderment and adventure starts to wear off; you feel homesick and miss doing the things you're used to. You feel awkward, an outsider. You don't understand why members of your host culture do things the way they do. Minor problems become major crises and you feel angry, anxious or depressed. There's nothing wrong with you: You're experiencing culture shock.

Culture shock and its associated feelings are perfectly normal in the cycle of cultural adjustment. As Robert Kohls says, "Culture shock is in some degree inevitable," it is "the occupational hazard of overseas living" which we have to go through, "in

order to enjoy the pleasures of experiencing other countries and cultures in depth."

Culture shock is a cycle, so you can expect to have highs and lows over the length of your stay abroad, as shown in the graph below. Sometimes just talking things out with someone else can provide relief. Remember, you are DEFINITELY not the only one feeling this way! Keeping yourself engaged socially, getting exercise, eating right and getting enough sleep will all help you get through the tough moments. But if you find that you have an extended case of the blues, are feeling extremely depressed and having trouble eating and sleeping, notify your host coordinator at once. He or she will help you get the assistance you need.



### For further reading:

*The Art of Crossing Cultures*, by Craig Storti. 1990. 136 pp. Intercultural Press.

*On Being Foreign: Culture Shock in Short Fiction*. Edited by Tom Lewis and Robert Jungman. 1986. 293 pp. Intercultural Press.

*Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad*, L. Robert Kohls, ed. 1996. 3rd ed. 181 pp. Intercultural Press

### **Special Note To Women**

In some countries (in the Middle East, Latin America, parts of Europe, for example) it is acceptable for men to openly demonstrate their appreciation of feminine attractiveness in ways that American women find offensive. Honking, staring, catcalls, loud and flowery compliments, pinching and gestures, are some common such behaviors. The attention can be flattering at first, but rapidly becomes tiresome, very annoying and embarrassing.

In these societies you might notice that local women don't elicit the same response from men that you do. Watch the way the women behave: they dress discretely, they don't make eye contact with the men, they avoid physical proximity to them on the sidewalk, buses and subways; they virtually ignore male presence in public places.

Follow the lead of local women. In general the best defenses against unwanted male attention are appropriate dress and behavior and a demeanor that indicates confidence and an "I know exactly where I'm going" attitude. Talk with other women in your group about strategies for dealing with unwelcome attention. Try to maintain the perspective that these experiences are part of your growth in the arena of cross-cultural understanding.

Cultural differences in the dynamics of male-female relationships, even simple friendships, can be complicated and difficult to negotiate when you don't know the society's rules. Stereotypes of the "liberated" American women are common. Misunderstandings can develop over supposed "messages" you may not even be aware you're sending.

Bottom line: Prepare yourself by doing your homework regarding gender roles and gender-based codes of behavior in the location where you'll be studying.

### **Racial And Ethnic Concerns**

Where issues of race and ethnicity are concerned, students of color have a broad range of experiences abroad. Some alumni report they felt liberated, freed of the American context of race relations; others say they encountered varying degrees of 'innocent' curiosity about their ethnicity; still others say they ran into both familiar and new types of

discrimination and prejudice and had to learn new coping strategies. But few students say that concerns about racial or ethnic problems you might face abroad are serious enough to preclude participation. At the same time, they advise students of color to do their research, inform themselves about what to expect and prepare for it. Advisors in the Education Abroad Office may be able to assist in putting you in touch with study abroad alumni of color. Excellent articles on such matters can be found at the following websites:

[www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com)

Michigan State University, Information for Multicultural Students:

<http://studyabroad.msu.edu/people/studentsofcolor/index.html>

University of Colorado at Boulder, Diversity in Study Abroad:

[http://studyabroad.colorado.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Abroad.ViewLink&Parent\\_ID=0&Link\\_ID=6E204190-009B-E1E0-D27FB8091127949E&pID=5&IID=17](http://studyabroad.colorado.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Abroad.ViewLink&Parent_ID=0&Link_ID=6E204190-009B-E1E0-D27FB8091127949E&pID=5&IID=17)

Allabroad.us, Helping All Students to Study Abroad:

[http://allabroad.us/study\\_abroad.php](http://allabroad.us/study_abroad.php)

### **LGBT Students**

It is important to be aware of the laws pertaining to homosexuality in the country where you will study as well as in any country you plan to visit. While some countries offer legal protections to LGBT travelers, others criminalize homosexual activity and behavior. It is also important to familiarize yourself with the general attitudes of the populace toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered members of their community. Whatever the general position, you will find that there will always be pockets of difference and personal idiosyncrasies just as in the U.S. In order to have a safe and rewarding study abroad experience, prepare yourself before you go. Talk to other students who have been where

you will go and use the following web resources for information and support pertaining to LGBT travel:

U.S. Department of State “students abroad” website. Go to: Smart Travel>For GLBT Travelers: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>

NAFSA Rainbow Special Interest Group Student Resources: <http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/student.htm>

Michigan State University: <http://studyabroad.msu.edu/forms/glb.html>

Ithaca College LGBT Students and Study Abroad Brochure: <http://www.ithaca.edu/sacl/lgbt/docs/abr.pdf>

Transitions Abroad: [http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0011/gays\\_and\\_lesbians\\_abroad.shtml](http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/magazine/0011/gays_and_lesbians_abroad.shtml)

### **Students With Disabilities\***

Living with a disability in no way prevents you from studying abroad.

With plenty of vigilance, your trip abroad can not only be safe, but it can also be accessible.

#### Before You Go

- First things first. Check with your doctor to make sure that it is okay for you to travel.
- Research study abroad programs to find one that will accommodate any special needs you may have. The Education Abroad Office can direct you to programs that set aside extra funds to make reasonable accommodations such as: personal care assistants, foreign sign language interpreters, oxygen providers, etc.
- Thoroughly research your location(s) and its accessibility—wheel chair ramps can be narrower, hotel bathrooms may not have safety bars, and crossing lights may not have a sound indicator. Accessibility laws vary from country to country, so

it’s better to be prepared for what you may encounter before you go.

- Before you book your flights, contact the airline early to confirm that your medical equipment (ventilator, wheelchair, etc.) meets the airline’s regulations; and obtain copies of the airline’s policies on the rights of passengers with disabilities. Ask plenty of questions such as, “Will I be required to purchase a second seat for my medical equipment” or “is the airplane bathroom wheelchair accessible?”
- Obtain a letter from your doctor on letterhead, explaining your need for any medical devices and medications. If possible, have this letter translated into the language used in the locations you will be visiting.
- Do you require oxygen service? Currently, passengers are not allowed to bring their own oxygen canisters aboard to use during flights; and legally, airlines are not required to provide oxygen service. Find out in advance about your airline’s procedures for allowing oxygen suppliers to meet you at the arrival gate.
- Make sure you have more than adequate medical insurance to be prepared for the unexpected. Are you covered under your parents’ policy or through your program provider? Now is a good time to find out if your current coverage covers you overseas. Consider obtaining supplemental insurance to fill in any gaps your current provider misses. And be sure to read the fine print about pre-existing conditions. See a list of companies that offer overseas medical coverage and other services.
- If you’re planning to travel to another country with your service animal, start the necessary documentation early. The amount of paperwork involved in bringing an animal into some countries can take from as little as a few weeks up to the course of a year! Be sure to contact the nearest embassy or

consulate of the country you will be visiting to find out the requirements of the country you will be visiting. (Some countries even require the implantation of an identifying microchip!) Ask your doctor to write a letter explaining your need for the animal, and get the health and rabies certificates from the animal's veterinarian documenting that the animal is up-to-date on all shots. Know how to obtain medical care, if needed, for your animal abroad.

- If you already use the services of a personal assistant, chances are, you'll want similar services abroad. Make arrangements with your study abroad program to arrange for the services of an assistant or to find out how your current assistant can be accommodated. Apart from program tuition, funds need to be set aside for your assistant's transportation, lodging, and day-to-day expenses.

- Since many other countries use 220-volt electricity while U.S. appliances use 110-volt electricity, you may need to purchase a "converter" or a "transformer" to be able to use your medical devices or equipment. (See previous section "Appliances & Electronics".) Check with your manufacturer to find out what will work best for your devices.

- The SDSU number to dial in case of emergency is 619-594-1991. Find out from your study abroad program provider (if other than SDSU) who to contact in case of a medical emergency, and create a list of the names and numbers of nearby medical facilities.

- Learn how to say and/or write simple phrases in the language spoken at your destination explaining your disability, and how to ask for or reject help. ("Thank you. I do not need help." "I am blind. Can you help me cross the street?")

- Bring an extra quantity of any medications with you and pack it in your carry-on, just in case your checked luggage gets lost. Just remember to keep it in its original container and clearly labeled. And while you're at it, check with the local embassy to make sure that your medication is acceptable to carry into the country. Visit the [TSA website](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm) (<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm>) for current medication screening procedures.

- If you use a ventilator, try to carry a spare ventilator with you abroad. Having some simple tools and a few replacement parts on hand doesn't hurt either.

### Travel Logistics

- Whether you require a wheel-chair or a sight-guide, you can request assistance at your airline's check-in to help you maneuver through the airport and to make your travel experience easier.

- Know your rights when going through airport security screening both here and abroad. For example, the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) limit of one carry-on bag and one personal bag does not apply to medical supplies and assistive devices. Visit the current TSA policies as it relates to disabilities.

- If you are required to undergo a personal search and you need privacy, you can request for the screening to be conducted in a private area of the security checkpoint. Feel free to request a disposable paper drape for additional privacy or if you want the Security Officer to change their gloves.

- It's a good idea to carry a Pacemaker Identification Card (ID) when going through airport security. Do NOT walk through the metal detector or be hand-wanded. Show the Security Officer your pacemaker ID ahead of time, and request a pat-down inspection.

- Normally, oxygen sources are temporarily disconnected during security screening. If you are not medically cleared to be disconnected or if you have concerns, ask the Security Officer for an alternate inspection process so you can remain connected.

- Allow at least 90 minutes between connecting flights to make sure you have enough time to transfer between gates.

•If you use a ventilator, know your ventilator settings in case the dials get knocked around while you're traveling. Check those settings regularly while traveling and try not to be separated from your ventilator during your travels.

Contact the American Embassy/Consulate in your host country for information on your tax obligations, how to file your return and pay your taxes from abroad.

## **Domestic Responsibilities – How To Take Care of Them While You Are Away**

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### **Power Of Attorney**

Chances are your signature will be needed for a banking, academic, or other legal matter during your absence. You should make arrangements for a "power of attorney," an individual of your own designation (family member, very close friend) who has your authority to act on your behalf in your absence. Describe in writing and in detail the duties this individual is authorized to execute. Take the document to a notary public for certification. Take a copy with you abroad, leave copies with the designated individual as well as family members and/or persons in whom you place your trust.

### **Absentee Voting**

Just because you are not physically in the U.S. at election time does not mean you cannot cast your ballot for elected officials, referenda and propositions. Register to vote before you leave the US. Consult the local Registrar of Voters (San Diego Registrar of Voters, <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/voters/Eng/Eindex.shtml>),

to get information about obtaining and submitting an absentee ballot while you're abroad. Make note of your party, district and city. If necessary, your completed absentee ballot can be notarized at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

### **Filing Your Taxes**

Plan ahead if you are going to be out of the country on April 15, the deadline for filing your federal and state income tax returns and paying any taxes owed. The IRS (federal tax bureau) and Franchise Tax Board (state tax bureau) will not exempt you automatically because you are studying abroad. You can request an extension to delay the filing of your return (usually two months,) but you are expected to pay any taxes you owe by the April 15 deadline.



## II. On Your Way: Traveling & Living Abroad

### Arrival, Immigration and Customs Inspections

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Upon arrival in another country via international flight (or other means) you will go through both immigration and customs. Just as in the US, these procedures are official and very serious, so do NOT make comments or jokes to anyone about “being a terrorist,” “bombs” or smuggled items. Customs and immigration can be somewhat intimidating and you may feel nervous or anxious, but they are strictly routine, so try to relax.



The first agent you will speak to is the immigration officer. This individual will ask to see your passport, visa and documentation of compliance with health regulations (immunizations, HIV test or other,) if any is required for that country. It is up to the immigration officer’s discretion to grant you entry into the country so be polite and accommodate the agent’s requests. S/he will ask you about the purpose of your visit and the length of your stay, then stamp your passport.

Usually you collect your checked baggage after you have passed through immigration, then proceed to customs inspection. You may have received a customs declaration form to be filled out on the plane (or train). The customs agent will ask you for the form and refer to it as s/he examines your bags, both carry-ons and checked bags. You may be separated from other travelers; your belongings may be examined very thoroughly; you may be asked to pay duties if there are any irregularities or violations of customs regulations. On the other hand, you may be waved through with no examination or special attention whatsoever.

Most major airports and train stations offer banking services, so if you have not brought any local currency with you, it is possible to purchase some

with U.S. dollars, other foreign currency, or travelers checks. Exchange just enough to get you through a taxi ride and a meal or two, as exchange rates at airports and train stations are usually much higher than outside local banks.

### Carrying Immigration Documents on Your Person

Your passport is your most important legal document while traveling abroad. **GUARD IT CAREFULLY.** In some countries non-citizens are required to carry their passports at all times. Ask coordinators at your host institution what is required by law and follow their guidance. Do not travel away from your study abroad site, and particularly away from your host country, without your passport.

If your passport should be lost or stolen, report it to the nearest US embassy/consulate and coordinators at your host institution **IMMEDIATELY.** If it is stolen, report the theft to local police as well.

### Services Provided By The US Embassy/Consulate

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#### Register your residency abroad

One of the first things you should do when you get settled at your host university is register your residency abroad with the US Department of State through the [Travel Registration](https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/) website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>. You will receive routine information about local conditions and in the event of an emergency, such as a natural disaster, local US authorities have your emergency contact information on file.

## Other services

The United States Embassy and its consulates can offer some limited types of assistance to US travelers abroad. They can: provide you with a list of local attorneys and physicians, contact next of kin in the event of emergency or serious illness, contact friends or relatives on your behalf to request funds or guidance; provide assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster and replace a lost or stolen passport.

The US Embassy/Consulate cannot: book or change travel reservations, give or lend money, cash personal checks, arrange free medical service or legal advice, provide bail or get you out of jail, act as couriers or interpreters, search for missing luggage, or settle disputes with local authorities. The primary purpose of the US Embassy and its consulates is to fulfill the diplomatic mission of the United States government abroad; not to play nursemaid to American travelers.

### US Department of State and Embassy/Consulate Contact Information

Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Also note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.

- **Tips for Traveling Abroad:**  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips\\_1232.html#contact\\_embassy](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html#contact_embassy).
- **Emergency assistance to American citizens abroad:**  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies\\_1212.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html)
- **Travel registration:**  
<https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

## Laws & Jurisdiction of Your Host Country

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During the time you are abroad, you are subject to the laws of the country you are visiting. Do not make any assumptions about what is and is not legal in your host country. Familiarize yourself with local laws and obey them scrupulously.

If you are accused of breaking the law, the US Embassy and its consulates can provide very little assistance beyond giving you the names of competent attorneys and doctors. The US Embassy/consulate cannot help you pay for these services, nor can their staff intervene on your behalf in the host country's justice system and judicial procedures.

Many legal systems are based on the principle that the accused is guilty until proven innocent, the opposite of US law. Bail provisions as we know them in the United States do not exist in many countries; pre-trial detention (including solitary confinement for some crimes) without bail is not uncommon and can last for months. Prison officials probably won't speak English; prison conditions can be very harsh and uncomfortable or downright deplorable in developing or fundamentalist countries. Many countries do not have trial by jury; in some cases you may not even be present at your trial.

If you get in trouble, seek local legal assistance as quickly as possible.

### Drugs

Avoid ANY involvement with substances that are illegal in your host country. Drug laws and the consequences for drug possession, use or sale, or simply being present where illegal substances are being used, can be extreme. Americans have been jailed abroad for possessing as little as three grams (about one-tenth of an ounce) of marijuana. The average jail sentence in drug cases worldwide is about seven years. In at

least four countries (Iran, Algeria, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Turkey) the death penalty can be imposed for some drug-related convictions.

## **Safety and Security**

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Everyone involved in the implementation of your study abroad program is concerned about your safety and welfare and will do their utmost to provide a secure and unthreatening environment in which you can live and learn. Protocols have been put in place at both host institutions and SDSU to handle health, natural disaster, civil disturbance, terrorism and other types of contingencies that could impact you while you are abroad. Networks have been created for quickly communicating breaking information via phone, e-mail and fax.

Most countries in the world have less street crime and personal violence than what is typical of urban and suburban America. Indeed, returning study abroad students often report that they felt much safer while abroad than at home in the US. Nevertheless, the fact that you are a foreigner in unfamiliar surroundings can increase the possibility that you will be the victim of certain types of crime, particularly theft and fraud.

While some parts of the world may be more closely identified with routine acts of civil unrest, political violence can erupt just about anywhere. You could find yourself innocently caught up in political strife that is not directed at you personally or even as an American, but the situation can be very dangerous, nonetheless. In locations where political violence and acts of terrorism are known to be a threat, program personnel at host institutions do their best to work with law enforcement and the local US diplomatic corps to put measures in place to protect your safety.

Pay close attention during orientation at your host institution to remarks about how to maximize your personal safety and security and exercise the following:

### **Common Sense Precautions**

- 1) Keep a low profile, try not to make yourself conspicuous by dress (expensive clothes, jewelry and accessories, camera, etc.) loud

speech, or by behaving in ways that identify you as a foreigner and a targetable individual.

- 2) Stay away from political protests and demonstrations, crowds, or other potentially volatile situations. No matter what your personal sympathies are, do not get involved!
- 3) Restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate can be targets for thieves or terrorists. Exercise caution.
- 4) Follow the local news media (newspapers, tv, etc.) to stay abreast of what is going on.
- 5) In the event of a natural disaster, health alert, terrorism or political unrest, stay in close touch with program staff at both your host university and San Diego State University as well as the US Embassy/Consulate and follow their instructions.
- 6) Be wary of unexpected packages; stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, or other areas of uncontrolled public access.
- 7) Report anyone who appears to be following you or other suspicious persons loitering around residential or instructional facilities.
- 8) Keep outside gates and access to your residence locked; be cautious about sharing personal information such as your address or details about your study program and your fellow students with strangers.
- 9) When staying in a single location for more than a week, register your presence at the nearest U.S. embassy/consulate.
- 10) Make sure program staff at your host university (and your host family, if applicable) always know where you are and how to contact you in the event of an emergency. If you're going to travel, even if it's only for a single night, give them a copy of your itinerary with contact information.
- 11) Develop with your family a plan for regular telephone or e-mail contact, so that in times of heightened political tension, you will be able to communicate

with your parents directly about your safety and well-being.

- 12) The US government monitors the political conditions in every country around the world. For current information, advisories, or warnings contact the State Department in Washington DC (202 647-4000) or the local US embassy or consulate where you are (see the previous section on US embassies or consulates abroad in this handbook).
- 13) Be aware of local health conditions abroad: especially if you are traveling to remote areas, you should be aware of any public health service recommendations or advisories. For current health conditions abroad contact local officials or have your parents contact the country desk at the State Department ([http://travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html)) (202-647-4000), or the Centers for Disease Control (404-639-3311). [See Health]
- 14) Know & respect local laws. What is legal in the US is not necessarily legal abroad.
- 15) Exchange your money in banks, do not exchange your money on the black market or on the street. Do not carry more money than you need for the day. Carry your credit & ATM cards, etc. in a very safe place.
- 16) Do not impair your judgment through excessive consumption of alcohol or use of drugs.
- 17) In some parts of the world, women foreigners attract unwanted attention from males. To minimize harassment female students are advised to observe the following: Dress conservatively. Short skirts and tank tops may be comfortable, but they may send the wrong message. Be aware that in other countries men may interpret a woman's friendliness as romantic interest. Avoid going out alone with someone you don't know and do not walk alone late at night or in questionable neighborhoods. Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know in a non-public place.

HOW TO DIAL FOR HELP ANYWHERE IN  
THE WORLD

[The International "911" List](http://studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/911_ABROAD.pdf)

[http://studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/911\\_ABROAD.pdf](http://studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/911_ABROAD.pdf)

## Health & Medical Care

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The BEST way to stay healthy while you're abroad is to take good care of yourself: watch what you eat and drink, don't wear yourself out, get plenty of rest and exercise; in hotter climates avoid excessive exposure to sun and drink plenty of liquids to avoid dehydration. If you're going to drink alcohol, keep consumption to moderate levels.

### Food and Water

In locations where hygiene and sanitation are poor and there are concerns about the safety of drinking water straight from the tap, travelers should keep the following in mind to avoid travelers' diarrhea and more serious gastrointestinal infections:



### Water

If tap water is unsafe to drink, drink only commercially bottled water or water that you are SURE has been purified through boiling or filtering and/or chlorination.) Avoid ice unless you know that it was made from purified water. Similarly, it is safer to drink directly from a commercially sealed beverage can or bottle than from a questionable glass or cup. ANY surfaces that will come in contact with the mouth, such as the tops of cans or bottles, should be wiped clean before being opened.

Beverages that are safe to drink include:

- Drinks made with boiled water, such as tea and coffee
- Canned or bottled carbonated beverages, including juices, carbonated bottled water and soft drinks.
- Beer and wine (in moderation!)

## **Milk Products, Fresh Fruit and Vegetables**

Do not consume unpasteurized milk and milk products, such as cheese.

Eat only fruit and vegetables that you have washed and peeled yourself. Look for anti-bacterial drops at pharmacies and grocery stores used to purify water and soaking fruits and vegetables to make them bacteria-free. Follow the directions on the bottle regarding the number of drops needed per liter of water and guidelines on how long to soak your food items.

## **Purchasing Food from Street-Vendors**

Street vendors all over the world offer enticing food items for sale. It is advisable to avoid foods sold at street stands unless and until you have ample evidence from reliable local sources that it is safe for visitors to eat.

You may notice that locals eating at street stands do not get sick. That's because they have already developed immunities to local bacteria, but visitors have not. Watch out!

## **Restaurants**

Use your good sense when it comes to eating in restaurants. As a general rule of thumb, pricier restaurants catering to tourists provide purified water and ice (as well as bottled water,) disinfect their lettuce and vegetables, and properly cook and refrigerate meats and other perishables. More economic eating establishments catering to locals may or may not. Ask your program coordinators or host families for recommendations on good restaurants for foreign students on a budget.

## **If You Become Ill While You're Abroad**

While onsite at your program location, program staff are your best resources for helping you contact a physician or other medical personnel if you become ill or injured. Contact them immediately.

If you become ill during breaks in your program or pre-/post program travel in a location where you do not speak the language, you're going to need to find an English-speaking doctor. The American embassy/consulate or hotels or even travel agencies (such as Thomas Cook) that cater to American

tourists can provide you with a list of English-speaking physicians.

The US Department of State website for travelers will also steer you to a list of doctors/hospitals in your location. Start here: [The US State Department list of doctors/hospitals abroad](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1195.html)  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies\\_1195.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1195.html)

## **Risk of HIV and other Blood-borne Infectious Diseases**

As was pointed out in the pre-departure "Getting and Staying Healthy" section of this handbook, not all countries have the same standards regarding the screening of blood and blood products for HIV and other infectious diseases, and use of only sterile, disposable syringes and needles. If you are injured or become ill in an area where it is not possible to certify the safety of blood products, avoid or postpone a blood transfusion unless it is absolutely necessary.

Similar cautions should be taken with respect to needles and syringes. Some countries even reuse disposable injection equipment. You may be able to purchase needles and syringes and take them to the hospital for your own use. If not, make sure the needles and syringes come straight from an unopened package or have been properly sterilized. When in doubt, ask to see how the equipment has been sterilized.

**Concerns about sterility apply to ALL instruments used to pierce the skin for:**  
Injections, tattooing, acupuncture, ear piercing and dental work.

## **Over the Counter Medications**

Do not use "over the counter" medications unless you are familiar with the product. These products are not subject to the same federal health and safety regulations as medicines available only by prescription.


## **Advice For Students With Disabilities**

- Join disability organizations and support groups located at your destination to create a support system to help you with the transition of living in another country. The [Mobility International](#) website is a good place to start!
- Each day, carefully pack everything you'll need to take along while you're away from your lodging for the day. Be sure to bring back-up supplies in case of emergencies.
- On a periodic basis, reach out to your support group of friends, family, faculty, officials, and locals to help ease any culture shock or homesickness you may experience.
- If you take medication or use other supplies, keep up with your schedule, and take inventory often to make sure you're not running low. A study abroad experience is a great opportunity to try new things, but this is not the time to experiment with not taking your medications or mixing alcohol with medicine.
- Take it easy. Resist the urge to try to fill every waking minute with activities. Every day presents an opportunity for a new adventure. You'll have plenty!
- Above all else, be safe. There are predators everywhere that try to take advantage of foreigners—there are others who particularly, may try to take advantage of your disability. Ask for help when you need it; but be careful when accepting assistance from strangers. Whether you simply shake your head with a stern look on your face, or unapologetically say “no,” be firm when declining unwelcome “help” from strangers. Always practice basic safety rules like not flashing excessive cash or valuables, and traveling in groups; and always be aware of your surroundings. If something doesn't feel right or look right, you have the right to leave the situation immediately!

## Financial Aid and Academics While Abroad

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### Financial Aid Disbursement



If you are receiving financial aid, remember that a staff person at your host university must fax verification of your presence and enrollment to the SDSU Disbursements Office AFTER your arrival abroad. It is your responsibility to let staff know and follow up to make sure it is taken care of.

Verification of enrollment must:

- Be on official letterhead of your host university
- State the dates that you are enrolled
- State the number of units you are enrolled in
- Be signed by your overseas coordinator

The letter should be forwarded directly to:

San Diego State University  
Student Financial Services, Attn: Debbie Hegmann  
5500 Campanile Ave.  
San Diego, CA 92182-7425

Fax: (619) 594-2568  
dhegmann@mail.sdsu.edu

After verification of enrollment has been received, your financial aid will be direct deposited to your account.

Keep in mind that you are required to be enrolled in the equivalent (as determined by the SDSU Office of Advising and Evaluations) of at least 12 SDSU units at your host institution in order to receive your full financial aid allocation. If you enroll in fewer units, your aid will be reduced proportionately.

Similarly, you must receive passing grades in your classes abroad. If you do not, this will negatively impact the amount of your aid allocation in future semesters at SDSU.

### Changes to Your Pre-Approved Academic Program

Once abroad it is not uncommon for students to find they have to make changes in the academic program

that was approved by advisors before they left SDSU.

If you find yourself in this situation, it is your responsibility to get in touch with faculty and advisors that signed your approval form, let them know why changes are necessary and offer your proposals for alternative courses.

It may be that you want to substitute a class in another academic area altogether, a department for which you did not get advisors' signatures before you left. In this case you will need to communicate with the advisor in that department. Keep in mind that each department has its own requirements about what will and will not be acceptable course work.

Send advisors detailed descriptions of the new courses, if you can, to facilitate their assessment of equivalency to courses at SDSU, and request their judgment as to whether or not you will be able to get SDSU credit for the classes.

Save your e-mail communications with faculty and advisors, bring home course syllabi, your notes, research papers/projects and tests and any other materials your advisors request to document your work.

Once you're abroad, it isn't possible to amend the academic approval form you submitted before leaving SDSU. You will need to petition for the new units using the Request for Adjustment of Academic Requirement (RAAR) form after you return. The form is available at the SDSU Office of the Registrar. Using the RAAR, your saved e-mail communications with advisors, and the course materials you brought home, the petition process is relatively simple and straightforward.

## Stretching Your Dollars

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Depending on the cost of living in your host country location, your routine expenses may be higher or even lower than at home. It's likely to take you a little while to get comfortable with the local currency and understanding prices in terms of their dollar equivalents. You're certain to encounter all kinds of tempting ways to spend your money on entertainment, food, clothes, local specialties and handicrafts. It's easy to lose track of what you're spending, but nothing is worse than finding yourself out of money and no simple or quick way to get more. The following list of suggestions will help you make your dollars go as far as possible:



- Make both daily and weekly budgets and stick to them.
- Learn how the local currency relates to US dollars as quickly as possible.
- Ask about special rates and discounts for students wherever you go; take advantage of the benefits available to you through use of your International Student Identification Card (ISIC) for travel, accommodations, entrance fees, some types of entertainment, etc.
- Choose less expensive alternatives for meals whenever possible. Cook for yourself (especially breakfasts); eat at subsidized student cafeterias rather than restaurants. Eat out only on special occasions.
- Look for free, inexpensive and discounted sources of entertainment and recreation on campus and local community.
- Shop at local street markets or major chain supermarkets. Avoid specialty shops and convenience stores with big price markups.
- Hold off on making major purchases until you are familiar with the full range of selections, quality and prices. You might even decide that you really don't need that expensive item after all.

- When you travel, stay in Youth or Student Hostels or modest bed-and-breakfasts rather than hotels that cater to tourists and business travelers with big budgets.
- Take care of your belongings, safeguard your travelers checks and cash.

### Opening a Bank Account Abroad

You will likely receive advice on banking and how best to handle your funds during orientation for your program. Some programs require students to establish a local bank account, but if not, it may be something you choose to do for the sake of convenience. Many banks issue debit cards so you can make feeless withdrawals in the local currency from their ATMs.

### How to Get Money from Home

Money can be sent to you from home in a variety of ways:

1. Bank to bank cable/wire transfer. Your hometown bank may have to process the cable/wire transfer through a major, internationally recognized US bank, which will deal in turn with an internationally recognized counterpart abroad.
2. [Western Union](#) offers online, point of contact, and phone money transfer services. You can receive funds in a matter of minutes, overnight or have them direct deposited into a bank account. The cost for service can be 10+% of the amount transferred.
3. Bank draft obtained from a bank in the US that has been drawn from a bank abroad in the currency of that country. For example, your family's bank in San Diego could secure a check in Spanish Euros from the Banco Hispano-Americano in Madrid payable to you. The draft can then be sent to you by expedited courier service (FedEx, DHL, UPS), registered or certified mail for you to cash or deposit abroad.

- Cashier's check in US dollars from a major US bank. The check should be sent to you by expedited courier service, registered or certified mail). The validity of the check will have to be confirmed by the receiving bank which could take several days or longer.

Note: Personal checks from family and friends are not likely to be negotiable instruments abroad.

## **When It's Time To Come Home**

### **Host Institution Transcripts**

At the beginning of this handbook, the point was made that whatever else you take away from your study abroad experience, the fundamental purpose is for you to receive credit for the academic work you complete abroad.

The transcript issued by your host institution documenting your credits and grades is the record required by the SDSU Registrar to bring your units back with you.

### **Official Transcript for the SDSU Registrar:**

• **ISEP, ISEP-Direct or CSU-IP program participants:** An official copy of your transcript will be sent to SDSU on your behalf, you do not have to make a special request

• **SDSU Exchange or Independent Program/Third Party Provider program participants:**

It is your responsibility to request that program staff at your host institution send an official copy of your transcript to SDSU AND to provide the address where your transcripts should be sent. Emphasize that transcripts should NOT be sent to the Education Abroad Office.

If you are an **undergraduate**, your transcripts need to be sent **DIRECTLY** to:

San Diego State University  
Enrollment Services Transcript Unit  
5500 Campanile Dr.

San Diego, CA 92182-7416

If you are a **graduate student**, your transcripts need to be sent **DIRECTLY** to:

Cristina Sanchez  
Graduate and Research Affairs  
San Diego State University  
5500 Campanile Drive  
San Diego, CA 92182-8220

### **Request Additional Copies of Your Transcript for Your Own Use**

Participants in all program types are advised to request copies of their transcript for their own personal use if you intend to apply to graduate school or would like to document your studies abroad with future employers. These copies will be released to you by your host institution. You may be asked to pay for these copies.

### **Personal Belongings:**

#### **What Can I Bring Back With Me?**

All articles acquired abroad and in your possession at the time of your return to the United States must be declared to US Customs officials, either orally or in writing. Declaration forms will be distributed during your flight back to the US.

Your **BEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION** about what you may and may not bring back with you, declarations, payment of duties, etc., is the **US Customs and Border Protection** itself. The agency has prepared a detailed brochure for travelers, "[Know Before You Go: Regulations for International Travel by US Residents,](http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/kbyg_regulations.ctt/kbyg_regulations.pdf)" [http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/kbyg\\_regulations.ctt/kbyg\\_regulations.pdf](http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/kbyg_regulations.ctt/kbyg_regulations.pdf). You can also consult with US Customs personnel at US embassies/consulates abroad. Inform yourself before you get on the plane to come home.

Here are the categories of items you must declare:

- Items you purchased and are carrying with you upon return to the United States.
- Items you received as gifts, such as wedding or birthday presents.
- Items you inherited.
- Items you bought in duty-free shops, on the ship, or on the plane.
- Repairs or alterations to any items you took abroad and then brought back, even if the repairs/alterations were performed free of charge.
- Items you brought home for someone else.
- Items you intend to sell or use in your business, including business merchandise that you took out of the United States on your trip.

The duty-free exemption, also called the *personal exemption*, is the total value of merchandise you may bring back to the United States without having to pay duty. You may bring back more than your exemption, but you will have to pay duty on it. In most cases, the personal exemption is \$800, but there are some exceptions to this rule.

Personal belongings of US origin taken abroad may be sent back by mail duty-free if, on the outside wrapper, it is stated that the articles were taken out of the US as personal effects and are being returned without having been repaired or altered while abroad ("American Goods Returned").

### **Sending Items Home**

So, just how are you going to get everything home with you? If you intend to ship items back, refer to the **US Customs and Border Protection** brochure, "[Know Before You Go: Regulations for International Travel by US Residents](http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/kbyg_regulations.ctt/kbyg_regulations.pdf)," [http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/kbyg\\_regulations.ctt/kbyg\\_regulations.pdf](http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/kbyg_regulations.ctt/kbyg_regulations.pdf).

The general guidelines are:

- Gifts for family and friends worth up to \$100 per person, per day, may be imported duty and tax free. Mark the package "UNSOLICITED GIFT." If the package contains gifts for more than one person, mark it both "UNSOLICITED GIFT" and "CONSOLIDATED GIFT PACKAGE". List the nature and value of the contents. For

consolidated packages, also include the name of the individual receiving each gift.

- Books can usually be mailed home at a special rate if they are packed according to specifications, so check .They are exempt from payment of duty.
- You can ship home personal goods of US origin (basically, items you took with you, including clothing) duty-free if you mark them as "AMERICAN GOODS RETURNED." Clothing items purchased abroad **DO NOT** qualify.
- Liquor cannot be mailed to the US.

**WARNING:** Do not misrepresent the contents of your packages. US Customs opens packages regularly and randomly (not just "suspicious-looking" ones.) Making a false declaration is a criminal offense!

## III. After Your Return

### Program Evaluation

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You will be asked to complete a study abroad program evaluation for CSU-IP, ISEP, or your independent program but don't forget that SDSU has an evaluation too! As a study abroad returnee, your feedback is invaluable to SDSU students who have many questions about studying abroad. If you haven't already done so, please submit an [SDSU Study Abroad Evaluation](#) now. You can find a link to the evaluation above and in the alumni section of the SDSU study abroad website.



### Annual Re-Entry Conference

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Every February San Diego area colleges, universities, and study abroad program providers host a conference for study abroad returnees. The conference is designed to benefit you personally and professionally by helping you reflect upon your experiences, lessons learned, and skills gained during your study abroad experience. You will also network with students and professionals and learn about further international opportunities at home and abroad.



Learn about (and register for) the [Southern California Re-entry Conference](#).

### Reverse Culture/Re-Entry Shock

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Coming home may be more difficult than you anticipate. While some students make the transition back with ease, many others find the adjustment upon return to the United States to be a bit trying and confusing. While it's great to be reunited with loved ones and hang out in all the old comfortable places, you may still feel a little disoriented and miss many aspects of your time abroad. It could be

that you're finding your friends and family can't relate to your experience abroad, or perhaps it's difficult to be back in an American classroom. No doubt your usual routine may seem a tad boring after the excitement and novelty of Madrid, Kathmandu, or London. These feelings are quite normal. Re-entering your home culture can be just as difficult as adjusting to your host culture.

### Ten Top Immediate Reentry Challenges As Rated by University Students <sup>2</sup>

There are lots of reasons to look forward to going home, but there are also a number of psychological, social and cultural aspects which can prove difficult – often because they are unanticipated. The following list was generated by interviewing students like you who have been through the experience and survived nicely. However, they say you should take the process seriously by being realistic and thinking about it and your possible reactions. They offer the following thoughts on reentry for your consideration in the hope they will make your return both more enjoyable and more productive.

1. **BOREDOM** After all the newness and stimulation of your time abroad, a return to family, friends, and old routines (however nice and comforting) can seem very dull. It is natural to miss the excitement and challenges which characterize study in a foreign country, but it is up to you to find ways to overcome such negative reactions – remember a bored person is also boring.

2. **“NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR”** One thing you can count on upon your return: no one will be as interested in hearing about your adventures and triumphs as you will be in sharing those experiences. This is not a

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<sup>2</sup> From the “What's Up With Culture” website, module 2.3.4, online at <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/index.htm> Dr. Bruce La Brack

rejection of you or your achievements, but simply the fact that once they have heard the highlights, any further interest on your audiences' part is probably unlikely. Be realistic in your expectations of how fascinating your journey is going to be for everyone else. Be brief.

**3. YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN** Even when given a chance to explain all the sights you saw and feelings you had while studying abroad, it is likely to be at least a bit frustrating to relay them coherently. It is very difficult to convey this kind of experience to people who do not have similar frames of reference or travel backgrounds, no matter how sympathetic they are as listeners. You can tell people about your trip, but you may fail to make them understand exactly how or why you felt a particular way. It's okay.

**4. REVERSE "HOMESICKNESS"** Just as you probably missed home for a time after arriving overseas, it is just as natural to experience some reverse homesickness for the people, places, and things that you grew accustomed to as a student overseas. To an extent it can be reduced by writing letters, telephoning, and generally keeping in contact, but feelings of loss are an integral part of international sojourns and must be anticipated and accepted as a natural result of study abroad.

**5. RELATIONSHIPS HAVE CHANGED** It is inevitable that when you return you will notice that some relationships with friends and family will have changed. Just as you have altered some of your ideas and attitudes while abroad, the people at home are likely to have experienced some changes. These changes may be positive or negative, but expecting that no change will have occurred is unrealistic. The best preparation is flexibility, openness, minimal preconceptions, and tempered optimism.

**6. PEOPLE SEE "WRONG" CHANGES** Sometimes people may concentrate on small alterations in your behavior or ideas and seem threatened or upset by them. Others may ascribe "bad" traits to the influence of your time abroad. These incidents may be motivated by jealousy, fear, or feelings of superiority or inferiority. To avoid or minimize them it is necessary to monitor yourself and be aware of the reactions of those around you, especially in the first few weeks following your

return. This phase normally passes quickly if you do nothing to confirm their stereotypes.

**7. PEOPLE MISUNDERSTAND** A few people will misinterpret your words or actions in such a way that communication is difficult. For example, what you may have come to think of as humor (particularly sarcasm, banter, etc.) and ways to show affection or establish conversation may not be seen as wit, but aggression or "showing off." Conversely, a silence that was seen as simply polite overseas might be interpreted at home, incorrectly, as signaling agreement or opposition. New clothing styles or mannerisms may be viewed as provocative, inappropriate, or as an affectation. Continually using references to foreign places or sprinkling foreign language expressions or words into an English conversation is often considered boasting. Be aware of how you may look to others and how your behavior is likely to be interpreted.

**8. FEELINGS OF ALIENATION** Sometimes the reality of being back "home" is not as natural or enjoyable as the place you had constructed as your mental image. When real daily life is less enjoyable or more demanding than you remembered, it is natural to feel some alienation. Many returnees develop "critical eyes", a tendency to see faults in the society you never noticed before. Some even become quite critical of everyone and everything for a time. This is no different than when you first left home. Mental comparisons are fine, but keep them to yourself until you regain both your cultural balance and a balanced perspective.

**9. INABILITY TO APPLY NEW KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS** Many returnees are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, technical, linguistic, and practical coping skills that appear to be unnecessary or irrelevant at home. To avoid ongoing annoyance: adjust to reality as necessary, change what is possible, be creative, be patient, and above all use the cross-cultural

adjustment skills you acquired abroad to assist your own reentry.

10. LOSS/COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF EXPERIENCE (SHOEBOXING) Being home, coupled with the pressures of job, family, and friends, often combine to make returnees worried that somehow they will “lose” the experience. Many fear that it will somehow become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box and only occasionally taken out and looked at. You do not have to let that happen: maintain your contacts abroad; seek out and talk to people who have had experiences similar to yours; practice your cross-cultural skills; continue language learning. Remember and honor both your hard work and the fun you had while abroad.

## Re-Entry Resources

### Articles

“Coming Home: Relationships, Roots, and Unpacking” Citron and Mendelson (Transitions Abroad Magazine July/August 2005) [view article online](#)

"What's a Month Worth? Student Perceptions of What they Learned Abroad" Chiefflo and Griffiths (International Educator, Fall 2003). Requires subscription to read online at [www.tieonline.com](http://www.tieonline.com).

"[The Benefits of Study Abroad](#)" Dwyer and Peters (Transitions Abroad, 2004).

### Books

[The Art of Coming Home](#) (Storti, 2001)

[Back in the USA](#) (Kepets, 1999)

[Maximizing Study Abroad](#) (CARLA, 2002)

[Cross-Cultural Reentry: A Book Of Readings](#) (Austin, 1986)

### Movies

*L'Auberge Espagnole* is a great movie about a French student's experiences studying abroad in Barcelona, from his preparations to his conflicting feelings about returning home.

[www2.foxsearchlight.com/lauberge/](http://www2.foxsearchlight.com/lauberge/).

### Radio

KUT, Austin's NPR station, did a feature on returning home from study abroad in early 2005. To listen, visit:

[www.publicbroadcasting.net](http://www.publicbroadcasting.net).

### Web Sites

La Brack's "What's Up With Culture?" web site, [www.uop.edu/culture](http://www.uop.edu/culture), an online resource for cross-cultural training, includes a reentry module with reflection exercises and anecdotes.

## **Stay Connected to the International Community at Home!**

Now that you're back at SDSU catching up with friends and crashing classes, don't forget that you have a lot of stories and experiences that other SDSU students would love to hear about. You can help us spread the word about the great study abroad opportunities available to SDSU and stay connected with the international community by taking advantage of the following opportunities!

- Submit photos of your trip to [studyabroad@sdsu.edu](mailto:studyabroad@sdsu.edu) to be posted in the [Study Abroad Photo Gallery](#)
- Check out the schedule of [Study Abroad Information Sessions](#) and volunteer to help answer questions from prospective students
- Become a Buddy Volunteer for an international student. Contact [buddycoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:buddycoordinator@gmail.com) for details.
- Join the [SDSU Study Abroad](#) and/or [ISEP](#) groups on Facebook
- [Attend International Coffee Hours](#) - every Friday at 12:00 noon during the semester at the International Student Center.
- Participate in [ISC activities](#) to meet incoming international exchange students.
- Work at the International Student Center (click [here](#) for job openings).

- Get involved with [international student groups](#) on campus.



- Join the [Email Partners Program](#) for incoming international students.
- Continue foreign language training or take internationally focused courses.
- Write about your study abroad experience for the Daily Aztec, San Diego Union Tribune, or your local home paper.
- Watch foreign films (ISC Dinner and a Movie, SDSU French Film Festival, etc ).
- Read international newspapers and books.
- Help organizations that support [community service and development](#).
- Get involved working with immigrants here in San Diego.

## **Going Abroad Again**

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Study abroad is not just for undergrads! After graduation, many students go abroad for their graduate education or find opportunities teaching, researching, volunteering or working abroad! Our website for [work, volunteer, and internships abroad](#) is a great place to start looking for international opportunities after study abroad. Don't forget to explore [scholarship opportunities](#)!



### PRE-DEPARTURE CHECK LIST

#### Academic and Administrative Matters:

- Get required approvals for major, minor, and/or general education credit for courses to be taken abroad. Submit the forms to the Education Abroad, or other office (e.g., CSU-IP,) as appropriate.
- Make a list of individuals and offices on campus you might need to contact while away. Include names, phone numbers, postal and e-mail addresses.
- Declare your major, if you have not already done so.
- Submit your Agreement Packet (SDSU Exchange, ISEP, ISEP-Direct and CSU-IP programs) or Independent Programs Waiver to the Education Abroad Office.
- Complete your pre-departure orientation

#### Financial Aid

- File your FAFSA at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)
- Consult with the Financial Aid Office about the types of aid that will be available to you while abroad.
- If you will be receiving transfer (non-resident) units for you work abroad, work with the Financial Aid Office to complete the Contractual Agreement or Special Enrollment Form.
- Sign the promissory notes for your loans.
- If you will be away during the spring semester, make arrangements with the Financial Aid Office for complete renewal paperwork for the following year.

#### Campus Obligations

- SDSU Exchange, ISEP-Exchange** participants: Pay your SDSU tuition through your Web Portal account by the date posted. (DO NOT register for classes at SDSU.)
- ISEP-Exchange** participants: Pay your housing at SDSU. The bill will be posted in your Web Portal
- Terminate contracts with residential living, dining service, etc.
- Clear all holds, make sure all outstanding balances are paid.

#### Travel & Immigration

- Apply for your passport. If you already have a passport, make sure it will not expire until at least 6 months after your anticipated date of return.
- If you are not a U.S. citizen, consult the embassy/consulate of your country (-ies) of destination to find out what travel requirements apply to you.
- Research the visa requirements for the countries where you will be traveling and apply for visas, as necessary.
- Collect any other entry documents you are required to take with you (e.g., documentation of immunization, HIV status, etc.)
- Consider purchasing insurance for personal liability property loss, trip interruption & cancellation, etc.
- Book your flights and other travel
- Obtain your International Student Identity Card (ISIC,) rail passes, hostel cards, etc., as needed.
- Pay all required fees to program sponsors.
- Bring several extra passport-size photographs for misc. use



### Health and Safety

- Get a physical, dental check up, eye examination, etc. Get all indicated inoculations; make sure your tetanus vaccination is up-to-date.
- Get back up prescriptions for all medications and eye corrections. Get letters from your physician documenting any medical conditions. Make copies of all documents; carry one copy with you, pack others in alternate locations.
- Verify that it is legal to take your prescription medications to your study location and other places you plan to travel
- Take a sufficient supply of medications onboard the aircraft with you. Pack additional supplies of medications, saline solutions, extra glasses or contacts, etc.
- Make sure you understand how your health/medical, emergency evacuation/repatriation of remains insurance coverage works (how to process a claim, co-pays, reimbursements, etc.) Take your cards and contact information with you; leave copies with family.
- Discuss emergency contact procedures with your family in the event of health emergency, natural disaster, civil unrest or terrorism
- Leave emergency contact information on file with friends, the Education Abroad Office and other individuals and campus offices, as appropriate.

### Finances

- Contact your bank and credit card companies to let them know you will be abroad, where you are traveling and for how long.
- Clarify the types of transactions for which you may use your ATM and credit cards with your bank and credit card companies. Find out what the charges are for different types of transactions; ask whether your financial institutions have in-network relationships with institutions in the locations where you'll be traveling. Verify that your current PIN will function for ATMs where you are going.
- Prepare a detailed budget of your travel and living expenses while abroad. Provide for an emergency fund (minimum: \$250)
- Take sufficient funds to cover program and other costs due immediately upon your arrival.
- Get about \$100 in local currency to take with you.

### Domestic Obligations

- Arrange for 'power of attorney' for the individual you designate to handle your financial and other affairs in your absence.
- Arrange for absentee voting in any election which will occur before you return (where you are registered to vote).
- Remember that studying abroad does not exempt you from paying taxes and filing an income tax return by April 15<sup>th</sup>.** Take measure to prepare or have someone else prepare and file your taxes.
- Contact your car insurance company to find out if you can suspend payments for non-use of your vehicle while abroad.
- Designate someone to receive and monitor your mail.

## STUDENT BUDGET WORKSHEET

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Some costs will vary depending on the duration of your study program, others will not. You may also wish to budget some costs on a weekly or monthly basis. Remember that exchange rates can help or hurt you! Check [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) or [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) to find the current rate of exchange for \$1.00 in the currency of your study location: \_\_\_\_\_

Costs quoted for Fall, 2009:

	<b>SEMESTER @ SDSU</b>	<b>SEMESTER ABROAD</b>
<b>Expenses (in US Dollars)</b>	0	
Application fee/Deposit	0	
Tuition and Fees (minus deposit)	2,773.00	
Required Insurance (if not in program fee) SEE HEALTH AND SAFETY SECTION OF WEBSITE!!	0	
Airfare/international transportation	0	
Passport and visa fees	0	
Entry and exit taxes (if applicable)	0	
Immunizations (if applicable)	0	
Housing (if not included in program fee)	3,200.00	
Housing deposit/bank deposit (if required)	800	
Meals (if not included in program fee)	2331.00	
Local commuting/transportation	875.00	
Orientation expenses (ie: additional language coursework, early arrivals before your accommodations start etc.)	0	
Required course related fees (if applicable)	varies	
Books/photocopies/art supplies	830.00	
Personal expenses (toiletries, postage, phone, entertainment, souvenirs, gifts, etc.)	1405.00	
Vacation/personal travel expenses	500.00	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES ANTICIPATED:</b>	<b>\$12,714.00</b>	
<b>Resources</b>		
Family/friends contribution		
Your income		
Your savings		
Stafford Loan (deduct 5% for origination fees)		
Other financial aid		
Other resources		
Scholarships and Grants		
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPECTED:</b>		
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES - EXPENSES =</b>		

## **KEY CONTACTS AT SDSU**

**Cashier's Office/Billing for Student Accounts:** Missy Woelm, (619) 594-4469,  
mwoelm@mail.sdsu.edu

**Disbursement Office** (for Financial Aid): Debbie Hegmann, (619) 594-1532, [dhegmann@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:dhegmann@mail.sdsu.edu)

**Education Abroad Office:** (619) 594-1982 or (619) 594-2475

Dave Rudel: [drudel@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:drudel@mail.sdsu.edu)

Adrienne Richart: [arichart@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:arichart@mail.sdsu.edu)

**Financial Aid:** Angie Caruso, (619) 594-1632, [caruso@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:caruso@mail.sdsu.edu)

**Registrar's Office:** Rayanne Williams, (619) 594-7800