



USC Dornsife
Office of Overseas Studies

**Study Abroad Handbook
Spring 2025**

**In front of a Greek Orthodox
Church**

**Paros, Greece
Photo credit: Jaylah Wilson**

**OFFICE OF OVERSEAS STUDIES
STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK**

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STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In study abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own well-being, health and safety through the decisions they make before and during the program and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

Participants should:

- Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the sponsor that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in host countries.
- Consider their health and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program.
- Make available to the sponsor accurate information about physical and mental health conditions as necessary to plan for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
- Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
- Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the insurance carriers.
- Inform parents/guardians/families and any others who may need to know about their participation in the study abroad program. Provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.
- Be sensitive to local customs and cultural norms in the host country, including the homestay, dorm, or flat.
- Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the program. Obey the laws of the host country.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
- Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
- Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in the host country.
- Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well-being.

- Look out for their fellow students, and assist them when necessary. If they notice that another's health or safety is at risk, then bring that to the attention of the appropriate program representative or USC representative, or others, as deemed necessary. Programs and USC representatives are limited by law in what they can tell students' parents.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be aware that studying abroad will be a time of great independence and personal growth for your student, in part as a result of taking on some important responsibilities.
- Discuss with the student any of his/ her travel plans and activities that may be independent of the study abroad program.
- Keep in touch with the student. But keep in mind that local conditions may prevent the student from immediately responding to you.
- Be aware that the student rather than the program may most appropriately provide some information.
- Remember time differences when contacting your student.
- Understand that if you call us about your student, Federal Education Rights of Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) may prohibit us from responding to you directly.

USC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ACADEMIC

Student Conduct

While you are overseas on a USC-approved study abroad program, the University Student Conduct Code and related university rules and regulations as stated in The USC Student Handbook still apply to you.

Eligibility

Applicants are required to have a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA at the time of application to Overseas Studies and are expected to remain in good standing prior to departure.

If in the semester or summer immediately prior to studying abroad a student's grade point average falls to the point that he or she is placed on academic probation, or if a student conduct check reveals serious misconduct, that student loses his or her eligibility to study abroad. Any expenses committed by the student or on behalf of the student for the purpose of study abroad (e.g. airfare, visa application fees, etc.) will not be refunded by the university, and the student is subject to the withdrawal policy of the study abroad institution to which he or she applied.

Attendance Policies

You are expected to adhere to the existing attendance policy that is set forth by your program. In most cases, the attendance policy will be as strict as or stricter than what you would encounter at USC. Be prepared to attend classes consistently.

Academic Advising

The Overseas Studies Course Pre-Approval Form that you completed with your application describes the specific academic policies that pertain to your program and confirms that you have received proper academic advisement before going abroad. In consultation with your academic advisor, you should have listed courses to be taken abroad and discussed what you will take upon your return to USC.

If the actual courses you end up taking abroad differ from those listed on your Overseas Studies Course Pre-Approval Form, you must notify your academic advisor and copy Overseas Studies on the correspondence. You are responsible for getting written documentation from your academic advisor regarding your ability to receive major or minor credit for the new courses.

If you take courses that do not apply to your major or minor, please keep two things in mind. First, not every course abroad is eligible for USC credit (e.g. Winemaking, Outdoor Education, Batik, CIEE's Intercultural Communication & Leadership, etc.). If USC does not offer a similar subject, there is a chance that it may not be eligible for USC credit. If, as a result, your load of USC-recognized courses falls below 12 USC units, your financial aid will be severely affected. If in doubt, please e-mail Overseas Studies.

Also, if you have a major in USC Dornsife, please remember that you need to earn a specified number of units in Dornsife academic departments. Courses abroad in subjects not offered in USC Dornsife will not be considered for Dornsife credit (e.g. Cinema, Dance, Theatre, Advertising, Business, Media, etc.).

Evidence of Coursework

We strongly suggest that you bring back to USC course syllabi and completed coursework (exams, papers & projects) after your semester/year abroad. This is essential if you are engaged in any kind of independent study or internship. The documentation that you provide can be a big help if there is ever a question about awarding credit for work done overseas.

Internship Credit

USC has very strict guidelines for those students who wish to receive USC academic credit for an internship abroad. USC may award no credit or less credit than that awarded by the host institution. Please see the Guidelines for

Evaluating Internship Credit in the appendix of this handbook for more information if you plan on doing an internship while you are abroad.

REGISTRATION

USC Registration Status (Block Enrollment)

Later this semester, you will use USC Web Registration to register for "Overseas Block Enrollment" as a full-time student at USC. The Office of Overseas Studies will provide you with the information you need to register for "block units." This process will ensure that your registration is continuous, your tuition bill is correct, and any financial aid you receive is not disrupted. USC Madrid and USC Paris students will be informed of alternate registration procedures specific to these programs. Year-long students will need to block enroll twice - once for fall term, and again (around December) for spring term. Before you can be registered for your semester abroad, you must clear any and all holds. You can check your holds online on OASIS. **DO NOT GO OVERSEAS UNTIL YOU ARE PROPERLY REGISTERED.**

Registration for Overseas Courses

Students typically register for their actual overseas courses at the overseas university or program site, which sets its own rules regarding when you must settle on your final course selection. This registration process is totally independent of the USC Block Enrollment (except for USC Madrid and USC Paris). These courses will only appear on your USC STARS Report after you have returned from your semester or year abroad and your transcript has been received by USC.

All students must take a full-time course load on their overseas program, as outlined in their Overseas Studies Course Pre-Approval Form, regardless of how many units they need and regardless of what constitutes a "full-time" course load on campus. Students may not earn USC credit for online courses offered by their host institution.

Students may not enroll in a Maymester, Julymester, USC Directed Research (490) course, or USC online course concurrently with a semester or year abroad program. Students may not enroll in any USC summer session that begins before the official end date of a spring or year abroad program.

Do not enroll in too many units. USC has established a maximum number of units you may earn on your program. The unit amount is listed on your Overseas Studies Course Pre-Approval Form. If you decide to take more than the maximum, be aware that you will be charged USC unit rate tuition for every attempted unit beyond unit maximum listed on the Advising Record.

Registration for When You Return

Registration for Fall 2025 will begin in late March. You will be able to view the USC Schedule of Classes online at: www.classes.usc.edu.

You are responsible for obtaining D-clearances from the appropriate advisors before you register. This can be done by e-mail. Pay attention to time zone differences.

Your registration may be delayed if you have a financial (or some other type) hold.

Please be aware that your future registration times may be impacted by any long delays in USC receiving an official transcript from your host university/program.

Drop/add

If you decide to withdraw from a class during your semester away, you are bound by the program's add/drop policies. Nearly all other institutions' policies are stricter than USC's. If the other institution's rules are less strict than USC's, then you fall under USC's rules, which are as follows.

At USC, courses may be added only up to the 20 percent mark of the term and a student may drop a course without academic or financial penalty up until the 20 percent mark of the term in which the course is offered. Your host institution may have a stricter policy.

Refer to the USC Schedule of Classes for exact deadlines for dropping a course or earning a "W" as programs vary in length.

Always get written documentation indicating drop and withdrawal dates, even if the overseas institution does not routinely use such documentation.

Final Transcripts

The Registrar of your study abroad program or overseas university will send your final program transcript to the Office of Overseas Studies either physically or electronically for most programs. Exceptions are explained below.

Nanzan U. and Waseda U. in Japan do not issue transcripts to USC. Instead, student must request that their official transcripts be mailed/delivered to Overseas Studies after completion of the program. Students on the BU Madrid, Syracuse Florence, ICCS Rome, Carleton College Buddhist Studies, HUI and AC Almaty programs must also specifically request that their transcripts be sent to USC Overseas Studies. Transcripts for those studying in Australia (except SFS) and New Zealand will be accessible through MyEquals, an online transcript portal. Once transcripts are available, students must send them directly to their USC study abroad advisor through the MyEquals system.

If you are asked to provide a mailing address for transcripts or billing, please be sure to use the Overseas Studies address and NOT your home address, USC Registrar, or USC Degree Progress.

Please be aware that it may take from several weeks to several months after completion of your program for your transcript to arrive at USC. Graduating seniors should keep this in mind.

Once your transcript has been received, Overseas Studies will forward it to the USC Transfer Credit Services Office for processing.

Grading Basis

You must take your host institution courses for a letter grade. You will not earn USC credit if you take them on a pass/no pass basis at the host institution.

For most programs, although you will receive grades from your overseas institution, courses taken abroad will appear on your USC transcript only as **Credit or No Credit**, which will not affect your USC GPA. You must earn a letter grade of C- or higher (or the equivalent) to receive USC credit. The only courses for which students receive letter grades on the USC transcript are the USC Catalogue courses on the USC Paris and USC Madrid Programs.

Although you may not receive letter grades on your USC transcript and your USC GPA may not be affected, please be aware that it is to your advantage to strive for the best grades you can get. Graduate schools, law schools, medical schools, and some employers may ask you to submit your letter grades obtained overseas in addition to your USC transcript.

HOUSING

Returning to USC Housing

Semester study abroad students currently in USC Housing who wish to be released from one semester of a housing contract must complete the Semester Away Housing Form.

The first step is to request "Semester Away" release in the USC Housing Portal. Once that is approved, the next step is to submit USC Housing Semester Away paperwork in person at the main USC Housing office by November 1, 2025.

DO NOT SUBMIT THE PAPERWORK IF YOU HAVE NOT YET BEEN ACCEPTED TO YOUR OVERSEAS PROGRAM.

Once you submit the paperwork, your housing space will be assigned to another student. Overseas Studies will inform USC Housing on the deadline which students are still awaiting program admission decisions.

Students living in fraternities or sororities whose

housing contracts are administered by USC Housing must get permission to return from the fraternity/sorority president, in addition to submitting the Semester Away paperwork by the deadline.

Students who study abroad for a full academic year or any two consecutive semesters and wish to return to USC Housing must apply for housing as a first time applicant. Applications are available online at <http://housing.usc.edu/> Campus housing questions should be directed to housing@usc.edu.

Other Resources

Plan ahead. We suggest that you stay in touch with your friends and make arrangements early.

Additional resources may include Facebook, Reddit and other online groups for housing.

There are a number of property management companies that operate in the area. As you may be abroad when you are trying to arrange for housing near USC, we suggest that you enlist friends who will be at USC while you are abroad to assist you in your search.

Overseas Studies and USC take no responsibility for any off-campus housing arrangements.

FINANCIAL

Cost sheets are located on the “Finances” tab of each program web page.

The cost sheet outlines the cost of your particular program. All costs are subject to change. They are based on the latest information we have received from the host institutions. Some costs are based on current exchange rates and thus are subject to fluctuation.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the cost sheet and to arrange all the financial resources you will need BEFORE you depart.

On the “finances” tab of the program page, costs are separated into two general categories—billable amounts and non-billable amounts. “Billable” amounts are those that will be billed by USC to the student’s fee bill. The tuition and tuition refund insurance are tied to Overseas Block Enrollment. Completing block enrollment will trigger these amounts to be charged to your student fee bill. Students will block enroll in December. The other items listed in the “Billable Amounts” section will be billed by USC and appear on students’ fee bills as outlined on page 8.

Some of these charges are billed based largely on cost estimates we receive from program providers. These charges may be adjusted later if the invoice USC receives from a program provider lists costs that are higher or lower than

initially estimated or if there are significant exchange rate fluctuations.

The items in the “Non-Billable Amounts” section are very rough estimates of what students may expect to spend. These items are not billed through USC. Some students spend less and some spend more. The “personal expenses” items on which students tend to spend the most money are travel during weekends and breaks, shopping, and entertainment. Students wishing to limit expenses are encouraged to explore local areas in depth, use any available cooking facilities, limit far-flung trips, scout out student discounts, and utilize youth hostels.

Late Withdrawal Fee (USC)

If a student withdraws after the withdrawal deadline, they will be charged the fee listed on their cost sheet, which will be added to their student fee bill. The withdrawal deadline is **November 8, 2024**. Exceptions are SFS, CET, Maastricht, SU Florence, and USC Paris, which have earlier commitment deadlines.

Billed Items

These are the items most often billed by USC:

- Tuition (for all programs)
- Housing (for some programs)
- Board/Meals (for some programs)
- USC administrative fee
- Tuition refund insurance (Optional; Approximately 0.28% of the total tuition and mandatory fees).
- Health insurance (USC Health Insurance in all programs; additional program-mandated Insurance or host country-mandated insurance in some programs).
- Visa fees (for some programs)
- Orientation fees (for some programs)

All payments should be made to USC through the regular fee bill process.

DO NOT MAKE PAYMENTS (INCLUDING DEPOSITS) DIRECTLY TO ANY LINKAGE SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS. If you or your parents receive a bill directly from the sponsoring institution, please contact Overseas Studies.

Exceptions (Deposits):

Students pay deposits DIRECTLY to the foreign university for the following programs: Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Exceptions (Housing Costs):

Students pay housing fees DIRECTLY to the housing provider (i.e. they will NOT be billed by USC) for the following programs:

- Australian National University
- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- King’s College London
- Jagiellonian University
- London School of Economics
- Sciences Po
- Queen Mary, University of London

Trinity College Dublin
Universidad de Deusto
University of Auckland
University of Bristol
University College London
University of Edinburgh
University of Galway
University of Melbourne
University of Otago
University of Queensland
University of Sussex
Waseda University
Yonsei University

Students receiving financial aid should note that housing deposits or other housing fees may be due prior to disbursement of financial aid.

Billing Timeline

- Estimated tuition charges will be posted on your USC fee bill automatically upon your registration for Overseas Block Enrollment but may not be visible on USCepay until July. The last day to register and settle without a fee will be January 10, 2025.
- Housing (if listed as a “billable” fee) should be billed in December but may be adjusted when an invoice is received from the overseas program.
- Health insurance should be billed between December and February.
- Health insurance may be billed AFTER you have received an automatic refund in your account or after you have settled tuition fees. Please keep this in mind when budgeting expenses and planning payments. And check your student account on USCepay regularly.

It is your responsibility to keep track of your USC fee bill on USCepay and arrange payments while you are overseas.

Students Using the Payment Plan Option

You should visit the Student Financial Services office or website and fill out a new payment plan worksheet. One way to calculate monthly payments is to add up all the “Billable” items on the cost sheet (those that are billed by USC) and divide the total by the total number of months of your overseas program. You may enroll in a payment plan via USCepay. If you need to change or cancel your current payment plan visit: <https://sfs.usc.edu/payment/plan/> for more information.

Airfare

As program fees do NOT include airfare, you will need to make your own arrangements. Students are advised to consider baggage and other fees and to consider buying flight cancellation insurance.

Program Withdrawal and Refund Policies

There are two types of withdrawal and refund policies to consider: those for the academic program and those for housing and other fees. Regarding the program, you are subject to the

stricter of your program’s refund policy and USC’s refund policy. USC’s policy of allowing students to withdraw by the end of the third week with little or no financial implications is generally less strict than the refund policies of most overseas institutions/program providers.

For some programs, students incur financial obligations well before the program begins.

The details of the individual refund policies can be found in the Documents area in the USC Student Travel Abroad portal. The amount of obligation and refund varies greatly from program to program and depends on the date you notify the overseas program of your withdrawal.

If you decide to withdraw from a program, you must immediately notify in writing both the USC Office of Overseas Studies and the program sponsor. If you should wish to extend your study abroad semester for another term, you must notify USC Overseas Studies by April 1 for fall and November 1 for spring.

You may not defer your USC acceptance. You will need to reapply to USC, should you want to go at a later time. Please keep in mind that you must maintain eligibility (GPA, no negative conduct record, not yet officially graduated) until you go abroad.

Disbursement of Aid and Settlement of Account

Federal and state grants and loans cannot be disbursed until 10 days before the start date of your particular study abroad program (see next section if your program starts before the USC semester). University grants are usually disbursed prior to 10 days before the program start date. USC’s payment deadline matches that on campus regardless of when your program starts. If your program starts after USC and you are reliant on those grants to settle your USC fee bill by the USC payment deadline, please email the Financial Aid Office so they can arrange a deferral for you.

If your USC fee bill is settled by grants and/or scholarships and you are planning to use “direct loan” funds for expenses not charged to your fee bill, please remember that those direct loans will not be accessible until 10 days before your program start date, so you must arrange your finances accordingly.

Students receiving financial aid should note that living expenses are included in the costs on your Cost Sheet, and as a result, you may have a credit on your fee bill. Read on for information on accessing this credit.

We strongly recommend that you check your account on USCepay before you leave to make sure your bill is settled. Then check USCepay regularly, especially early in the semester.

“My program starts before the USC semester!”

If your fall semester program starts well before the USC semester, your financial aid will not have been disbursed by the program start date. The soonest any aid for Fall 2025 will be disbursed is late July 2025. Fortunately, tuition and other "billable" fees for these programs will not be due until August 22. Students on these programs, however, will need to purchase airfare and bring sufficient funds for personal expenses and initial housing costs (for some programs) until their financial aid is disbursed..

Accessing Student Account (Fee Bill) Credit

If you do have a credit on your fee bill after all aid and scholarships have been disbursed and all charges have been billed, you can receive your refund by Electronic Refund only.

Electronic Refund Authorization

We **strongly recommend** that you set up eRefund service with the USC Cashier's Office. If you arrange for an electronic refund, the Cashier's Office will check electronically for a balance on your fee bill during the USC semester. If there is a credit on your fee bill, the money will be automatically refunded your designated checking account.

To apply, you must complete the application form on the USC Student Financial Services website: <https://sfs.usc.edu/>. If you have already applied, you do not need to do it again.

If you set up this authorization, monitor your checking account carefully. You do not want to spend money that was credited to your account erroneously.

Electronic refund authorization continues even after you return to campus. You may withdraw from eRefund anytime on USCepay.

WARNING:

If you receive a large refund during the first few weeks of school, be sure to check your fee bill on OASIS and see that all charges associated with your semester abroad are listed. Don't spend a \$5,000 refund only to find out that you still owe \$3,500 for housing.

Financial Aid Deadlines

It is imperative that you meet all financial aid deadlines for submission of all forms, including copies of tax returns or non-filing statements, CSS profiles, and FAFSA's, in order to be considered for financial aid for the next academic year.

Please see the financial aid website for specific deadlines at: <https://financialaid.usc.edu/> Being on an Overseas Studies Program is NOT an excuse for late submission of financial aid forms. Each year there are several students who do not submit their forms on time, and as a result, have serious difficulties with their financial aid.

Tuition Refund Insurance

Tuition Refund Insurance offers an 85% tuition refund in case a qualified major illness or injury forces you to leave your program early.

The cost is approximately 0.28 of 1% of the total tuition fee for your program, as listed on the Cost Sheet.

The Office of Overseas Studies **strongly encourages** you to get Tuition Refund Insurance even though you have the choice to decline it when you register for overseas block enrollment.

Please read more about USC's Tuition Refund Insurance Policy online at: <https://arr.usc.edu/registration-counseling/registration/usc-tuition-refund-insurance-program/>

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Passports

If you do not have a passport or a current passport that is valid through 6 months after the end of your program, you should apply for a new passport immediately.

Information on applying for a passport can be found at: <http://travel.state.gov/passport>

There may be delays in the processing of U.S. passport applications and renewals. Don't take any chances. Apply early. You will need all of the following when turning in your passport application:

- An official copy of your birth certificate OR expired passport, OR a certified copy of your naturalization or citizenship papers. If you do not have a birth certificate with the official seal, write to the County Clerk in your county of birth to obtain one.
- A photo ID with signature; examples include a driver's license, California ID, or Military ID.
- Two identical passport photos, front view, 2" x 2" square, with a white background.
- \$165 processing fee for new applications and \$130.00 for renewals. Add \$60.00 to expedite the service. Payment must be made by personal check or exact cash.

Visas

A student visa is an official permission granted by the authorities of the country where you will study or travel that allows you to enter and remain in the country for a certain amount of time. A visa is usually in the form of a stamp or sticker placed in your passport. Some countries (e.g. Australia) issue electronic visas for which nothing is placed in your passport; instead, the authorization to enter the country is linked to your passport number.

If your host country does not require a student visa, you will need special documentation to be there as a student. You may not stay in your host country as a tourist. Consult your host country's

embassy and/or consular website.

A student visa is required to enter many of the countries in which USC sponsors study abroad programs. Visa requirements for US citizens may vary from those for citizens of other countries.

The documentation and fees required to obtain a visa vary greatly from country to country, and even between different consulates of the same country. Some countries will require a signed medical form or letter from a physician or certain immunizations. Some require an TB or HIV test, bank statements, or criminal background checks.

For some countries you need to apply as far as three months in advance. Most consulates will keep your passport while they are processing your visa application. This may force you to alter pre-program international travel plans. Advise your parents not to plan international travel for you if you may need to leave your passport with the consulate.

Please note that for some visas you need to apply in person at the nearest consulate in the US and some require in-person pick-up as well.

You will also be advised on the visa process by your program provider and your study abroad advisor.

It is ultimately the student's responsibility to obtain the visa.

Visas for Non-US Citizens

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you should consult the nearest consulate of the country of your citizenship and the nearest consulate of the country where you plan to study. The procedures you will follow are different from those for U.S. citizens. It is important to initiate this process as soon as possible in order to assemble the documents and allow time for lengthy procedures.

Non-U.S. citizens should also check to see if a transit visa is required for the countries they pass through on the way to their ultimate destination, and whether they need a visa to travel to other countries during the semester..

Re-Entry to the U.S.

U.S. permanent residents must check with the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) concerning regulations for re-entry into the U.S. It is particularly important to verify procedures for those who contemplate being outside of the U.S. for more than six months or are in the process of applying for citizenship. International students must see an advisor at the Office of International Services (OIS) to obtain important information regarding regulations and documentation to leave and re-enter the United States.

DACA and TPS students should consult with

their study abroad advisor.

PREPARING TO BE AWAY

Absentee Voting

You can cast a ballot from overseas. In order to receive an absentee ballot, you must be registered to vote at home. You can find all of the information you need to register for absentee voting at the following web site:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/abroad/legal-matters/benefits/voting.html>

Income Taxes

If you are planning to be abroad for spring term, you may be out of the country between January 1st and April 15th, the income tax filing deadline for most of us. People temporarily living abroad can usually request an extension for filing taxes, normally until June 15th.

Tax forms are easily downloaded and filed at www.irs.gov/. Make sure that you can get your W2 forms sent to you overseas or can access them online if you choose to file while you are abroad.

Property Insurance

Loss or theft of property can occur while you are overseas. USC Health Insurance does not include any property insurance. Many homeowners' and renters' insurance policies contain a clause about coverage of your personal property. Check your/ your parents' policies to see if it extends worldwide. Normally you will need to file a copy of a police report following a loss or theft of property. Please be advised that if a loss or theft occurs because of negligence on your part, your claim will usually not be honored. Student Property Insurance can be obtained at www.nssi.com.

Power of Attorney/Proxy Status

If you have financial or legal dealings that will be difficult to manage from abroad, consider assigning a power of attorney or proxy.

Working Abroad

People on student visas or tourist visas are usually barred from working legally in the host country. There are very few exceptions, notably Australia; if you are thinking about working while you study overseas, you should do your homework about what the possibilities are.

PACKING YOUR BAGS

Most programs will provide packing suggestions relevant to that particular program. Use the following lists as basic guidelines and pick and choose what is essential for you. The obvious things (e.g., underwear, shirts, toothbrush, etc.) are not listed. Be sure to consult the specific information provided for your program, as well as recommendations from former participants.

The best and most ignored advice is to TRAVEL LIGHT. You will hear this over and over again and for good reason. Do not bring more luggage than you can comfortably carry and/or roll by yourself. You may find yourself having to walk long distances with your bags. Any items that could be considered a weapon (e.g., scissors, Swiss Army knives, etc.) should not be packed in your carry-on luggage but placed in your checked luggage. You should bring important medications and documents in your carry-on luggage. Do not pack any products containing cannabis or its derivatives, including CBD. Ensure your luggage contains no residue of such products.

Baggage allowances may differ for international flights to and from the U.S. and flights between and within other countries. Rules also vary from airline to airline. Do not make assumptions based on previous travels or advice from friends and/or family. Always check with your airline for carry-on and checked baggage regulations and fees.

Lost Document Kit

Each semester we get reports of students abroad misplacing their important documents or having them stolen (through burglary, pickpocketing or mugging). Losing a passport and other documents can be a major headache; to reduce the hassle, we suggest that you take with you two U.S. - produced passport photos, a certified copy of the face page of your passport (which you can shrink to wallet size). Keep these items separate from your actual passport, and leave a copy with your parents or trusted friend at home. You should also have two sets of photocopies of other important documents such as your USC ID card, driver's license, and your credit, debit and insurance cards; leave one set with your parents or trusted friend, and keep one set in your homestay or dorm separate from the actual documents.

Important Documents (not a complete list)

- Passport, visa and photocopies
- Airline tickets (incl. e-ticket confirmations and receipts)
- International SOS information
- International Student ID card (ISIC Card)
- Driver's license (with photocopy)
- Credit cards, debit cards (and copies of both sides)
- Prescription for contact lenses/glasses
- Prescriptions for medications (if any)

Medicine and Toiletries (not a complete list)

- Prescription medicine (carry a copy of the prescription too); and keep medication in the original bottle/container it came in. Don't mix pills in one bottle. Carry all medication and scripts in your personal/hand luggage.
- Soap and shampoo (just enough to start with, then you can buy locally)
- First aid kit (small)
- Contraceptives/condoms
- Tampons/pads, enough for the first month. Tampons may be hard to find in some

developing countries or may not come with applicators.

- Extra eyeglasses
- Extra contact lenses and solution
- Hand Sanitizer (small 1 oz. bottle)

Clothing (not a complete list)

- Sturdy rainproof walking shoes
- Flip-flops (good for showering in hostels)
- Shorts (may not be appropriate in certain cultures)
- Sweater/sweatshirt
- Wind and rain gear
- Swimwear
- 1-2 nice outfits
- Winter coat, gloves, scarf, hat (depending on location). You can always buy clothes there!

Gift Suggestions (for students staying in homestays)

- Clothing and items with University logo
- Cookbooks with American recipes
- Coffee table photo books from your region of the U.S.
- Calendars with U.S. scenery
- US-style paraphernalia (Disney, Warner Bros., NBA)
- Handmade crafts or jewelry
- Photos of friends and family to share (NOT a gift, but good conversation starter)

Miscellaneous (not a complete list)

- Swiss Army knife (very useful when backpacking) [Pack in checked luggage]
- Address book and journal
- Books, guides, maps
- Day backpack
- Heavy duty Ziploc bags
- Sewing kit
- Luggage lock and tags
- Battery powered alarm clock
- Towel and Washcloth
- Money belt/pouch
- Chargers/emergency charger

Choose sturdy luggage that will stand up to rough treatment. A backpack is extremely handy if you plan to travel before or after your program. Make sure that your luggage is clearly labeled so you can recognize it easily. After you have packed everything, try carrying all of your luggage.

Computers

Do not expect the same access to and quality of WiFi connections that you are used to at USC or at home. WiFi quality in homestays, dorms, and student apartments can vary significantly. As unlimited data is often not available, you may have quotas and be expected to pay for additional usage. There are some programs (e.g. Botswana) where an ethernet cable is needed or where there are limits on internet access (e.g. SFS and Buddhist Studies in India). Some countries are prone to planned rolling blackouts (e.g. South Africa). We suggest you do the following:

- Find out what kind of computer access is available at your study site.
- Find out if what kind of plugs are used and get the right plug adapter.
- Remember to consider security and storage (especially if you will be traveling after the program ends).
- Check to see if your computer is covered under insurance policies you or your parents may have, such as homeowner's insurance.
- Have a plan in mind in case your computer is lost or stolen or needs to be repaired.

You can access USC's online resources (such as email, OASIS, and the library) through USC's intranet by using VPN (Virtual Private Network) which allows you student access to all resources while you are off-site. Log-on using the instructions at vpn.usc.edu. This is especially useful if you are going to a country where the government is known to block sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

TRAVEL

The Office of Overseas Studies is not a travel agency and cannot arrange any travel for you. Please consult travel agents and/or guide books.

Traveling to Your Destination

Programs do not have "group flights," so you will need to arrange your own travel to arrive at your program site by the date specified by the program.

Always compare not only ticket prices, but also refund policies and ticket change prices.

Airlines typically will not allow their passengers to fly into a foreign country on a one-way ticket for stays over 90 days. **All students should therefore purchase a round-trip ticket. (Sometimes an onward ticket to a 3rd country will suffice.)**

We strongly suggest students consider purchasing Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) flight insurance or a fully refundable ticket.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The ISIC card (www.isic.org) is recognized worldwide and entitles you to significant travel and entertainment discounts.

Traveling While You Are Abroad

Train: There are many different kinds of rail passes available for travel in Europe and beyond. Some passes must be purchased in the U.S., while some may be purchased only overseas. Some are designed for 30 or more consecutive days of travel and not suitable for study abroad. Students sometimes buy passes prematurely, before exploring all the options, and regret having wasted their money. In many countries, bus travel will be easier and cheaper.

Air Travel: In some countries, low-cost airlines such as Virgin Australia, Ryanair, EasyJet, and

Jetstar offer the fastest and cheapest way to travel. Before buying train tickets, be sure to research flight prices. Booking in advance can save you a lot of money.

Driving: We strongly discourage you from renting or buying cars while you are overseas. Driving in a foreign country is dangerous and traffic accidents are among the leading causes of injury and death of students abroad.

If you decide to travel by car, you will need to demonstrate that you are a legally qualified driver. Sometimes your US driver's license will work, but you should consider obtaining an International Driver's License, issued by the American Automobile Club (AAA). They are valid for 1 year and cost \$20 (a passport-sized photo is required).

Hostels

Hosteling is one of the truly great things about student travel. Youth hostels - many of which are not restricted to so-called "youth", which in many parts of the world means under 26 - are cheap, mostly clean, often extremely well-located, and a great place to meet fellow adventurers and travelers. Most youth hostels are set up like dormitories, with large single-sex group rooms, usually bunk beds, but some offer private rooms too. Some youth hostels impose strict curfews and lock the front door at a certain time; some insist that you provide your own sheet; some ask that you pitch in and do a chore such as sweeping the dormitory.

The International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF) card is required for most youth hostels, and often can be purchased directly at a youth hostel. You can buy a membership online and learn a lot more about hosteling at www.hihostels.com/. For more hostels, go to Hostelworld.com.

Excessive Travel

Many students view a semester or year abroad as their "one shot" at traveling overseas. However, as the world gets smaller and the work place more global, many of you will have opportunities in the future to travel for work and for pleasure. We strongly advise against spending your entire time abroad as a "tourist." For example, if you are in Florence for a semester, make sure that you spend some weekends in Florence like Florentines do. We understand that it will be tempting to go out of town every weekend, but you will really miss out on some of the pleasures and subtleties of being a resident in a foreign city. You cannot expect to make local friends if you frequently travel out of your host city.

COMMUNICATION

E-mail

Your USC e-mail account is our main line of communication with students overseas. Be sure to check your USC email regularly.

The Office of Overseas Studies will send e-mail only to the USC e-mail address that you listed in your study abroad application. If you open a different e-mail account, please ensure that e-mail sent to your USC account gets forwarded to your new account; otherwise, you will miss important information.

At most host universities, students will get a host university email account, and they should check it regularly for messages from the host university. For other programs students will need to use their USC or person email accounts.

Cell Phones

Students usually choose one or more of the following options:

-Bring their own phone but get a physical SIM card or eSIM with a cell phone service provider in the host country. This is usually the most economical option. Note that the phone number will change. Host country locals will usually prefer to text or call you at an in-country number rather than a foreign number. This option involves buying minutes/data on a pre-paid basis and topping up as needed.

-Purchase a new cell phone (perhaps older model) in the host country and sign up for service with an in-country provider. This option involves buying minutes/data on a pre-paid basis and topping up as needed.

-Getting an international plan with their US cell service provider. This is usually the costliest option. Check rates carefully! Using your US carrier's internet service while roaming can be very costly.

Always keep your phone charged, and carry a small portable charger bank in case you do run out of charge.

Consider using Zoom to communicate with family and friends.

WhatsApp is also widely used in some countries. You should set up your account before going abroad.

In some countries, government agencies may have legal access to the contents of your phone. You may want to consider removing content if travelling to such a country.

MONEY AND BANKING

The most common ways to access money while you are overseas are:

- Debit Cards
- Credit Cards

We suggest that, if possible, you have multiple options available to you just in case there is a problem with one or the other.

Phone-based contactless payment methods like ApplePay may not be widely available. Bring physical cards with you. We also suggest always having a small amount of cash with you.

Find out the best method(s) of accessing money in your host country. Ask program alumni and do some investigating before and after you arrive at your host country.

Debit Cards

Make arrangements with your bank for a debit card that you can use overseas. Check how much they will charge you each time you withdraw money abroad at an ATM or use your card in a store. These charges can really add up. Since your account balance may not show up on your ATM receipt overseas, it is important to track your balance via online banking. Ask your bank if they have a partner bank in your host country that will not charge ATM fees.

Make sure that your PIN number has 4 digits and can be used internationally. Memorize your PIN by the numerical digits rather than by the letters of the alphabet.

Don't expect ATMs to be accessible 24 hours a day, even if you see a sign saying one is open 24 hours. Don't expect all ATMs to accept your card.

You may find in some countries that you can use your debit card at ATM machines but not at "points of sale" such as stores and restaurants.

Emergency Funds

We suggest pre-paid Visa cards kept in a safe separate location as an emergency source of funds if your debit card is lost or stolen.

Credit Cards

We strongly suggest that you bring a credit card with you overseas. Some vendors (e.g. hotels, airlines, train lines) may accept credit cards but not debit cards. Credit cards are also important for emergencies. A credit card can help you secure accommodation, flights and other services in a hurry.

Credit cards often give the most favorable exchange rate. In general, Visa and MasterCard are most widely used overseas. Major credit card companies charge currency conversion service fees, so check with your credit card company to find out how much those are.

Keep close track of your expenses. Make sure you have a way to make regular payments. Check your statements regularly and check to see if your card comes with fraud protection. Avoid letting your card out of your sight when dining or making purchases. Credit card fraud and theft are rampant in some countries.

Before going abroad, we strongly recommend that you contact your bank or credit card company and let them know you will be using your card overseas, what countries you plan on visiting, and the duration of your stay. This can usually be done online. They will then place a travel alert on your account so that your

overseas card use is not mistaken for identity theft and fraud. Without the travel alert, they may block your card entirely if they detect suspicious card activity. This advice applies to debit cards, too.

Cash

Many countries are much more cash-based, especially for small purchases, than the U.S. In some countries, exchanging cash may be the best way to obtain local currency. Check with individual programs since carrying large amounts of cash can pose a risk.

Bank Accounts

Most students DO NOT open bank accounts overseas, except Australia, Ireland and New Zealand semester students and some yearlong students. If you want to open a bank account, be sure to understand the terms and conditions of your account, such as service fees.

Foreign Currency

Familiarize yourself with the currency you will be using. Follow the exchange rates for several days or weeks in the newspaper or on the internet. Consult the Universal Currency Converter: <https://www.xe.com/>.

By the time you arrive in your host country, you should know how much \$1US equals in the host country currency.

Changing Money

US airports usually DO NOT have very favorable exchange rates, so it may be preferable to exchange just enough for incidentals for the first day or two and transportation from the airport to your housing. Also, most international airports have currency exchange booths (though they may have limited hours) and most international airports have ATM machines that will accept your US debit card and issue money in the currency of your destination country.

Banks tend to have the best exchange rates, but make sure you understand what rate of commission you are being charged. Try to avoid changing money in places like hotels, restaurants or shops. Changing money on the street may be very risky and is illegal in many countries.

General Tips for Budgeting

The overall cost of living abroad can sometimes be higher than at home in part because you are in an unfamiliar environment and you are confronted with a lot of possibilities and temptations to spend money. Here are a few budgeting tips to keep in mind:

- Make both daily and weekly budgets and try to stick to them. Learn the value of the money wherever you are. Be careful not to fall into the habit of equating one unit of foreign

currency with \$1 US.

- Costs for the first month are usually higher because you are settling in. After the first few weeks you should be able to do more with less money.
- Always be on the lookout for student rates and discounts. Sometimes it's not advertised and you have to ask. Most countries are far more generous with student discount than the U.S. is. Local students are a great source of tips and useful information.
- Staying relatively local and going off the beaten path will usually save you money (and give you a unique experience). Day trips within a few hours of your host city let you avoid paying for a hotel.
- Try to use libraries and the program's resources before rushing out and buying a lot of books. Watch how students of the host country manage books and supplies.
- Try cooking for yourself whenever possible. Going to a grocery store in another country can be a very educational experience.
- When you travel, stay in youth hostels. They are fun, usually clean and well located, and you will meet students and travelers from all over the world. See page 12 for more info.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

Some students may be tempted to limit their exposure to information about the place they will visit. They may think that this is a good strategy to guarantee an experience full of surprises and discoveries. This is false logic. Even if you do a good deal of research on where you are going, you are sure to experience new things.

If you go with little or no knowledge at all, the amazing discoveries you make are often very superficial; you are just scratching the surface. When you go armed with some information, you'll be ready to make much deeper discoveries and gain more profound insights!

Here is a summary of resources to consult before you go:

Worldwide Colleges and Universities
<http://www.globaled.us/wwwc>

ATM Locators
<http://www.visa.com/atmlocator>

Useful Health & Safety Information

International SOS
<http://www.internationalsos.com>
Go to membership login.
Then enter membership no. 11BSGC000010

Centers for Disease Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

World Health Organization
<http://www.who.int>

International Newspapers
<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/>

International Radio Stations
<http://www.radio-locator.com>

U.S. State Department Website

State Department Travel Information:
<http://travel.state.gov/>

Select INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL from the menu.

From the State Dept. website, you can link to the following:

- Travel Advisories
- Safety and Health Issues
- Country Specific Information
- Emergency Information
- Enroll in STEP
- Tips for Students

By enrolling in STEP and registering your travel plans, you will receive important information about your travel destinations and allow the local consular office to contact you in an emergency.

Refer to <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/> for student specific info and advice from the US State Department.

For contact information, including websites, for US consulates overseas see the Appendix of this handbook, or <http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Currency Conversion

<http://www.xe.com>
<http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic>

Travel Books

[Lonely Planet Travel Guides + Phrasebooks](#)
[Moon Publications Travel Guides](#)
[Blue Guides](#)

BBC Languages

The BBC has good free online language learning programs. Please check out www.bbc.co.uk/languages/.

Fiction

Go to Amazon.com or a bookstore to get works of fiction by writers in your host country or set in your host country. Reading such works of fiction is a great way to pass time on an airplane, train, or bus.

Periodicals

[Online newspapers](#) are a great way to brush up your language skills and learn what's going on in the place where you will spend a semester or

year. It also gives you lots of material for engaging in conversation in your host country.

USC Center for Languages and Cultures

The [USC Center for Languages and Cultures](#) has a wide range of resources to promote language learning at USC.

EXPLORING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Understanding Difference

As much as you may be aware intellectually that people living in other countries have a different culture and hold different values and expectations from yours, living in and interacting with another culture 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is bound to pose some challenges. Try to value the cultural differences you encounter and make every attempt to empathize with the host culture's values. Being aware of how a person expects to be treated (e.g. at a store, restaurant, or in an educational institution) can make cross-cultural experiences more understandable and less trying.

(Adapted from IES London by the Institute for the International Education of Students)

While you are studying abroad, you may encounter stereotypes of people from the United States. People in your host country may already have ideas about you through interactions with the media, tourists, or coworkers. The following is a list of common stereotypes that students have encountered.

Americans are often seen as:

- hard-working
- wealthy
- confident they have all the answers
- aggressive
- racially prejudiced
- extravagant, wasteful
- naïve
- disrespectful of authority
- outgoing, friendly
- loud, rude, boastful
- optimistic
- superficial
- generous
- informal
- always in a hurry
- ignorant of other countries

Why do you think these stereotypes exist? What image do you project as an American, and what image do you want to project?

What stereotypes do you have about people in your host country? How can you challenge those stereotypes?

While others may have ideas about you as an American, it is also important to analyze how you perceive yourself. Dr. L. Robert Kohls, author of *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, has composed a list of values that many Americans report that they adhere to:

- There is no such thing as “fate”; everyone has control over what happens in his life.
- Change is indisputably good, leading to development, improvement, and progress.
- Time is of the utmost importance and needs to be used productively.
- Americans see themselves as highly individualistic in their thoughts and actions.
- Competition brings out the best in any individual in any system.
- “Keeping busy”, even in times of recreation, is highly valued in American society.
- Americans are informal in most areas of their life, from language to dress.
- The direct approach is the best, most open, and most honest approach.
- Americans are realistic, practical, and efficient, avoiding being overly sentimental in decision making.
- Americans value newness and innovations, thus creating a constant need to upgrade to the next best thing and fostering materialism.

With which of these values do you agree? Which of these values do you anticipate may conflict with the values of your host country?

One reaction to such conflicts in values is to resort to stereotyping the entire culture. Such stereotyping can go both ways; that is, you generalize about your host culture, and people in the host culture generalize about Americans.

A great resource for further exploration of the issues introduced in this section is the University of the Pacific’s “What’s Up with Culture?” website (<http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>), which is an online course for students about to study abroad that offers some great self-guided activities and exercises. Check it out!

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is a real and usually temporary state that occurs when you are immersed in a new culture. It is usually characterized by feelings of bewilderment, disorientation and mental fatigue. It is not uncommon for people going through culture shock to feel “fed up” and depressed about their new situation. You might find yourself going through a period of time in which you feel resentful of the new culture and new place that is placing so many challenges upon you. This is a normal reaction to living abroad and in some ways is a positive sign: you are really immersing yourself in a new culture.

We have included here a few short readings about culture shock. If you can recognize the signs of culture shock, you can deal with it more effectively.

Remember: It is temporary and a sign that you are being challenged to go outside your cultural comfort zone.

The Stages of Culture or “Transition” The Honeymoon Shock

(adapted from IES Family Guide by the Institute for the International Education of Students) (See graph on pg. 40).

Adapting to a new environment and new culture has been compared to an emotional roller-coaster. An individual’s highs and lows and twists and turns will vary significantly. The information below on the stages of transition and suggestions for culture shock is intended only as a rough guide.

Anticipating Departure

During this exciting time of preparation, people naturally form expectations and goals. For some the anticipation becomes overwhelming, while some try so hard not to build up any expectations that they also fail to make any preparations. It is important to remain realistic in your expectations so you will not face disappointments when you settle in while abroad.

Suggestions: Research the country, read some of its important works of literature, and read its newspapers on the Internet. Listen to online radio stations from your host country. It is also useful to start a journal that defines your goals and expectations for your time abroad. These activities will help give you a sense of understanding of and attachment to your host country.

Arrival Confusion

This can be a trying and disorienting period that includes jet lag, meeting new friends, language fatigue, new food, new rules and customs, and in some cases a whole new educational system.

Suggestions: During this period, you may find yourself calling home, upset about housing, the city, jet lag, or local people. It’s important to talk with the local program staff. They have dealt with many students in these situations and are ready and able to help you during this period.

The Honeymoon

In this stage, students are swimming in fascination and a sense of adventure. Many students report being on a cultural high and feel that everything is wonderful.

Suggestions: This is a good time to stockpile some of the good experiences for when times become more challenging. It’s also a good time to begin inquiring about differences in food, people, and other cultural variances. For students taking medication for anxiety or depression, this is not at all a good time to stop taking your medication despite the temptation to do so.

The Plunge

This is when the novelty wears off and reality sets in. You may feel frustrated and confused.

Rather than simply observing others' behavior, you need to start to change your own way of thinking and doing things. You need to begin adjusting to new ways of communicating and differences in living styles, food, social customs, and classroom interactions. Although difficult, this stage prepares you to engage with the new culture at a deeper level.

Suggestions: Avoid making value judgments on cultural differences. Instead, strive to understand these differences.

Initial Adjustment

As you develop language and social skills, you become more confident. Local transportation, communication, and social customs become a normal part of your everyday life. Many of the initially confusing differences begin to make sense and you may begin to be able to balance the positives and negatives within the culture.

Suggestions: Cultural differences are not problems to be solved. Understanding these cultural differences and responding appropriately are major accomplishments for which you should give yourself a pat on the back.

Confronting Deeper Issues

At this stage, you begin to confront cultural issues and personal differences at a deeper level and begin to see a multitude of approaches to your life abroad. You may question deeper assumptions about the world and may feel isolated at times during this stage.

Suggestions: Go ahead and explore your values and beliefs. Write in your journal about what is going on.

Adapting and Assimilating

You begin to identify with new ways of thinking and doing. You may establish strong friendships with local people or may have to accept that you will not have time to develop deep friendships. You are comfortable with your home identity as well as the adapted identity you've developed in the new culture.

Suggestions: Not all students reach this stage, especially in just a semester, so don't beat yourself up if you don't get there.

Going Home

The program is winding down and you want to take a few more pictures, visit places you still haven't seen, say farewell to friends and pack for home, all while you are dealing with final exams and papers. You may start to reflect of what you've accomplished and where you have been. You may also feel sad about leaving the place you've just begun to feel used to!

Suggestions: Refer to the "Top Ten Immediate Re-Entry Challenges" listed later in this section.

Give yourself time to make some psychological adjustments.

RECOGNIZING CULTURE SHOCK

(from University of Kansas' Study Abroad Handbook)

The reaction to culture shock varies from person to person but may include irritability, depression, loss of appetite, loss of sleep (or conversely compensations such as overeating or sleeping excessively), anger, loss of self-esteem... A student with culture shock may want to go home (and sometimes he/she does) or may develop a very hostile stance toward the host culture.

Americans with Culture Shock: Four Common Behaviors

The Fugitive avoids contact and spends a lot of time in his/her room. Lots of texts and emails home and long hours of sleep are signs of this reaction. Blame falls on foreign culture and on self. S/he feels ashamed to feel homesick and after having dreamt of a great time abroad.

The Critic draws no comparisons and casts blame on all sides, playing no favorites. The weather is intolerable, the prices exorbitant, the people dull or rude, etc. The academic program is trivial, the teachers uninspiring, the students infantile and everything is going wrong.

The Chauvinist talks endlessly to those who will listen, underlining the contrast between the US and abroad. His appreciation for the US has surged upward and he puts the local culture down.

The Native cuts down the US and wants to melt into the crowd. A loner, he shuts off all contact with other Americans and feels tempted to never return to the States, that land without culture.

Coping Strategies: Culture Shock/Cultural Fatigue

While you cannot avoid initial culture shock, you can take steps to make it more manageable. Explore the area you're living in, find a map and strike out on your own. Set attainable goals. Observe people closely and try and pick up the silent language. Avoid clustering with your American friends. Join a club or a sports group at your university, or in your neighborhood. Keep a journal and watch yourself change. Above all, keep an open mind and try to accept the people and culture rather than resist them. This requires great maturity, perceptiveness, and skill in cross-cultural communication.

RE-ENTRY

Coming home after living abroad may seem like a very simple process; however, "reentry shock" or "reverse culture shock" is common.

Your overseas study experience does not stop once you land on American soil. It would be a

shame to compartmentalize your experience in between a definite start and end point. Students who integrate their experience into their life after returning to the U.S. find the effort very rewarding.

The Office of Overseas Studies holds a Welcome Back Celebration near the start of each semester. This social include tips on readjustment and on integrating your overseas experience into your resume, further studies, and career plans.

The Top Ten Immediate Reentry Challenges

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. They offer the following thoughts on reentry for your consideration.

1. Boredom

After all the newness and stimulation of your time abroad, a return to family, friends, and old routines can seem very dull.

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.

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 that you will become frustrated trying to present 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.

4. Reverse “homesickness”

Just as you probably missed home for a time at the beginning of your stay overseas, it is natural to experience some “reverse” homesickness for the people, places, and things that you grew accustomed to while abroad. 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 part 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 you were abroad, the people at home are likely to have experienced some changes as well.

Alternatively, you may feel that you have changed a lot and “everything/everyone is the same” at home, which may be disconcerting.

6. People see the “wrong” changes

Sometimes people may concentrate on small alterations in your behavior or ideas and seem threatened or upset by them. Others may ascribe any “bad” traits to the influence of your time abroad. These incidents may be motivated by jealousy, fear, or feelings of superiority or inferiority.

7. People misunderstand

A few people will misinterpret your words and actions in such a way that communication is difficult. For example, what you may have come to think of as humor and ways to show affection or establish conversation may not be seen as wit, but as aggression or “showing off”.

8. Feelings of alienation/critical eyes

Sometimes the reality of being back “home” is not as natural or enjoyable as the place you had constructed as your mental image of “home” while you were overseas. When real daily life is less enjoyable or more demanding than you remembered, it is natural to feel some alienation, see faults you never noticed before in the society around you or even become quite critical of everyone and everything for a time.

9. Inability to apply new knowledge and skills

Many returnees are frustrated by the lack of social opportunities to apply newly gained social, linguistic, and practical coping skills. To avoid ongoing annoyance: adjust to reality as necessary, change what is possible, be creative, be patient, and above all, use all of the cross-cultural adjustment skills you acquired abroad to assist your own reentry.

10. Loss or compartmentalization of experience

Being home, coupled with the pressures of job, family, and friends, often combine to worry returnees that somehow they will “lose” the experience, as if their experiences will become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums and only occasionally taken out and looked at. You do not have to let that happen. Maintain your contacts. Talk to people who have had experiences similar to yours. Practice your skills. Remember and honor the hard work and all of the fun that you had while you were overseas.

-Adapted from Dr. Bruce LaBrack, School of International Studies, and University of the Pacific.

RESOURCES FOR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ABROAD

[Diversity Abroad](#) and [IES Abroad](#) have a broad range of Diversity and Inclusion Resource

Guides available online.

Religious Diversity Abroad

- <https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/religious-diversity-abroad>
- <https://www.iesabroad.org/identity-resources/social-identity/religion>

LGBTQ + Students Abroad

<https://www.iesabroad.org/identity-resources/social-identity/lgbtq>

Students with Disabilities Abroad

- <https://www.iesabroad.org/identity-resources/social-identity/health>
- <https://www.miusa.org/>

Women Abroad

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/women-abroad>

Economically Disadvantaged Students

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/economically-disadvantaged-students>

Racial & Ethnic Minorities Abroad

<https://www.iesabroad.org/identity-resources/social-identity/race>

Heritage Seekers

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/heritage-seekers>

First Generation Students

<https://www.iesabroad.org/identity-resources/social-identity/first-generation>

Traveling with Natural Hair

<https://www.iesabroad.org/identity-resources/social-identity/traveling-natural-hair>

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR WOMEN

In some study abroad programs, women have said that attitudes they have encountered abroad, both in public and in private interactions between men and women, were quite challenging.

Local customs with regard to gender roles vary widely from country to country. Some men openly demonstrate their “appreciation” of women in ways that many women find offensive. American women are seen as liberated in many ways, and sometimes the cultural misunderstandings that come out of that image can lead to difficult and unpleasant experiences.

It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly approved of, and, in general, to be actively noticed simply for being a woman, and, in particular, an American woman. Even eye contact or a smile from you may result in totally unexpected invitations. Sometimes the attention

can be flattering. Soon, it may become very annoying and potentially even angering. Local women, who often get the same sort of treatment, have been taught, either explicitly or through experience, how to ignore the attention. Many American students have found that hard to do. Asking local women to share their strategies can be very helpful.

Women can provide support for each other. Former students suggest that you get together several times early in your program to talk about what works and what doesn't for dealing with unwanted attention.

Please refer to the Health and Safety section for information on sexual assault risk reduction.

INFORMATION ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCE

Regrettably, racism occurs in overt and covert ways all over the world. It is impossible to generalize accurately about the relative level of racism in various countries. The program resident director or university's international students' office can usually provide information and advice about local conditions. Minority students studying overseas have occasionally been the victims of overt racism. Keep in mind, however, that offensive behavior is not always due to racism. Some people in your host country may never have seen or met a person from some racial or ethnic groups before; they may be curious about you and may express their curiosity in an awkward way. In other cases, racism may be due to ignorance, as some people know nothing about minorities other than the negative stereotypes portrayed in the media. Try to distinguish between genuine racists and people who will really benefit from getting to know you. Keep an open mind. Remember that your host country has a very different historical background from the U.S.

Dr. Joy Carew, Director of the Center for Critical Languages and Cultures at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, in writing about the U.S. minority student abroad, states:

“the experience is not always positive, but it is almost certainly constructive. If you are a minority student, you may learn a lot about your identity as an American through a first experience in a foreign culture. In some cases, you will be considered simply an ‘American’ with no regard to your identity as a “hyphenated American,” a situation that may leave you uncomfortable and force you to reassess your identity. Conversely, in other cases, locals may not be able to accept that you are a ‘real American’ if you do not fit their image of ‘Americans’ as Caucasians. Some minority students overseas experience a liberating freedom from the baggage of being a “hyphenated American.” If you have grown up as a minority in America, you have probably developed considerable skill in interpreting the sometimes perplexing behaviors and expectations of the majority culture. This mental

skill will serve you well while abroad.”

In addition, so-called “heritage students” (e.g., Korean-Americans going to study in Korea) may encounter some unique issues. For example, a Korean-American in Korea may be expected to speak Korean well and follow Korean social norms, while Americans of other heritage may receive admiration for knowing only a little Korean and may not be as expected to adhere to local social rules of behavior.

Recommended Resources:

Diversity Abroad and IES Abroad are great resources.

State Department resources for students

Mobility International USA provides resources on disability-related topics: <http://www.miusa.org/>

BEING LGBTQ+ ABROAD

It is important to be aware of the general attitudes of the populace in your host country toward the LGBTQ+ members of their community.

LGBTQ+ students who are not familiar with the legal status and the attendant cultural attitudes toward sexual orientation and gender identification in the host country might consider gathering information on-line and talking to LGBTQ+ students who have studied abroad.

Transgender students should consider the logistics of navigating airport security and immigration, access to gender-affirming health care, housing options, and safety considerations particular to their host country.

Information Resources

IES Abroad, USC Overseas Studies advisors, USC LGBTQ+ Center

Websites:

International: <http://www.ilga.org>
Asia: <http://www.fridae.asia>

Being/Coming Out

Weighing how “out” to be with your classmates, friends, host family, and so on is a personal decision. In other cultures, the act of declaring one’s sexual orientation may be seen as important, silly, unnecessary, offensive, dangerous, or altogether foreign. Living in a homestay may present an additional set of challenges.

Your “gaydar” might malfunction while you are in your host country. People who you think might be “queer” may not turn out to be, and vice-versa.

Safety

Attitudes toward safe sex may vary greatly. Know the risks and practice safer sex at all times. There are times when it is not at all wise to “do as the Romans do.” For example, if men in the host country seem to be casual about condom use, don’t follow suit; always insist on condom use. Drugs and alcohol are notorious for causing lapses in judgment. Also, beware of police entrapment, blackmail, gay bashing, and other possible dangers. Learn the local rules about public displays of affection and what areas are considered relatively safe.

Reactions to gender identity and gender expression not adhering to cultural norms can vary from disinterested to curious to aggressive. Students are advised to research cultural norms in advance and consult with locals on site.

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with disabilities and special medical, physical, psychological or dietary needs may also face particular difficulties in the study abroad setting.

Notify the USC Overseas Studies staff and the host institution program coordinator of any special needs you may have. Research what is available in your host country to assist in meeting your needs. Make any needed arrangements before you leave the U.S.

If you usually receive accommodation related to academics or housing, consult with the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) well in advance.

Here are some useful websites:

International SOS:
<http://www.internationalsos.com>

Mobility International USA:
<http://www.miusa.org/>

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR USC STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Health Insurance and International SOS

All USC students are required to have sufficient health and accident insurance during their study abroad program. In order to ensure proper coverage, all students going abroad must have either USC Overseas Policy or the USC Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) for the semester (or year) during which they are abroad.

As students may not waive out of USC health insurance when they study abroad, students will be automatically enrolled in the USC Student Health Insurance Plan and billed accordingly by the USC Health Insurance Office. Students who have a waiver on file (because they have successfully waived out of the USC Student Health Insurance Plan through the online process on OASIS) will be enrolled in the USC

Overseas Policy and billed accordingly.

Some foreign countries, foreign universities, or third-party study abroad program providers will require that students purchase insurance that they provide or approve and do not allow students to waive out with the USC Student Health Insurance Plan or the USC Overseas Policy.

The insurance carrier that covers students while they study overseas on the USC Student Health Insurance Plan or the USC Overseas Policy is ACE/Chubb. This is accident and sickness insurance, not a comprehensive health care plan. It covers accidents and emergent conditions. It does not cover routine care or management of chronic conditions. This insurance does not cover international students studying in their home country.

The USC Student Health Insurance Plan and USC Overseas Policy work on a reimbursement system when you are abroad, which means you will generally be expected to pay out of pocket for your medical care and prescriptions and then file a claim for reimbursement. There is no deductible for eligible medical expenses. When you submit a claim, you will need to attach all of your medical care receipts. If your receipts are not in US dollars, you must also submit exchange rate information for the dates of service. For information on how to file a claim, please contact the USC Health Insurance Coordinator at 213-740-WELL (9355) or studenthealth@usc.edu.

Both the USC Overseas Policy and the USC Student Health Insurance Plan include the services of International SOS, a leading international medical assistance and security services company. **Students are advised to contact International SOS as their "first stop" in pursuing medical care.** International SOS is NOT a care provider but will assist you in accessing care and managing any "cases" you open with SOS. There are cases in which International SOS can guarantee payment to the service provider, thus making it unnecessary for the student to pay out of pocket and then file a claim for reimbursement.

Both the USC Student Health Insurance Plan and the USC Overseas Policy include important medical assistance and security services (through International SOS) not normally covered under domestic plans. Rates for the following academic year are announced in June.

The USC Student Health Insurance Plan for Fall 2023 was \$948. The Fall 2024 rate will be higher. The rate for Year 2023-24 was \$2,702. The 2024-25 rate will be higher. Fall 2024 coverage dates will be August 19, 2024 to January 12, 2025., and Year 2024-25 coverage dates will be August 19, 2025 to August 18, 2025.

The cost of the USC Overseas Policy in 2023-24 was \$107 per month. The 2024-25 monthly rate

will be higher. The USC Overseas Policy cost is not prorated, and your total cost is based on the month of your departure and the month of your return. For example, if your program starts on January 13th and ends June 15th, you will be charged for 6 full months of coverage.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE USC OVERSEAS POLICY ONLY COVERS YOU WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD AND ONLY FOR THE DURATION OF THE PROGRAM; it does not provide coverage when you are in the United States.

You can find the ACE/Chubb insurance plan summary and information about the services of International SOS in your USC Student Travel Abroad portal under Tasks or Documents. A copy will also be emailed to you so you can share it with your family. Before you go abroad you should review the policy and note the limits of the policy. A personalized certificate of coverage with your name, host country, and coverage dates will be uploaded to your Documents prior to your departure. Some student visa applications will require proof of insurance.

Some of your benefits with International SOS include:

- 24-hour access to International SOS physicians who provide emergency and routine medical advice
- 24-hour access to International SOS Global Alarm Centers for medical information, referrals, and emergency assistance
- Medical and dental referrals
- Emergency medical evacuation or evacuation in the case of political or other unrest
- Medically-supervised return
- Case Management
- Medical Expense guarantee and payment if you do not have the funds to pay out-of-pocket for eligible care. Call International SOS and request a guarantee of payment.
- Emotional support: short-term counseling sessions by phone or video call

PLEASE NOTE THAT INTERNATIONAL SOS SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IN PREPARATION FOR AND DURING YOUR PROGRAM ONLY.

The packet you receive will include a Summary of Benefits from the underlying insurance provider for coverage **outside the U.S.**, ACE/Chubb, for both the USC Overseas Policy and the USC Student Health Insurance Plan. [If you are on the USC Student Health Insurance Plan, you are covered by Aetna while in the U.S. and by ACE/Chubb while on your educational program outside the U.S. but can utilize your Aetna insurance on an "out-of-network" basis.] It is important that you become educated about your International SOS services and insurance coverage while you are abroad. Please note what is covered and excluded. (An example of exclusion is "Injury resulting from off-road motorcycling; jet or water skiing; sky diving; automobile racing; bungee jumping; spelunking;

or parasailing.”) Please contact the USC Health Insurance Coordinator at 213-740-WELL (9355) or studenthealth@usc.edu if you have questions about your insurance coverage.

What do I do if I get sick or injured?

If you are ill, psychologically unwell, or injured, you should contact International SOS, which will serve as a “first step.” International SOS does not provide care but will refer you to English-speaking care providers and sometimes assist in making appointments. There are some instances in which this may not be the case. In a medical emergency, get help immediately. Contact International SOS first only when doing so will not delay medical attention. If you have a very minor health issue, utilize the student health clinic at your host university or the doctors recommended by your program director, but open case with International SOS if the condition worsens.

PRE-DEPARTURE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

Pre-departure Exams

Some programs require medical examinations, immunizations, or a doctor’s certification of health prior to a student’s departure. The USC Health Center can provide these services. Be aware that in the semester of your program, you will not have access to the student health center without paying a special service fee. Before your departure, be sure to get any check-ups (gynecological, dental, vision, etc.) that would fall within the time you are abroad. You should bring the following important health records/information with you:

- Blood type
- Eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions
- Prescriptions for medications being taken (including the generic name of any prescription drugs)

Prescriptions

If you are currently taking prescription medicine, try to bring enough with you for the entire duration of your stay abroad. If your doctor normally prescribes your medication for short periods of time, explain how long you will be living overseas and request an exception. Don’t mix different medications in one bottle to save space in your luggage. Keep medication in the containers they originally came in. Do not stop taking prescribed medication while you are abroad without first checking with your doctor.

Do not plan to ship medications abroad ahead of time or have medication shipped to you.

International Travel Clinic

The USC International Travel Health Clinic provides students with immunizations, medications and personalized travel advice.

You can make an appointment by calling (213) 740-9355. For more information, visit them online at <https://pharmacies.usc.edu/services/international-travel-clinic/>.

International SOS Advice and Referrals

Your health insurance packet will be loaded into the application portal. You will be able to find the number for International SOS in the packet and call to get free advice about taking and obtaining medications abroad as well as referrals to English-speaking care providers. Note that some medications are difficult if not impossible to obtain in certain countries. The USC ISOS membership gives you access to their website, which provides health and safety information for most countries. Check this site regularly and make sure that you are up to date on the recommended vaccinations for your specific country.

For your reference, the USC group number you need to access International SOS services is 11BSGC000010. Their phone number is 215-942-8478. You should also download the ISOS App to your cell phone.

Managing Diabetes and other Chronic Illnesses

It is likely that the country you are going to will have available insulin and disposable syringes.

Check availability and prices with the program director or the foreign university’s international students’ office before you go.

The CDC has information on their [website](#) on traveling with diabetes.

For any other chronic illnesses, it is important to consult with your doctor, USC’s International Travel Health Clinic, or International SOS before you go.

Immunizations/Vaccinations

Consult the USC Student Health Center and/or the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Regardless of the country you are going to, you should be up-to-date with your tetanus and diphtheria shots and vaccinations. For many countries, it is advisable to get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B before you go.

STAYING HEALTHY OVERSEAS

Jet Lag

Jet lag is a real and often unpleasant part of international travel. Our physiological “clocks” are set to Pacific Time, so when we travel to another country in another time zone, our clocks are out of sync with local time.

In order to reset your body’s internal clock, you should try to adjust as quickly as possible to

your new schedule. Expose yourself to as much sunlight as possible during the first few days, especially in the morning. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids and eat regularly too, but reduce or avoid caffeine and alcohol. Being fatigued from jet lag can exacerbate any feelings of homesickness or sadness that you might feel in the first days. Remember that this is a normal reaction.

Common Traveler's Illnesses

Colds, flu, diarrhea and other gastrointestinal troubles are the most common ailments affecting travelers. Travelers are also at increased risks of hepatitis A, tetanus, malaria, HIV, and more, depending on their location and behavior. Carry a basic first aid kit that includes medications to treat common illnesses such as diarrhea, hay fever or colds. If you suffer from gastrointestinal troubles for more than a few days, you should seek medical attention.

Food

Discovering new foods can be one of the great joys of traveling but these new foods can sometimes cause serious illness. Make sure you are informed about what is and what isn't potentially risky. Should you eat uncooked vegetables and fruits? Can you drink the water? Especially at the beginning of your stay abroad, err on the side of caution when it comes to eating and drinking. Becoming accustomed to different kinds of food, portions, and meal times always takes some time. Always follow the precautions suggested by the program regarding food and water.

Environmental Conditions

If you are in a climate you are not used to, observe how locals dress and do the same. Dressing in layers is important in colder climates, and keeping well-hydrated is especially important in hot climates. Smoking is more prevalent in other countries/cultures outside the U.S. In addition, air pollution can be a problem to contend with in some cities (e.g. Beijing, Santiago, and Milan). Allergies can crop up unexpectedly when exposed to allergens your body is not used to dealing with.

If you are used to Los Angeles, with its many days of sunshine, be aware that living in a city with fewer bright days can affect your mood and even contribute to depression.

Body Image / Eating Disorders

Different foods, different levels of physical activity, and the stress of adjusting to a new environment can sometimes lead to or intensify eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. Be aware of your eating habits and seek help immediately if you sense a problem. Program personnel, friends and family are people you should consider asking for support. International SOS can refer you to local clinical help and

provide emotional support counseling.

If you suspect a friend's health is in serious danger from an eating disorder, please discuss it with them and if needed notify program staff, the international students office, Overseas Studies, USC CSI, or Trojans Caring for Trojans (TC4T).

Exercise

Your lifestyle will change dramatically. Make a point of getting regular exercise. If you can't do the same activities you are accustomed to here, join the locals in the sports they enjoy. This is one of the best ways to make friends and integrate into the culture, and it can also be a good way to combat depression.

Creativity and Spirituality

Catering to your creative and spiritual needs may also assist in maintaining optimal health. Involving yourself in local creative endeavors and spiritual pursuits can also lead to a stronger connection with the local culture and people.

Culture Shock and Depression

Students studying abroad experience emotional ups and downs and can sometimes feel lonely, homesick, and overwhelmed. These feelings are normal, and some degree of culture shock is an inevitable part of living abroad. Being able to recognize the process of culture shock and the homesickness that accompanies it can make it more bearable. Keeping a journal can really help you recognize your own emotional patterns.

Sometimes homesickness and culture shock can lead to depression. The USC Student Health and Counseling Services has prepared the following list of suggested steps to take if you are getting depressed.

These are some simple ways to help you alleviate symptoms while you're waiting for other help or trying to keep things on an even keel. They may not solve the underlying problem but they will provide some relief.

- Use cognitive techniques to get you out of negative thought patterns. For example, "No one cares about me" is a negative thought so try to avoid thinking that way. Besides, it is an inaccurate generalization.
- Try not to over-generalize -- that is, to think in terms of "never" or "always".
- Plan your day with some activities you have to do and some activities you enjoy.
- Break down difficult tasks into smaller incremental parts.
- Give yourself credit for even the smallest things you get done.
- Get up in the morning and get dressed even when you don't feel like it.
- Get emotional support from a friend, support staff or professional. Talk to an understanding, non-judgmental person for as long as you need to talk.

- Get involved in a fun activity that you enjoy.
- Go to class even when your impulse is to skip it.
- Listen to or help somebody else.
- Use whatever spiritual resources you are comfortable calling on.
- Get some exercise, whatever you can muster.
- Get as much sunlight as possible.
- Eliminate sugar, caffeine, and junk food from your diet. Eat three healthy meals a day.
- Limit use of alcohol.

Above all, if you do start to feel bad while you are overseas, don't keep it to yourself. All of the programs we work with have onsite support staff and they are there for you. Use them! Finally, although you may be coping well, your classmates and friends may be facing larger challenges. If you notice serious problems, discuss them with your friend and/or the resident director.

Mental Health

If you have a history of conditions related to mental health, such as depression, bipolar disorder, attention deficit disorder, anxiety/panic attacks, sleep disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, etc., it is very important to discuss your study abroad plans with a mental health professional and your loved ones and develop strategies for managing such conditions should they continue, get worse, or pop up unexpectedly while you are overseas and far from your usual support system. Be sure to take enough of any medications you need, and do not discontinue medications without first consulting with a doctor.

Continuing Counseling

If you are seeing a counselor on a regular or periodic basis, discuss your study abroad plans with them. If you determine that it is in your best interest to continue seeing a counselor while overseas, inform your counselor of your needs, so they can discuss the necessary arrangements you should make.

International SOS and program directors can refer you to English-speaking mental health professionals overseas. While the ACE/Chubb insurance does not cover routine continuing care for pre-existing conditions, you can use Aetna insurance on an out-of-network basis (usually 50% coverage after deductible met) if you also have the regular Student Health Insurance Plan, or if on parental/family insurance you can research what kind of coverage is available.

Alcohol

Most countries where USC has programs abroad have lower drinking ages than the United States, but they all have very different attitudes toward consumption of alcohol and public drunkenness. In many cultures, public drunkenness is socially unacceptable. Learning about these attitudes will be part of your cultural adjustment. Sometimes students slip into patterns of alcohol abuse while

abroad. It is important for you to remember that alcohol and drugs can impair your judgment, especially while you are abroad in unfamiliar surroundings and can make you that much more vulnerable to unsafe sex, sexual assault, theft, and physical attacks or fights. Alcohol is used by offenders as a tool for incapacitating their victims. The majority of crimes and accidents involving study abroad students involve the excessive use of alcohol.

Other Drugs

Although alcohol is socially accepted in many countries outside of the United States, use of other drugs is almost never allowed. In some countries simple possession of prohibited drugs can result in heavy fines, deportation, or prison sentences. While you are abroad you will be subject to all local laws, and these can be very severe when it comes to illegal drugs. It is your responsibility to know what is and what is not legal and you must adhere to the laws of that country.

Cannabis in all forms remains illegal in most other countries. Cannabis derivatives such as CBD oil are illegal in most places where cannabis is illegal. Cannabis is also illegal at U.S. airports, which are under federal jurisdiction.

If you are recovering from alcohol or other substance dependency, you can find meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and other support groups in many countries. Get locations and phone numbers before you go.

You may encounter situations where marijuana/hashish and other drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth, ketamine, GHB and the like, are used more openly than you might see in the U.S. The sources of such drugs will be less familiar than any source you may have had in the U.S.; when you purchase or accept such drugs, you do not know exactly what you are getting and don't know whom you can really trust. There have been cases of drugs being slipped into study abroad students' beverages without their knowledge. Some of these drugs are known to sometimes trigger latent psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, suicidal ideation, etc. It would be especially unwise to take such drugs without thoroughly educating yourself about all the risks involved. Drug dealers have been known to tip off police and get students arrested in hopes of getting a cut of a bribe or police protection. Besides, they are illegal in most countries. If you get arrested with illegal drugs in a foreign country, all the U.S. embassy can do is refer you to English-speaking lawyers and notify your family, and you will be subject to that country's laws and jail conditions.

Intravenous Drug Use

In some countries, I.V. drug use among college students is more prevalent than in the US. Even if you steer clear of such drugs, remember that having sexual relations with a person using drugs intravenously could expose you to HIV and

Hepatitis B and C.

Safer Sex

Always practice safer sex whether you are at home or abroad. But while you are overseas, being safe and careful in this area takes on a special urgency. Some extra challenges you will face are:

- Using a different language to negotiate and ensure safer sexual practices. You'll find that even in other English-speaking countries, the vocabulary used in relation to sex is quite different from American English.
- Cultural norms and expectations in relation to sex.
- Your own level of judgment and decision-making. It's interesting to note that some students who keep themselves well-guarded in the U.S. can become very careless abroad.
- Availability of information and types of protection.

If you think there is a chance that you will be sexually active while you are abroad, bring protection with you. Some safer sex supplies and contraceptive methods that are easily found here are not always available in other countries. For example, you may not be able to access certain kinds of implants or shots, certain kinds of birth control pills, "emergency" or "morning after" pills, sponges, reliable condoms, PrEP, etc.

While they do not offer 100% protection against pregnancy, condoms are the easiest form of contraception to obtain around the world. Bottom line: if you have sex overseas, use a condom. Do NOT throw caution to the wind because you are in a totally new environment. Exercise good judgment, and weigh the risks (not just physical, but emotional too) of getting involved with someone overseas.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) may occur in higher percentages of the population or occur in quite different populations than in the U.S. After abstinence, condoms used properly are the best-known protection from exposure to STIs but cannot prevent all exposure to STIs. Some STIs (e.g. syphilis) can be spread through skin-to-skin contact. Consider getting vaccinated against HPV (human papillomavirus).

HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B/C

HIV/AIDS breaks down the body's immune system and leads to infections and cancers that may be fatal. Be aware that the HIV virus is present in virtually every country. There are no known vaccines to prevent HIV infection. No one should put themselves at risk of contracting HIV. Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person. There is no vaccine for the prevention of HCV infection. A Hepatitis B vaccine is available. The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) can cause lifelong

infection, cirrhosis, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. So get vaccinated!

The risk of getting HIV, Hepatitis B/C depends on you. Here are some general precautions you can follow anywhere in the world:

- Avoid contact with others' semen (including "pre-cum"), vaginal secretions, and blood. Either abstain from sexual activity or practice safer sex.
- USE A CONDOM. Men and women should both carry their own condoms.
- Have water-based lubricants available if needed.
- Do not share needles and syringes or use ones that may have been used previously.
- If you need an injection at a hospital, ask to see the needle removed from its original (new) packaging.
- Avoid excessive drug and alcohol use, as intoxication impairs judgment and negotiation skills in sexual situations

If you are using PrEP to lower the risk of HIV infection, be sure you research its availability abroad, and do not forget the importance of frequent testing. If you are HIV positive, consult very carefully with your health care providers regarding your study abroad plans. Some countries will not issue visas to people with HIV/AIDS.

Blood Transfusions

Not all countries have mandatory screening of donated blood for the HIV and Hepatitis C viruses. In some locales, ascertaining the availability of HIV and Hepatitis C screened blood and blood products may be difficult. If you are in such a country, consider postpone any blood transfusion unless it is absolutely necessary. If you do need blood, try to ensure that screened blood is used.

Injections

In some countries even disposable equipment is reused. In such places, if you are in need of an injection, you may want to buy needles and syringes and bring them to the clinic or hospital for your own use.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that diabetics or other persons who require routine or frequent injections carry a supply of syringes and needles sufficient to last their stay abroad. But carrying needles and syringes without a prescription may be illegal in some countries. Take a note from your doctor.

Tattoos

Should you decide to get a tattoo overseas, please make sure that all tattoo instruments are sterile and that the ink supply is fresh and has not been used on someone else.

SECURITY AND SAFETY ABROAD

Basic Rules

- You are a guest and should always behave with this fact in mind.
- All student conduct policies listed in The USC Student Handbook apply while you are overseas. This includes the University's policies on alcohol and drug use, as well as sexual misconduct.
- You are still a USC student when you are abroad, even on programs not directly run by USC, and all incidents of misconduct will be reported to the USC Office of Community Standards or the Office of Academic Integrity.
- The rules and recommendations given by your overseas program are in existence for good reason and are often based on real-life experience.
- Being "foreign" does not excuse you from knowing and obeying the laws of your host country.

General Precautions

- Take good care of your essential documents (passport, tickets, debit/credit cards, etc.). Make photocopies and keep them in a separate location.
- Do not be too dependent on your cell phone, and have a backup plan in case your phone is lost or stolen, your phone is out of charge, or there is no WiFi available.
- Don't stand out; try to fit in with the surroundings and keep a low profile. One of the stereotypes about Americans is that we are loud! Prove them wrong. Be attentive to how the people of your host country dress and behave in public and in social situations. Integration into the host society enhances safety.
- Avoid crowds, protest groups or other potentially volatile situations, as well as restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate. While "safety in numbers" is generally a good rule to follow, traveling as a "pack" of American students may attract attention and possibly cause problems.
- Be wary of receiving unexpected packages and stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, or other areas of uncontrolled public access.
- Register with the US Dept. of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). You can register your presence with the US Embassy/ Consulates in your host country. To register go to: <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- Do not share your address, phone number, or other personal information with strangers.
- Make sure the resident director, host family and/or host university international students office always knows where and how to contact you in an emergency. Always give someone your schedule and itinerary if you are traveling, even if only overnight.
- Develop a plan for regular phone contact with your family.
- Be streetwise; know where you are going--or at least appear to know. Avoid impairing your judgment through excessive consumption of

alcohol or other drugs.

- Have an action plan in mind for various types of emergency situations.
- Use a "buddy system" and never leave a fellow student alone in a questionable situation or state of intoxication.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Know the number to dial in case of an emergency in your host country. Know to whom you should report a crime. Your program's resident director or university's international students' office often provides lists of emergency contacts as well as procedures to follow in various emergency situations. Make sure that you know what these are.

International SOS also provides assistance and services to USC students in security and crisis situations. In the case of a security emergency such as civil unrest, attempted coups or acts of terrorism, International SOS can provide political evacuations, emergency and contingency plans, crisis centers and referrals. The International SOS website and app are great resources for general travel security information and region-specific information: www.internationalsos.com. Make sure that you keep a copy of the International SOS card in your wallet and have the app on your phone.

Crime

The most common types of non-violent crime students experience abroad is theft of personal belongings, often by pickpockets, and fraud. . Always remain extremely vigilant about keeping a close eye on your purse, bags, and pockets. Consider a money pouch or money belt.

Cell Phones, Tablets & Small Electronics

- "Snatch & run" theft is common in some countries.
- Avoid identity theft; keep personal information secured and don't store personal information on your USB Flash Drives, which are very easy to lose or misplace.

Reporting Crimes and Incidents

Authorities and the general public in other cultures may respond to reported cases of crime and incidents (including sexual assault and harassment) differently than might be expected in the U.S. If you are the victim of a crime, call International SOS and seek assistance from your study abroad program staff. Also contact the American Citizens Service office of the US embassy or consulate. They may be in a much better position to advise you on dealing with local authorities.

High-Risk Activities

Your insurance may not cover you if you engage in certain high-risk activities, such as scuba diving, skydiving, bungee jumping, drag racing, whitewater rafting, joining political protests, etc. Read your insurance policy carefully.

Transportation Safety

Traffic-related accidents are the most common cause of injury and death among students who study abroad. Alcohol consumption is often a contributing factor. Among such accidents, many occur while riding on motorcycles or walking across the street. Pedestrians often do not have the right-of-way in many countries, and traffic may flow in the opposite direction than expected.

While it is tempting to rent a motorbike and ride around that Greek isle, realize that the chances of being involved in an accident are quite high. When taking local transportation, including buses, trains, ferries, and domestic flights, always consult with locals about the level of safety. If a bus or van driver is driving erratically or looks intoxicated or overtired, consider getting out and finding alternate means of transport.

Driving in countries where cars drive on the left-hand side of the street is especially dangerous. Those used to driving on the right-hand side may react inappropriately (e.g. pressing the wrong pedal or veering the wrong way) when faced with "close calls" from other drivers or when under stress or fatigue.

Civil and Political Instability

Demonstrations anywhere can shift very quickly from peaceful, controlled events to violent chaos. Sometimes anti-American sentiment is vocal and can become violent. Do not get involved in any social or political unrest or illegal movements, no matter how sympathetic you are with the cause or the people involved.

If a brewing or ongoing situation becomes increasingly dangerous, follow the instructions of the resident program director and utilize the International SOS and US embassy and consulate information. Upon arrival in your host country, be sure to register with the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. If you are not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, register with the embassy or consulate of your country.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate Assistance

The U.S. Embassy or Consulate cannot get you out of jail or out of a legal dispute. The protection of American law and legal procedures does not apply in foreign countries.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

You are most strongly encouraged to enroll in STEP! The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. You can enter information on your trip or overseas residence and subscribe to receive

updates on Travel Advisories, Travel Alerts and other information for a particular country. Go to <https://step.state.gov/step/> to enroll.

Travel Advisories and Country Information Sheets

These U.S. Department of State web publications include information about countries, and areas within countries, where one should avoid traveling as well as public announcements about threats to the safety and security of American travelers. Country information sheets are available for every country in the world and include the location of the U.S. Embassy in that country, health, crime and security information (including road and transportation safety), currency information and entry regulations and more. The country specific information sheet for your country is the absolute minimum information you should have before traveling abroad. You can find country specific information sheets, public announcements and travel advisories on the U.S. Department of State Website: www.travel.state.gov.

SAFETY TIPS FOR WOMEN

The following is a list of safety tips for women (and men) everywhere:

- Carry a whistle or an alarm beeper
- When walking, appear confident. Always look as if you know where you're going
- Always be aware of what is happening around you and watch out for potential problems
- Always follow your instincts. If a situation seems unsafe, get out of there as quickly as possible
- Consider the risk of walking alone at night and instead, take a taxi, have your friends walk you home, etc.
- If you know you're going to be out late at night, arrange for a ride home beforehand (make arrangements with a friend or taxi company, or carry the phone number for a taxi)
- Never hitchhike or accept a ride from a stranger
- If you suspect that someone is following you and you want to make sure, try crossing the street several times. Go into a public place or find a police officer
- Avoid shortcuts through poorly lit areas and parks.
- Carry your keys in a separate place from your address, preferably in your pocket (in case your purse is lost)

In the Appendix you will find a letter from the Director of Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services.

SEXUAL ASSAULT RISK REDUCTION

A primary way to avoid sexual assault is to not be an offender. Always ask for consent for sexual contact and understand that one cannot be considered to have consented if they are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

The following is an outline of steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of sexual assault while overseas. CARE-SC (Confidential Advocacy, Resources, and Education Support Center) can provide more detailed information regarding sexual assault risk reduction, as well as post assault counseling.

The telephone number is 213-740-WELL(9355). The website address is:
<http://www.sites.usc.edu/clientservices>

Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault. Ninety-nine percent of perpetrators are male regardless of the victim's gender.

While there is no guarantee that a sexual assault will not occur even if you take every precaution, a few safety measures can reduce your risk. Statistics show that most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. It could be a study abroad or international student, a local you've met in a nightclub, coffee shop or library, or a member of the host family with whom you are staying. The following are ways to reduce the risk of sexual assault and unwanted sexual contact.

These safety precautions are not meant to infringe upon your overseas study experience. They are meant to enhance it. A good resource for personal safety while overseas is the Center for Global Education SAFETY (Safety Abroad First Educational Travel Information) website: <http://www.globaled.us/safeti/>. Go to "Health & Safety Issues A-Z Index." Of special note are: "Sexual Harassment and Prevention in College Students Studying Abroad", by Nancy Newport.

"Top Ten Ways to Not Become a Victim of Crime Around the World", by Malcolm Nance and Lisa Hughes.

"Personal Safety Overseas: Safety Tips for Overseas Travel, An Update", by Michael O'Niell.

Please see letter from CARE-SC Appendix on page 33.

Cultural Awareness

The "culture" at USC may be quite different from the culture in a foreign country. Here it is not uncommon for males and females to be friends; to share the same dormitories and apartment buildings; to crash on each other's couches; and to socialize without any sexual expectations. But in some foreign countries these very things may be interpreted as unintentional invitations or may be exploited by sexual predators. In some cultures, a woman going out in public unescorted by a male could be imagined as a sign she is seeking unsolicited attention. Before you go abroad to study in a foreign country you should familiarize yourself with the local customs surrounding male/female relations. When you arrive you should observe how the locals interact, how they define "personal boundaries", how the women dress in public, and what is considered appropriate socializing between genders.

Some Avoidance Techniques

Define Your Personal Boundaries. Personal boundaries are both physical and emotional. You must decide what your boundaries are. For instance, would you allow someone to put their hand on your knee while talking to you? Will you allow them to ask probing questions about your previous or current relationships?

What if someone just seemingly "accidentally" brushes against you? Should you allow a person whom you just met to buy you a drink at a coffee shop, bar, or nightclub? You may want to be more thoughtful about personal boundaries overseas than you would at home.

Make Clear Your Personal Boundaries

Be firm and direct. If you are touched in a way you do not like, attempt to remove yourself from the situation. If you choose to say, "I don't like that. Don't do it again" and if they do it again, then you should take this as a signal that they do not respect your personal boundaries and remove yourself from the situation. Be conscious of both your body language and your words. Saying "No" with a smile on your face provides a mixed message. Whether overseas or at home predators may test personal boundaries to see what you will allow and escalate inappropriate and criminal behavior as they feel successful.

Trust Your Instincts

If a person or a situation feels "creepy" to you, it probably is. Don't talk yourself out of how you feel. Don't say, "Something feels wrong here, but it's probably just my imagination." It's better to go with your gut and get yourself out of the situation.

Stay Sober

Alcohol and drug consumption are involved in many sexual assaults. Some things you should remember:

- If you drink, only drink with trusted friends who can watch out for you.
- Never accept drinks from strangers.
- Do not leave drinks unattended.
- Go home in a group. Be responsible for each other. Do not leave a friend in a vulnerable position.

Socialize Safely

When socializing or dating in a foreign country, always do some research first. Ask around. Find out what areas of the city or town are considered dangerous. Find out what clubs or bars should be avoided.

Maintain Contact with Friends

Plan your social activities ahead of time. If you are going out with a stranger or recent acquaintance, leave word with someone where you are going, with whom you are going, and what time you plan to be back. Bring a cell

phone. If there are any changes to your plans, let someone know. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, call a friend and ask them to come and meet you.

Keep Emergency Contacts at Hand

Always carry International SOS information and any local or international numbers you might need. Have the USC Student Health website bookmarked on your phone/tablet: <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/>.

Know how to contact the local police and ask for medical assistance in the local language. Know where the closest hospital or health clinic is located. Know how to contact the American Embassy or Consulate.

If you are the victim of a sexual assault during your overseas study experience, contact ISOS for information regarding your options for medical care, reporting and counseling. International SOS is also available by phone 24 hours a day to assist with these issues. U.S. Consulates and Embassies' American Citizen Services have 24/7 emergency numbers and staff who can assist you in sexual assault cases. If you are participating in a study abroad program sponsored by another institution, there may be other staff available on-site for immediate assistance or you can call USC RSVP at (213) 740-WELL (9355) (after hours, press zero "0" to speak to an on-call counselor).

GETTING THE MOST FROM THE STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

Traveler vs. Tourist

(Adapted from the University of Alberta's Education Abroad Handbook)

Before you depart on your adventure, you should consider what kind of visitor you will be and what you will be carrying as baggage.

As a tourist, you take your country with you wherever you go, or at the very least, expect it to be there once you've arrived. You go to see but not to feel. A tourist may even have a light backpack (although that's rare), but the preconceived notions and critical outlook through which the world is filtered are often quite heavy.

As a traveler, you are content to leave it all behind, preferring to call home the place where you hang your proverbial hat. A passport, a credit card, a notebook and a hat are the only burdens of the ideal minimalist traveler. You leave your shopping list, must-see list, travel books, iPod and all preconceived notions of safety at home. Rather than make an impact on the world he or she visits, a traveler tries to absorb as much as possible while passing through.

Striking a balance between being a tourist burdened with cultural baggage and a traveler with an empty suitcase is difficult to achieve. But those aren't your only options. You can also

become a resident, having the greatest opportunity to absorb a culture and give of yourself to others. If you choose to be a resident, besides the passport, credit card, notebook, and hat, there are three other essentials that take up no room so long as you bring them, but become a terrible burden if you do not.

First, bring your sense of humor. Without it, you will be doomed to suffer countless maladies, but with it, you'll gain a sense of perspective, and a cure-all for most mishaps.

Second, bring empty space and room to grow, a sort of empty suitcase for your psyche. If you leave yourself open, you will discover new things about your new residence and new things about yourself. Some of the space will fill without you even noticing but sometimes you'll have to make an effort to meet people, try new foods, learn new words, or ask more questions.

Third, bring a sense of self. Don't be afraid to challenge yourself or ask yourself why you believe what you do. You are not a chameleon; some things about yourself are special. Be proud of these things because they make up who you are, no matter where you go.

Finally, be ready to explore new things. The longer your usual ways remain the sole way to fulfill your needs, the more your new residence will seem like a place you'd rather not be. Sometimes it's nice to go away and feel like you've never left home, but ideally living abroad should cause the definition of "home" to grow. If this happens, it's a good indicator that you packed what you needed and left behind what you did not.

Goals and Expectations

Surveys of students who have studied abroad and rated the quality of their experience indicate that those who set specific goals and fine-tuned their expectations along the way had a richer experience.

Setting Goals

Just showing up in the host country and going with the flow of attending class and participating in program activities is probably not the best strategy for getting the most out of your experience. Setting concrete goals, and occasionally re-thinking your goals, can add some shape to your time abroad.

While goal-setting is a very individual activity, here are some examples from previous study abroad students:

- learning all about the cinema industry in Italy with the hope of eventually working there
- learning how to make Spanish tapas and other dishes such as paella
- making friends with a similar interest in political activism and environmental issues
- understanding how manga and anime shape the culture of young Japanese

- forming solid friendships and possibly a romantic relationship
- becoming much more fluent in the language of the country
- seeing and understanding how racial and ethnic identity are viewed in the host country
- learning all there is to learn about rugby
- traveling off the beaten path in the host country and seeing things that most tourists don't get to see

How would you go about pursuing the goals listed above or the goals you set for yourself?

Fine-tuning Expectations

As much as we try to embark on new endeavors without building up too many expectations, it's inevitable that we do have expectations of some sort, whether they are conscious or subconscious. It's important to reconsider your expectations when your goals continually seem unreachable to the point of frustration and disappointment.

Be proud of your "baby steps." In the first few weeks, your accomplishments will probably include such lofty tasks as buying a cell phone, riding the subway without getting lost, or exchanging pleasantries with a person at a coffee shop.

Here are some examples of expectations that students often find themselves having to fine-tune:

a) expecting to make friends easily with a lot of locals in the host country.

Making friends with locals in your host country can be challenging. Think about how difficult it might be for a visiting student from another country who does not speak great English to make a circle of good friends during a semester abroad at USC. Would you as a USC student go seek out such an exchange student and try to make friends with them? What kind of effort would that exchange student have to make? Students in other countries tend to already have a close group of friends and don't feel the need to seek new friendships, especially with people who will be around for just four or five months. Making new friends can be difficult, but virtually everyone who has made the effort has said that it was worth it, even if the effort resulted in short-term acquaintances rather than lifelong friendships.

b) expecting the experience to be similar to that of a friend or sibling who has already studied abroad.

You are a unique individual and are responsible for shaping your own experience. If your friend had a great time in a certain city over a certain holiday and highly recommends that you do the same, you may want to caution yourself against expecting the same kind of experience. You may end up having a much worse, or much better, time.

c) expecting to become fluent in a foreign language.

One semester is a relatively short time in the process of acquiring a language. While everyone's definition of fluency differs, it is unlikely that a student with two semesters of a language, for example, will attain native-like fluency in just one semester abroad. Rather than get frustrated and give up if not speaking like a local by the third month, the important thing is to stick with the effort to use the language as much as possible and reward yourself for the real progress that you make.

Students sometimes say they want to study in a foreign country because it will "force" them to use the language they have been studying. More likely than not you will be in a program with other American students and will be free to speak English as much as you want outside of class and/or your homestay. Using the language will be a voluntary act that is entirely up to you. Rather than hoping the environment will "force" you to speak, sometimes it's more useful to think of using the language as a process of opening yourself (and your ego) to new opportunities to express yourself and hear what others want to express to you.

Being Open to Difference

Many of the same attitudes that help you appreciate all that a diverse city such as Los Angeles has to offer will help you appreciate and enjoy your time living abroad. Some attitudes and character traits that promote cultural learning are:

- high regard for culture
- eagerness to learn
- desire to make connections
- readiness to give as well as receive
- being curious (vs. passive)
- being secure (vs. guarded)
- being humble (vs. haughty)
- willingness to suspend judgment
- tolerance for ambiguity
- a good sense of humor

We often become excited about entering a different culture but become annoyed once we get there by many of the differences. It helps to be aware of how your own values and ego shape your reactions to the cultural differences you encounter abroad.

Suggestions from Alumni

Do not perceive and judge things based on American standards, but instead take things the way they are. (CIEE, Taiwan).

A study abroad program will not improve your language skills for you; you need to make the decision to improve. You need to take control of your own language immersion. Do research and find clubs and activities where you will be with native speakers. (IES, Germany)

It's not about seeing as much as possible--knowing a place means staying there for a while to explore on your own because guidebooks are for tourists, not travelers. If you have a week, go to two cities, not four or five. You can't "do" Paris in a weekend. (Syracuse U. in Florence, Italy)

Have fun and live up your time. A great experience involves trying new things, making new friendships and learning more about a different culture. (Australian National University, Canberra, Australia)

The best thing to do is take classes you'll be interested in. (Queen Mary, University of London, UK).

APPENDIX

(A) USC CAMPUS CONTACTS

The USC website, www.usc.edu, has direct links to OASIS, the current Schedule of Classes, Course Catalog, the Faculty/Staff Directory, and more. Many of your questions can be answered through these resources. If possible, please start by consulting these resources.

If you are not able to get an answer, please direct your inquiries to the appropriate contact person listed below. Please allow a minimum of three days for a response.

General Program Questions: E-mail your study abroad advisor.

Academic Advisement Questions: E-mail your major or minor advisor with a "cc" to Overseas Studies.

Registration Questions: E-mail the Office of Overseas Studies at overseas@usc.edu.

Billing Questions: E-mail the Office of Overseas Studies at overseas@usc.edu.

USC Housing Questions: E-mail Michael Alvarez at housing@usc.edu and "cc" Overseas Studies.

Financial Aid Questions: E-mail the Financial Aid Office through the "contact us" page at www.usc.edu/contactfao

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you do not receive a response from Overseas Studies within a week, please re-send your message (with the proper "cc") and request a confirmation.

(B) PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Administrative

- Make copies of your personal documents (both sides of credit cards and ATM/debit cards, passport, insurance cards, driver's license, etc.); leave one set of copies at home and bring one with you.
- Complete all tasks in the application portal on time.
- Complete all required program/host institution

forms and return promptly to program sponsor.

- If you have a parking permit at USC, turn it in to Transportation Services and get information from them about obtaining a permit when you return to campus.
- If you are in USC Housing, submit your Semester Away Release Form.

Contact Information

- Change your local address (usually to your permanent address) in OASIS so that your mail from USC gets to the right place.
- Make sure that the study abroad provider/foreign university has your updated contact addresses and contact information.
- Make sure that your USC e-mail gets forwarded to any non-USC e-mail account you may be using. You will be expected to read all email coming from our office and take action when necessary. We will not send emails to a non-USC account; check your USC email account regularly to make sure you are not over quota.

Travel

- Obtain your visa, if required
- Provide your family with your overseas contact information and your travel itinerary.
- Make photocopies of your passport--leave one at home and bring one with you.
- If you are not a US citizen, be sure to consult with an advisor in OIS before leaving USC.
- Find out if it is appropriate to bring a laptop computer to your host country/program.
- If you are bringing electrical equipment, find out about the electrical current and plug adapters in your host country and obtain the appropriate transformers, converters and adapters.
- Before packing your bags, find out about local standards of dress, temperature, etc. Pack lightly and appropriately.
- Research rail passes, hostel cards, and purchase before leaving the U.S. if appropriate.
- Check with your airline on baggage limits and fees.
- Visit the State Department's website: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov>.
- Get and read a good student-oriented travel guide (e.g. Lonely Planet, Let's Go, Moon) for your host country.
- Go online and find local newspapers and start reading them regularly. Pay attention to the weather section
- Register in STEP: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Financial

- Familiarize yourself and your parents with your program costs located on the finance tab of the program page.
- Attend financial aid meeting if you receive financial aid.
- Inform the Office of Overseas Studies if you are an outside scholarship recipient.
- Meet with a financial aid counselor if you have questions about your financial aid package and study abroad.
- Meet all financial aid deadlines for next year.

NOW	Passport: Apply for it NOW if you do not have one.
Fri., October 18	Financial Aid information meeting: For all students receiving loans, grants, and/or scholarships.
Thurs. Oct. 31 or Fri, Nov. 1	General Orientation meeting: This session is mandatory. No attendance jeopardizes your permission to study abroad.
Fri, Nov. 1	Semester Away Housing Form due to McCarthy Way main Housing Office Do not complete until you receive official acceptance from your program.
Fri, Nov. 8	Last day to withdraw w/ no financial penalty, except Maastricht, SFS programs and SU Florence. See page 10 for more detailed information on the withdrawal fee.
Fri., Nov. 8	Complete all tasks in the application portal except Flight Itinerary & Emergency Evacuation.
November	Program-specific orientation: You will be emailed the schedule for orientations. If your session will be held via Zoom, your advisor will email you the Zoom link. Please e-mail our office ahead of time if you cannot attend due to work or school.
Min. 6 weeks before departure	Flight Itinerary & Emergency Evacuation task Upload flight itinerary once booked.

- Verify that you have correct 4-digit PIN numbers for your credit/debit and/or ATM cards.
- If you purchase traveler's checks, record the check numbers and keep a copy at home.
- Arrange for someone to be able to deposit funds into your US bank account.
- Notify your credit card and bank companies about living abroad.

Academic

- Bring a copy of your Overseas Studies advising record with you overseas.
- Bring your major advisor's contact information with you abroad.
- Register for Overseas Block Enrollment.
- Check with your major departmental advisor to verify your requirements.

Health

- Discuss with USC's International Travel Clinic or other health care consultants about any pre-existing conditions which may affect your participation at some point or which may be critical to know if you become ill/injured and are unable to communicate.
- Bring your health insurance card and download the International SOS app to your phone.
- Get appropriate vaccinations/immunizations for your host country.
- Obtain enough of your prescription medications to last you for the duration of your stay abroad.
- Keep prescriptions in their original packaging/containers from the pharmacy.
- Bring copies of your prescriptions including the generic drug names of all medications.
- Register with the US Dept. of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).

(C) CARE-SC: CONFIDENTIAL ADVOCACY, RESOURCES, AND EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER

Dear USC Student:

We hope you are excited about your upcoming Study Abroad experience! I'm writing to remind you that while you are studying overseas in a USC-sponsored program, our teams are available to you if you find yourself in need.

When you travel to another county, you may feel as though familiar resources are far away. However, well-being services such as access to a confidential advocate from CARE-SC is available to you.

Advocates are trained to advise students who experience any form of relationship and dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other form of gender-based harm. They are available on a 24/7 basis, every day. Even from afar, Advocates can help you navigate USC support services, and they can give you information on your reporting

options such as Title IX procedures, medical issues, academic accommodations, safe emergency housing options, and more.

When arranging its programs abroad, USC asks your host institution to provide an environment free of harassment or other harm. We encourage you, before you travel, to review USC's policies and services related to student well-being, as well as misconduct policy (<https://policy.usc.edu/student-misconduct/>).

Even so, please keep in mind that laws, cultural norms and customs about gender roles and sexual orientation vary widely from country to country. You may find, for example, that your host institution deals with reports of sexual harassment differently than you would expect.

In the event that you have a sexual or gender-based harm concern (e.g., stalking, domestic violence, sexual assault), please do not hesitate to contact either your program leader or CARE-SC directly for support and assistance

We encourage you to keep these contact details on-hand:

Student Health Phone Number: 213-740-9355 (WELL)

Student Health Email: studenthealth@usc.edu.

You may also reach a confidential advocate in MySHR (usc.edu/myshr) by selecting the secure message option.

Information about RSVP is also available at <https://sites.google.com/usc.edu/rsvpclientservices/home>.

The USC Office of Overseas Studies, of course, is also available to address any matters that arise during your time abroad. Their e-mail address is overseas@usc.edu. To discuss reporting options at USC (non-confidential), you can also call the Title IX office at 213-821-8298.

Here are some general safety tips to keep in mind as you are abroad:

- Follow your instincts. If you have a “bad feeling” about something, trust it.
- Be mindful of the cultural norms in the country you are traveling in.
- Act and walk with confidence.

- Travel with other individuals and be accountable for one another.
- Try to blend in whenever possible and avoid appearing to be a tourist.
- Learn key phrases to use in case you need help.
- Give yourself permission to say “no” or leave uncomfortable situations
- Make sure you have access to a map and know how to get to a safe place.
- Always keep important phone numbers and emergency numbers with you.

On behalf of the CARE-SC, we wish you the best as you embark on your study abroad. Be assured that the staff and faculty at USC will remember you while you're away and look forward to welcoming you back.

Sincerely,

Deborah Schleicher

CARE-SC

(D) GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING INTERNSHIPS FOR USC CREDIT

USC Academic Records and Registrar

Students who plan to do an internship while on a study abroad program may be interested primarily in the experience and not care whether they earn units at USC for the internship. However, students who wish to earn USC credits should be aware of the following policies.

Only internships which receive credit on the official overseas program transcript are potentially available for credit. However, even internship courses which are granted credit on the study abroad transcript will not necessarily be granted units by USC. (This is true whether or not the institution is a college in the US, such as Syracuse University.) The USC curriculum committee has established guidelines for internship courses given by USC, which indicate what criteria they must meet in order to be approved as unit-bearing courses, and how many units should be given. These same guidelines are used by the Articulation Office in evaluating internships taken abroad, to determine if they will receive any elective units, and if so, how many. If you wish an internship which has been granted elective units to be used for major or minor credit, it must also be reviewed by the major or minor department to determine if it can be used to fulfill major/minor requirements.

In almost all cases, internships cannot be approved for credit in advance, because it is necessary to review the work produced by the student during the internship. Therefore, you should keep all materials produced during an internship for review upon your return (see "Summary" for details). One exception: at Australian National University, the Public Sector Internship A has been reviewed and will receive credit, but the internship B has not been preapproved and would need to be reviewed upon return.

USC may grant the same number of units for an internship as the overseas institution, fewer units, or no units at all. If no units are granted, the internship will not be entered on the student's USC record (though it will appear on the transcript from the overseas institution). The following information is summarized from the "Guidelines for Undergraduate and Graduate Internship Courses" prepared by the University Curriculum Committees:

"An internship is intended to provide practical experience in applying knowledge to relevant work settings and to enable the student to acquire needed skills and knowledge that cannot be gained in the traditional classroom.

Generally, one unit of credit for an internship requires 4-5 hours per week of offsite work experience over a 15-week semester, or 60-75 hours of work at the internship site per unit of credit.

Before beginning an internship, the student is generally asked to complete in writing a preapproval agreement which includes: number of internship units to be earned; specific work site and the nature of the work that will take place there; how the internship will further the student's program of study (i.e., what academic value is expected to occur from the internship beyond what a mere job would offer); specific goals that should be achieved from the internship; and how the students will be evaluated. [If there is no such official requirement overseas, students should, on their own, determine all these matters.]

If a student is already employed at a workplace, credit is not generally given for performing work activities that the student would have to do anyway at their workplace.

A faculty member should be responsible for grading. If an on-site supervisor other than the faculty member has input into the grading, the interaction between the faculty member and supervisor in grading must be clear.

Typically, after completing an internship, students are encouraged to reflect on their experience and summarize their learning. They may be asked to write an appropriately substantial paper reflecting on the nature and value of the internship, how it furthered their academic program, and how well the goals specified in the pre-approval agreement were

met. [If no such paper- or any other tangible product- is required by the overseas site, it will probably be required by USC if credit is to be granted.]

The student should be supervised at the worksite, either by the faculty member (instructor of record) or by a specified on-site supervisor. If the faculty member is not the supervisor, generally a student has formal contact with the faculty member at least once during the semester to assess progress towards the goals identified in the pre-approval agreement."

Summary

In general, course credit will not be given for office work such as Xeroxing and answering phones, even if this is done in a foreign language. The student must do something of academic value and provide evidence of this activity.

Students (or their institutions) should provide as much as possible of the following information upon the student's return, verified by the instructor or the overseas institution:

1. Course syllabus, goals, or pre-course agreement, and any related information which describes what is expected during the internship. The information in the pre-approval agreement described above should be covered (academic value of work to be done, nature of supervision and work site, contact with faculty member, method of evaluation, etc.).
2. Log or other record of number of hours worked. Approximately 60-75 hours of work at the internship site are required per USC unit.
3. Final paper(s) or other products, including such items as a research report prepared for the supervisor, a reflective paper on what was gained from the experience, a report presented to other students in the class, etc.
4. Evaluation and any comments or reports by the instructor or supervisor.

(E) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Tips for Students (from the U.S. Dept. of State website <http://studentsabroad.state.gov>)
The Department of State offers the following information for student advisors and for their students who plan to travel and/or study abroad.

This is an official U.S. Government source. Inclusion of non-U.S. Government links does not imply endorsement of contents.

LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE COUNTRIES IN WHICH YOU PLAN TO TRAVEL OR STUDY

- Students should read the State Department's Country Specific Information Sheet for the countries in which they plan to study or visit,

and check for Public Announcements or Travel Warnings that may pertain to that particular country. A Country Specific Information Sheet is available for every country in the world and provides an overview of conditions pertaining to travel in each country.

- Encourage students to learn about the history, culture, politics and customs of the country/ countries in which they travel and study, and to respect the country's customs, manners, rules and laws. For instance, various countries and cultures respect certain manners and dress codes. American students should also abide by these manners and dress codes as much as possible.
- It is a good idea for students to learn as much as they can of the language of the country in which they plan to travel or study. Learning basic phrases of the language can be helpful, and it indicates a willingness on the part of students to make an effort to communicate in the language of the country.
- The Department of State publishes Background Notes on countries worldwide. These are brief, factual pamphlets with information on each country's culture, history, geography, economy, government and political situation. Background Notes are available for approximately 170 countries and often include a reading list, travel notes and maps.
- It is important that students learn about the local laws abroad and obey them. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws!

Obtaining Passports and Visas to Travel, Study and/or Work Abroad

- Students must have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Students studying abroad must be sure that they have the proper visa to study there. A visitor's visa or entry without a visa may not allow one to study.
- Students should remember to fill in the emergency information page of their passport.
- It is a good idea for relatives of students abroad to obtain and maintain a valid passport as well, in case of an emergency requiring them to travel.
- Students who wish to work part-time in conjunction with their studies or when their studies are finished, should make sure that they understand the laws that apply and comply with them.
- The United States requires student visas for study in the United States.
- Students should make copies of their passport's data page and any visas. They

should keep a copy separately from the originals while traveling and leave one at home with their family and with their student advisor. This will help to obtain a replacement passport in the event that a passport is lost or stolen. Refer to our brochure *Your Trip Abroad* for more information on U.S. passports.

- Students are encouraged to travel with extra photos, in case they need to get a new passport quickly. Refer to our brochures *Passports - Applying for Them the Easy Way* and *Your Trip Abroad* for more information.

LEARN ABOUT MEDICAL INSURANCE AND EVACUATION INSURANCE IN CASE OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY ABROAD

Every year, hundreds of students become ill or suffer injuries overseas. It is essential that students have medical insurance and medical evacuation insurance that would cover a medical emergency abroad. For further information, see our flyer on Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad, *Your Trip Abroad* and visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's web site at <http://www.cdc.gov>. *STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO KNOW THE LOCATION OF THE NEAREST U.S. EMBASSY OR CONSULATE AND TO ENROLL IN S.T.E.P.* If students are going to be in a country for more than a couple of weeks, they should register at the American Embassy or Consulate. This is helpful to students and their families, if there is need to locate family members in the event of an emergency. See our links to U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide.

What U.S. Consular Officers Can and Can Not Do to Help U.S. Citizens Abroad

- If students find themselves in trouble overseas, the Consular Officer at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can provide certain assistance and advice. Consular Officers can also help in the event of illness, injury, natural catastrophe, evacuations, destitution, or death. See our brochures *Crisis Abroad*, *U.S. Consuls Help Americans Abroad* and *Overseas Citizens Services* for more information.
- In the United States, the Office of Overseas Citizens Services can also assist American students abroad and their families in the USA in emergency cases. There is a 24-hour number to call (202) 647-5225.
- There are certain things that consular officers at American embassies CAN NOT do for American citizens abroad. For example, they cannot cash checks, lend money or serve as your attorney. See our brochure *U.S. Consuls Help Americans Abroad*.

General Precautions for Traveling or Studying Abroad

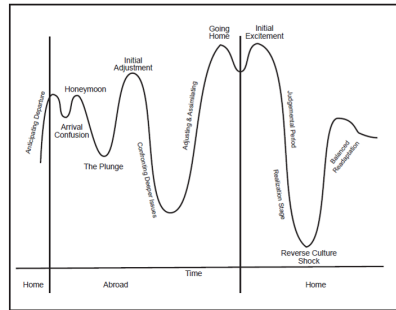
- Remember not to leave luggage unattended

and not to carry packages for anyone. The packages could contain drugs or other illegal items. Refer to our brochure Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad.

- Do not become a target for thieves by wearing conspicuous clothing and expensive looking jewelry. - There are restrictions on photography in certain countries. Students should check the Consular Information Sheet for the countries where they plan to visit or travel. Students should avoid demonstrations or civil disturbances, which could turn violent. Demonstrations could also turn anti-American.

The Department of State is engaged in outreach efforts to education-related organizations to publicize road safety risks in other countries. Students, who may choose less expensive, often less reliable methods of local travel while in foreign countries, should be aware of the potential danger.

(G) THE STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK
(see reading on pages 19-22)



(F) HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE TABLE

These rates and dates are subject to change.

USC Student Health Insurance (Approximate Costs)	USC Overseas Health Insurance (Approximate Costs)
Spring/Summer 2025: \$1,977	Spring 2025: \$107 per month Coverage only from beginning of month of program start date to end of month of program end date.
Covered in U.S. and abroad	Not covered in U.S.
International SOS services included in premium	International SOS services included in premium.

(I) CONTACT INFORMATION FOR U.S. EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES OVERSEAS

Contact Country	Contact City	Type	Contact Address	Contact Website	Telephone
Argentina	Buenos Aires	Embassy	Av.Colombia 4300; C1425GMS	https://ar.usembassy.gov/	(54-11) 5777-4354
Australia	Canberra	Embassy	Moonah Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600	https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/canberra/	(02)-6214-5600
Australia	Melbourne	Consulate	553 St. Kilda Road Melbourne, VIC 3004	https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/melbourne/	(03) 9526 5900
Botswana	Gaborone	Embassy	Embassy Drive, Government Enclave, Gaborone	https://bw.usembassy.gov/embassy/	267-395-3982
Brazil	Brasilia	Embassy	SES-Av. Das Nações , Quadra 801, Lote 03, 70403-900 Brasilia, DF	https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/embassy/	(61) 3312-7000
Brazil	São Paulo	Consulate	Rua Henri Dunant, 500, Chácara Santo Antônio, São Paulo- SP, 04709-110	https://br.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/saopaulo/	(11) 5186-7000
Chile	Santiago	Embassy	Ave. Andres Bellow 2800, Las Condes Santiago	https://cl.usembassy.gov/embassy/	562-330-3000
China	Beijing	Embassy	No. 55 An Jia Lou Lu, Beijing, China 100600	https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/	(86-10) 8531-4200
China	Shanghai	Consulate	1038 West Nanjing Road, 8th Fl.	https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/embassy-consulates/shanghai/	(86-21) 3217-4650
Ecuador	Quito	Embassy	E12-170 Avigiras Ave. and Ave. Eloy Alfaro	https://ec.usembassy.gov/	593-2-398-5000
Egypt	Cairo	Embassy	5 Tawfik Diab Street, Garden City, Cairo	https://eg.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulate/cairo/	[20] (2_ 2797-3300
France	Paris	Embassy	2 avenue Gavriel 75382 Paris Cedex 08	https://fr.usembassy.gov/	33 1 43 12 22 22
Germany	Berlin	Embassy	Clayallee 170 14191 Berlin	https://de.usembassy.gov/	49-30-83050
Greece	Athens	Embassy	91 Vasilisis Sophias Avenue, 10160 Athens	https://gr.usembassy.gov/	30-210-721-2951
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Consulate	26 Garden Road, Hong Kong	https://hk.usconsulate.gov/	(852) 2523-9011
Ireland	Dublin	Embassy	42 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4	https://ie.usembassy.gov/	353 1 668-8777
Israel	Jerusalem	Embassy	18 Argon Road, Jerusalem 94190	https://ru.usconsulate.gov/	972-2-6227230
Italy	Milan	Consulate	Via Principe Amedeo, 2/10 Milano 20120	https://it.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/milan/	39-02-290351
Italy	Rome	Embassy	Via Vittorio Veneto 121 Roma 00187	https://it.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/rome/	(39) 06.4674.1
Italy	Florence	Consulate	38 Lungarno Vespucci Firenze 50123	https://it.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/florence/	39 055-266-951
Japan	Tokyo	Embassy	1-10-5 Akasaka, Minatoku Tokyo 107-8420	https://jp.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/tokyo/	(03) 3224-5000
Japan	Nagoya	Consulate	Nagoya Int'l Center Bldg. 6F, 1-47-1 Nagono, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya 450-0001	https://jp.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/nagoya/	(052)581-4501
Jordan	Amman	Embassy	Abdoun, Al-Umawyeen St. Amman, Jordan	https://jo.usembassy.gov/	962-6-590-6000
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Embassy	Rakhynzhan Koshbarbayev Avenue, No. 3 Astana, Kazakhstan, 010010	https://kz.usembassy.gov/contact/	+7 (7172) 70-21-00

**(I) CONTACT INFORMATION FOR U.S. EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES OVERSEAS
(continued)**

Contact Country	Contact City	Type	Contact Address	Contact Website	Telephone
Mexico	Mexico City	Embassy	Paseo de la Reforma 305 Colonia Cuauhtemoc 06500 Mexico, D.F.	https://www.usembassy.gov/mexico/	(01-55) 5080-2000
Morocco	Rabat	Embassy	Km 5.7, Avenue Mohamed VI Souissi, Rabat 10170	https://ma.usembassy.gov/	(212) 0537 637 200
Netherlands	Amsterdam	Consulate	Museumplein 19, 1071 DJ Amsterdam	https://nl.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulate/amsterdam/	31 (0)20 575 5309
New Zealand	Auckland	Consulate	23 Customs St., 3rd Floor Auckland 1010	https://nz.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/auckland/	64 9 303 3734 ext. 2800
New Zealand	Wellington	Embassy	29 Fitzherbert Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington	https://nz.usembassy.gov/	644 462 6000
Nicaragua	Managua	Embassy	Km 5 1/2 Carretera Sur Managua	https://ni.usembassy.gov/	(505)-2252-7100
Poland	Krakow	Consulate	Ul. Stolarska 9 31-043 Krakow	https://pl.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulate/krakow/	+48 12 424 5100
Russia	Moscow	Embassy	Bolshoy Deviantinsky Pereulok No. 8, Moscow 121099	https://ru.usembassy.gov/	7-495-728-5000
Russia	St. Petersburg	Consulate	15 Furshtatskaya St. St. Petersburg 191028, Russia	https://ru.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/st-petersburg/	7-812-331-2600
South Africa	Pretoria	Embassy	PO Box 9636, Pretoria 0001 877 Pretorius St, Arcadia, Pretoria	https://za.usembassy.gov/	(27-12) 431-4000
South Africa	Cape Town	Consulate	2 Reddam Avenue Westlake 7945	https://za.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/capetown/	27-21-702-7300
South Africa	Durban	Consulate	Old Mutual Bldg., 3030 West St. Durban 4001	https://za.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/durban/	2731-305-7600
South Korea	Seoul	Embassy	32 Sejongno Jongno-gu, Seoul 110- 710	https://kr.usembassy.gov/	82-2-397-4114
Spain	Madrid	Embassy	Serrano 75 28006 Madrid	https://es.usembassy.gov/	91587-2200
Tanzania	Dar Es Salaam	Embassy	686 Old Bagamoyo Road, Msanani, Dar Es Salaam	https://tz.usembassy.gov/	+255 22 229-4000
Taiwan	Taipei	Citizen Services Office	No. 7, Lane 134, Xinyi Road Section 3, Taipei	https://www.ait.org.tw/	886-02-2162-2000 s. 2306
United Kingdom	London	Embassy	24 Grosvenor Square, London, W1A 2LQ, UK	https://uk.usembassy.gov/	[44] (0) 20 7499-9000
United Kingdom	Edinburgh	Consulate	3 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh Eh8, 5BWQ	https://uk.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/edinburgh/	4401315568315



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