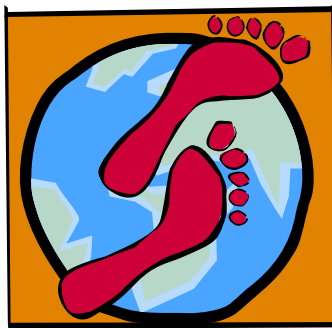


Where will you leave
your footprints?



The Center for International Education
The College of Charleston
66 George Street
Charleston, South Carolina
29424
(843) 953-7661



Study Abroad Handbook



Your guide to going abroad...
before, during and after

Provided by:
The Center for International
Education



January 2007

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Dear Student:

Welcome to the journey of a lifetime! We are delighted that you have decided to make study abroad a part of your college experience. Your time abroad will be one of the most exciting times in your life, as well as an educational and maturing experience.

By this point, you have been accepted to a program and are preparing for your departure. We have compiled a guide to aid you as you prepare to depart, to assist you while you are abroad, and to advise you upon your return to the U.S. and to the College of Charleston.

We are available if you have questions or concerns at any point during your international experience. Do not hesitate to contact us if you need assistance.

We would love to hear from you while you are away and invite you to stop by the office upon your return to let us know about your experience. Sharing your experiences will help us learn more about your program and enable us to provide valuable advice to prospective study abroad students.

Until then, have a safe and wonderful time abroad. Make the most out of every day and take lots of pictures!

Again, welcome to the world of study abroad!

Sincerely,

The Center for International Education Staff

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Helpful Websites

CofC Study Abroad Homepage

www.cofc.edu/international

Has great links to many other travel resources.

Cougar Trail

Cougartrail.cofc.edu

U. S. State Department

travel.state.gov

Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets can be found here.

Center for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov

Information on health and immunizations.

Study Abroad.com

www.studyabroad.com

A wealth of study abroad information, including their own handbook.

GoAbroad.com

www.goabroad.com

Geopedia

www.geopedia.com

Has country information sheets for every country.

Exchange Rates

www.xe.net/currency

Current listing of exchange rates; can also convert between two foreign currencies.

European Railways

www.raileurope.com

The North American website of the European Railways, complete with rail timetables.

Time Zones

www.timeanddate.com/worldclock

New York Times

www.nytimes.com

You can keep up to date on U. S. news while abroad by visiting this site.

Student Universe

www.studentuniverse.com

Has great student airfare. Keep in mind when using this site you must have an active student email account, i.e. johndoe@edisto.cofc.edu (must contain .edu)

World Health Organization

www.who.org

Lonely Planet Travelers Health Website

www.lonelyplanet.com/health

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BEFORE YOU GO

For a successful and rewarding study abroad experience, the following checklist is provided for your review. It is advisable that you address each of the items before your departure. If you have questions, please contact The Center for International Education (CIE) at 843-953-7661.

- Keep in contact with the CIE about your study abroad program and any changes
- Passport—check that your passport is valid for 6 months after your return
- Apply for visa if necessary
- Turn in *coursework elsewhere* form (green sheet) to CIE
- Complete Financial Aid & Power of Attorney forms (if necessary)
- Clear debts at the Treasurer's Office
- Clear holds on student account
- Notify Housing and Residence Life (if applicable)
- Drop C of C campus schedule for the intended semester abroad

Academics

Remember “study abroad” is first and foremost an educational experience.

Transfer Credit

If you are studying on a bilateral exchange or with an independent program, you must have your courses abroad **pre-approved**, so you know they will be accepted by CofC as transfer credit. To have your courses pre-approved, provide the individual department chair(s) with descriptions to evaluate the course(s). *It is the discretion of the chair to award any and all transfer credit.* Approved courses need to be documented on the “coursework elsewhere form” (green sheet) available in the CIE. If your earned hours plus the number of attempted hours abroad equal more than 87 hours, you must also have the department chair of your major sign your “coursework elsewhere” form.

If the courses you had pre-approved are unavailable when you arrive at your host institution, contact the CIE (simmonites@cofc.edu or mackg@cofc.edu) and the appropriate department chair with your new course selection(s). It is essential that you provide course information/description to have the new course(s) approved. Failure to do so means risking the chance that you may not receive any credit for new classes.

Receiving Credits

You must earn the equivalent of a U.S. “C” or better to receive credits as awarded by the host institution. You will receive transfer credit only; the grades will not affect your CofC GPA.

***NOTE for students with Life and Fellows Scholarships: Grades earned through U.S. institutions (ex: FSU, UVA etc.) will be factored in to student’s Life and Fellows GPA.**

- Photocopies of your passport**
- Photos** (of your friends, family, home, neighborhood, school, favorite places...)
- Postcards** (of your hometown—great to give to kids or show where you are from)
- Rail Passes** (you can’t buy them overseas)
- Razor and blades** (if it’s an electric one, don’t forget a converter)
- Resume** (you never know whom you’ll meet while traveling!)
- SENSE OF ADVENTURE!**
- Sewing kit** (a small one will be fine)
- Sleeping bag/ Sleep sack** (for hostels)
- Sunscreen**
- Tissues**
- Toiletries**
- Towels and washcloths** (does your program provide towels?)
- Travel Guide(s)**
- Umbrella** (the smaller the better)
- Walkman or Discman and plug-in speakers** (consider it your stereo while abroad)
- Wet-naps or handy wipes**
- Youth Hostel membership card** (an application form for this can be found on their web site: www.hiayh.org)
- Ziploc-type plastic bags** (they are a lifesaver, especially when packing or on daytrips)

A-Z Packing Checklist

- Address Book**
- Anti-biotic ointments**
- Alarm Clock** (battery operated with an alarm)
- Adapter/Converter** (if necessary)

- Backpack**
- Band-Aids**
- Bathing Suit**
- Batteries** (don't forget camera batteries)
- Beach towel**

- Calculator** (a small pocket one is best)
- Camera**
- Chapstik** (or any other lip balm)
- Comb/Hairbrush**
- Contact Lenses and your prescription**—also contact lens solutions/cleaners
- Contraceptives/condoms**

- Decongestant products** (for colds/flu)
- Deodorant**

- Feminine hygiene products**
- Film** (film can be very expensive overseas)
- Flashlight** (you'll use it more than you think)

- Gifts** (for your host family or for friends you make overseas)
- Glasses and your prescription**

- ISIC Card**
- Itinerary**

- Journal**

- Knife** (small Swiss Army style...only in check-in luggage)

- Laundry soap** (e.g. packets of Woolite) and a portable clothes line
- Linens** (does your program provide sheets and bedding?)
- Locks for your suitcase** (combination locks are better)
- Locks for your backpack** (combination are best)

- Maps**
- Medical kit with pain relievers you use** (cold/cough meds, meds for upset stomach and diarrhea)
- Money Belt and/or Neck Pouch**

- Nail Clippers** (for check-in luggage)
- Nice Clothes for special occasions**

- Passport and Visa** (if necessary)
- Passport photos** (they will speed up replacement of your passport should that become necessary)

Registration for Semester/Year Abroad

Once your courses have been approved on your "coursework elsewhere" form (green sheet) , turn it in to the CIE so you can be registered as studying abroad. A special course section has been created for study abroad students (ex. INST100-900).

All bilateral and independent program registrations are automatically set at 12 credit hours (since that is the minimum number required for full-time status). If you earn more than 12 hours on your program, then you will receive credit for the courses you successfully completed. For example, if you take 15 hours and earn at least a "C" , then you will transfer in 15 hours for those approved courses.

NOTE to all students: You will need to validate your CofC status through Cougar Trail just as you do each semester. Students using Financial Aid will not receive their refund check until they are validated.

Registration for Returning Semester

While you are abroad, you will register for your returning semester through Cougar Trail just as you do in Charleston. Therefore, it is important to meet with your advisor or with Academic Advising to determine the courses you need to take. This will make your registration process much simpler.

To find out your registration time, check the website at www.cofc.edu/~register/entrytimes.html.

Remember you can access the CofC catalog and requirements for your major/minor through the web at www.cofc.edu/academic as well as general graduation requirements through CougarTrail.

Foreign Schools

In many study abroad programs, you will find that there will be less professorial supervision of your academic work than you are accustomed to in the U.S. This is especially true if you are enrolled directly in a foreign institution. Other educational systems place greater responsibility on out of the classroom studying. Syllabi may be less detailed (if one is provided), more readings may be assigned, required textbooks may not exist and professors may not enforce attendance policies, etc. Often there are fewer assignments and/or tests during the semester and your entire grade can depend on a final exam and/or paper. Therefore, it is important to work consistently throughout the term. Make an effort to familiarize yourself with the educational system of your host country before you go.

√ **Transcripts**

All transcripts from study abroad programs should be forwarded to:
Center for International Education
College of Charleston
66 George St.
Charleston, SC 29424

Your transfer credits cannot be posted until the CIE receives your transcript.

Necessary Documents

☐ *Passports*

As a study abroad student, you will need to possess a valid passport. Passports are valid for ten years if you were at least 18 or older when you received it. Should you need expedited service, additional charges will apply. You can apply for a passport in person at the U.S. Post Office on East Bay Street. The applications and renewal forms for passports are also available in the CIE.

You can also visit the U. S. Department of State website for more passport information and to download a passport application <http://travel.state.gov>.

Note: Once you have received your passport, sign it immediately. Otherwise, it is not valid! Sign it in ink and then fill in the information page for emergency contacts. USE A PENCIL to fill this in, as the contact information should always be kept up to date. Make several copies of your passport – take at least 2 with you and leave 1 with your family.

Keep in mind that some countries require your passport to be valid for six months after your visit to that country. There are many countries that have this six-month validity requirement—check with the consulates of the countries you plan to visit.

Note: Some countries require non-citizens to carry their passport or other documents on them at all times. Check with the Embassy or Consulate of the host country for more information. A photocopy may suffice in compliance with such a requirement.

☐ *Plane Tickets*

After you have accepted a placement in a study abroad program, you should make arrangements for your transportation overseas. Some programs include airline tickets, while others require you to purchase your own ticket. Find out exactly what your program includes and how you will get to your destination once your plane arrives at the airport (i.e. will there be a bus for students or will you need to find the university on your own?).

Do not wait until the last minute to get your plane tickets, especially for those departures that are in the middle of high season. There are several websites that offer discounted fares for students. Refer to the list of useful websites in the back of this handbook.

☐ *Visas*

Most countries require a student visa before entering their country for an extended stay. A visa is official permission to visit a country allowing you to stay for a certain period of time. This is a crucial aspect of the study abroad experience, so you need to be diligent in your application process. Several months before your departure, contact the consulate for your host country to find out if a visa is required (most countries require a visa if you are staying

subject to fines and/or penalties.

For a detailed brochure on Customs regulations, send a request for “*Know Before You Go*” to:

U.S. Customs Service

P.O. Box 7407,

Washington, D.C. 20044

You may also call (202) 566-8195 to request a copy of this brochure. The U.S. Customs Service also has a website where you can find information regarding questions on Customs regulations: www.customs.ustreas.gov/text/index.htm

Suggestions for Dealing with Reverse Culture Shock

- Don't be surprised that many of your friends and family may not understand what you have experienced, and may not demonstrate the level of interest in your semester or year abroad that you had expected.
- Use diplomacy in raving about your host country.
- Avoid criticizing the United States and always comparing it to your host country.
- Don't impose your cultural changes on others.
- Seek out your good friends and share both the joy and readjustment problems.
- Listen to those who have remained at home; they will also have stories to tell.
- Consider the techniques you used in adjusting to your host country and use those same strategies.
- When asked stereotypical questions, respond with your observations and experience of reality.
- Always rely on a sense of humor!
- Stay physically healthy since stress may cause you to be unduly tired, easily depressed or subject to minor illnesses.
- Spend time alone to sort out your feelings, to set new goals and priorities, to put things into perspective and to separate the lasting benefits from the casual impressions.
- Meet with other returning students to share experiences and advice on readjustment issues.
- Extend hospitality to foreign students, faculty and visitors on campus.
- Keep up with developments in the host country. One of the best parts of an overseas experience are the friends made. Write to them and invite them to the United States. Make every effort to keep the friendships as strong as they were when abroad.

Re-entry

Re-entry Procedures

Visit the CIE upon your return to CofC. We'd love to hear about your experience abroad. We are located in the Multicultural Center, 207 Calhoun St. Please leave your new address and phone number with our office, should the need arise for us to contact you (e.g. to discuss transfer credit).

We welcome peer advisors and volunteers. In speaking with students seeking to study abroad, your comments and experiences can help others in their decision-making. It always helps students to speak to someone who has just returned from the same country or program they are interested in. If you would like to become a peer advisor, please call the International Office.

Preparing for Your Return

Several weeks before you return home, you may wish to start preparing for re-entry. You can have friends send you local or school newspapers, or clippings about local happenings. Catching up on local issues will speed up your adjustment to life at home.

Take time to properly say goodbye to your friends. Taking two minutes to say goodbye on the last morning isn't the way most people wish to leave. Spend time with your friends and enjoy your final weeks/days abroad. Don't wait until the last morning to take pictures...especially of your neighborhood, your friends, etc... Take pictures throughout your program.

Aside from preparing yourself mentally, you should also begin to consider re-packing and how you intend to bring all of your belongings that you have accumulated. Excess baggage fees are often very expensive. You will need to check with the airline for extra fees.

U.S. Customs and Immigration

Upon your arrival in the United States, you will exit your plane and proceed to Immigration. Here they will stamp your passport and welcome you back home. Next you will enter the arrival hall and claim your checked luggage. From here, you will proceed to the Customs Inspector who will either a) send you on your way, or b) ask you to open your bags. They have the legal right to search your possessions and to open your bags for inspection. Additionally, you should know that most, if not all, U.S. airports have drug and agriculture sniffing dogs, trained to spot drugs and food items being brought into the country. If you are asked to open your bags, be polite and cooperate with the search.

By law, you are permitted to bring back \$400 US (retail value) of merchandise and gifts acquired abroad. Items bought in airport "Duty Free" shops or from the "Duty Free" cart on your flight home should be included in this \$400 limit. If you exceed this limit, you are required to pay a flat 10% duty on the next \$1000 of merchandise. Failure to declare items or understating the value of merchandise is

longer than 90 days). Some requirements, such as a police background check and a doctor's letter stating good health, can be time consuming and involve pre-planning. Do not wait until the last minute. Visa processing can take up to several months and each country requires specific documents. Please note that some student visas carry certain restrictions (e.g. no employment), and you need a valid passport to apply for a visa. Once you have been accepted by a program, you should begin the visa application process.

Note to Non-U. S. Citizens

Requirements for non-U.S. citizens may vary from those of U.S. citizens. Do not assume that requirements will be the same. Also, check with the CIE to secure necessary documents to return to the U.S.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The ISIC card is useful for students studying abroad. It is recognized worldwide and immediately proves that you are eligible to receive available discounts on travel, accommodations and admission to museums, theaters and other cultural attractions in more than 90 countries. The ISIC card can be obtained at the CIE for \$22. You must bring a passport-sized photo, cash or a check made payable to the College of Charleston, and your current student ID card. It usually takes less than a day to make the card, but do not wait until the day before you are leaving.

IMPORTANT PREPARATIONS

Overseas Addresses (if possible)

Provide the Office of International Education and Programs with your foreign address as well as your email address. This information is helpful in case we need to contact you while you are away.

Gifts

If you are staying with a host family and/or plan to visit friends or family while overseas, it is customary to bring a small gift—something that would represent the United States or your local community. Some suggested ideas for gifts include the following:

- Cookbooks
- Postcards (of CofC, your home, tourist attractions)
- Small photo books of US or local travel sights
- T-shirts or hats with logos (CofC, sports team)
- Local crafts or artistry

Taxes

Don't forget to have someone take care of them for you! You are responsible for filing taxes while you are overseas. This applies to students going abroad for the academic year or spring semester.

For more information, contact the IRS at 1-800-829-1040

TDD 1-800-829-4059

❑ **Change of Address**

Several weeks before going abroad, you will want to consider making address changes for your:

- Credit Cards
- Phone bills and other utility bills
- Rent statements (if applicable)
- Bank statements
- Magazine subscriptions or other memberships

Please be sure to change these addresses *several weeks before departure*.

❑ **Pre-departure Reading**

It is your responsibility to learn as much as you can about your host country before your arrival. Buy a good guidebook (Lonely Planet and Let's Go) and/or other resource materials to familiarize yourself with your host culture.

There are many aspects of a culture that you should learn about, such as:

- Dating customs
- Drinking age
- Acceptable norms
- Social customs (greeting people with a kiss on the cheek...men and women)
- Meal times (some countries have dinner much later than we are accustomed to in the U.S.)
- Political history
- Educational system
- Become familiar with the current events and history for your host country and the U.S. before you go. It does not look good for citizens in your host country to know more about the U.S. than you.

Health Issues

Health Insurance

It is important for you to have sufficient health insurance coverage while you are abroad. Failure to obtain coverage can result in anything from very high medical bills to refusal to be treated in a hospital or doctor's office. In some countries, foreigners might have to prove they have medical insurance before they can be treated. No matter where you go or what treatment you may seek, **SAVE ALL MEDICAL BILLS AND RECEIPTS.**

Check to see if your current medical coverage is valid outside of the United States and if your program provides insurance. Find out how you would file a claim from abroad and how the insurance company would handle the claim. Ask your insurance company if they provide benefits for medical evacuation and repatriation. Although it is not a pleasant subject to think about, you need to be aware of what would happen if you were to become seriously ill while abroad and had to return to the U.S. for medical treatment. If your current policy doesn't

prepared to pay or else take a chance at getting an unreserved seat.

- Daily passes for travel on buses, trams or trains might be cheaper than purchasing individual tickets if you are traveling within a major city for a certain period of time. Some cities offer 24-hour travel passes that make traveling much easier and much cheaper.
- Travel insurance is something students may wish to consider if they are purchasing a travel package or airline ticket that carries strict penalties for cancellation. In the event of illness, a travel insurance policy should cover the cost of replacement or refund, thereby eliminating any penalties imposed by the airline/operator. Ask a travel agent for more information about such policies.
- Dates of travel are always an issue to keep in mind during the planning stages. Many shops are closed on Sundays in Europe; in Israel, shops are closed on Saturday. Every country is different and guidebooks will provide you with hours of banks, shops and museums. It is fairly common for museums to be closed one day a week; refer to travel guidebooks for detailed information.
- Holidays are another logistical factor to consider while planning trips. Many cities shut down completely for holidays, while banks may be the only institution in observance of the holiday. Transportation schedules may be drastically changed to reflect the holiday—you don't want to be waiting three hours for a train that has been cancelled. Some countries have local holidays, in addition to national holidays. Guidebooks provide information that will help you plan your travels around holidays.
- Festivals and big events are fun to attend while traveling. Despite the festive atmosphere, you must constantly be aware of pickpockets and other petty thievery. Large crowds and gatherings are the perfect settings for pickpockets to ruin the fun of others. Be aware of anything unusual, such as being squirted with ketchup or mustard—a distraction tool used by pickpockets and thieves. Never keep your wallet in your back pocket and avoid using the tourist-style hip bags. In a large crowd, you should know how to shout "Stop Thief" or another phrase to call for help should you become a victim.
- Strikes can also throw an unexpected curve into your plans. Keep abreast of world news while abroad. Should a strike arise, contact your program director for further information or make alternate plans.
- Lodging is very important to plan in advance. You do not want to be walking around a foreign city without a place to stay. The student guidebooks such as "*Lonely Planet*" and "*Let's Go*" provide lists of budget places to stay. Additionally, tourist offices can provide the same information that is often more current.
- Leave your travel itinerary and contact/lodging information with your program director, host family or friends. This will be invaluable should an emergency situation arise and they need to reach you.

Keep in mind that the laws concerning drunk driving, the possession and/or selling of illegal drugs in most foreign countries are MORE SEVERE than they are in the United States. Even if you are not using drugs, you may find yourself “guilty by association” if you are at a party where drugs are present. If that situation arises, you should leave immediately.

Traveling While Abroad

While abroad, you will spend a good deal of time traveling. Since everyone has different goals for their journeys, we would like to raise your awareness on several general issues.

Normal common sense should prevail when traveling abroad, just as it would at home. Be especially cautious in situations where you are more likely to be victimized such as in crowded subways, train stations, elevators, market places, and festivals.

In addition, keep track of the news to be aware of any potential problems in areas where you may be traveling. Keep your money and tickets in a money belt. It is not a good idea to carry a purse or handbag with valuables because this is too convenient for snatch-and-run type thievery. Leave all expensive items at home.

- When purchasing your transportation, whether it be air, rail or sea, consulting a student travel agency is very helpful. Not only will they be able to locate discounts available exclusively to students, but the staff will often times provide recommendations of places to visit and things to do while traveling. Consult your travel guide for local travel agents. Do check around between agencies as each offers unique discounts that the other may not have.
- Airline tickets offered at student discounts may or may not have restrictions resulting in severe penalties for itinerary and/or date changes. It is advisable to ask before you purchase your ticket what the conditions are. Is there a fee to change dates? Can you earn frequent flyer points?
- Students studying abroad in Europe commonly use Eurail passes. There are different types of passes. Some passes offer flexibility in dates, while others are valid for a set period of time. Eurail passes must be purchased in the United States, so consider this carefully before your departure. You can have someone at home purchase the pass for you, but remember that it must be shipped over to you in Europe—have the package insured for loss or theft since the pass is valuable. Depending on your rail itinerary, it may be less expensive to purchase individual train tickets rather than a Eurail pass.
- Train reservations are mandatory on some train routes, especially between two major cities during the business week. Check with a local train station to see if a reservation is necessary for the route on which you will be traveling. Reservations often carry a small charge, so be

provide coverage, consider purchasing some form of supplemental insurance coverage. Other questions to ask your insurance carrier:

- Does the policy cover you for all countries you will visit?
- Are there pre-admission requirements, which may not be practical outside the U.S.?
- Does the policy exclude injuries sustained from terrorism and/or acts of war?
- Are the reimbursement procedures appropriate for a student outside the U.S.?
- Will you be required to pay cash in local currency and seek reimbursement later?
- Does the insurance company require claims to be submitted in U.S. dollars?
- What kind of financial and medical documentation will be required, and is such documentation readily available in the host country?

If you are not currently covered by medical insurance or your current insurance does not cover you while outside the U.S., you are advised to enroll in a policy designed for U.S. students studying abroad. Information on basic and supplemental medical coverage is available in the CIE.

Immunizations

Some countries require proof of immunization from various diseases. In some cases, proof of an HIV test may be required. Since requirements are constantly changing, contact the consulate of the countries you will be visiting for details prior to departure. For more information, call the Center for Disease Control's Travel Information Hotline at (404) 332-4559 or visit their website at www.cdc.gov. It is always a good idea to carry a small card with you listing your prior immunizations and medical history. Ask your physician to provide you with a list of shots you have received to date and other medical conditions. Carry this card with your passport while traveling—should you encounter a medical emergency, this may prove invaluable.

General Medical Concerns

It is an excellent idea to have a routine physical exam or check-up prior to your departure. Additionally, it is suggested that you schedule routine visits to your eye doctor, dentist and any other specialist(s). We recommend that you bring the telephone and fax numbers for all doctors' offices that you may visit. In case of any medical emergency, you will be able to obtain your medical records quickly without any unnecessary hassles.

Students with severe asthma, epilepsy, heart conditions, allergies to antibiotics, and other medical conditions should consider purchasing a Medic-Alert tag to wear. These tags are internationally recognized and will alert medical personnel to your condition. For more information contact Medic Alert at 1-800-423-6333.

Bring legible copies of any medical prescriptions you are taking. You may also want to have your doctor prescribe substitute or alternate drug(s) in case your exact prescription is not available overseas. You are advised to take with you the medications you will need for the duration of your program abroad. Carry a copy of the prescription and/or a physician's statement that you may need to present when you enter the host country to document your need to import medication. Diabetics and others who self-inject medication are advised to carry enough needles for your full stay and to check in advance about regulations governing the transport of needles into your host country. All medications and medical supplies should be carried in their original labeled containers to facilitate admission and inspection at foreign ports of entry. Be aware that some drugs may be considered illegal (e.g. Ritalin is illegal in Italy), therefore first check with the consulate.

U.S. prescriptions may not be valid overseas, even with the actual bottle of medication (e.g. this is the law in England). It is a good idea to carry with you a small card detailing your medical history and prior immunizations. Keep this with your passport while traveling—it may prove useful should you encounter a medical emergency.

Students with Disabilities

Students with concerns about disability should access Mobility International at (541) 343-1284 or via e-mail at miusa@igc.apc.org. They can provide current information regarding facilities and access conditions abroad.

AIDS/HIV/STDs

Just as you do at home, you need accurate information on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and safe sex practices. Some countries require HIV screening prior to visa issuance or admission. If testing is required, you may want to secure test results in the U.S. to avoid the possibility of testing with reused needles common in some parts of the world. In some countries, blood transfusions are not always screened for HIV or hepatitis; transfusions in developing countries should be refused except in life-threatening situations. Ask your program director to help identify possible sources of safe and pre-screened blood in case of an emergency. These may include embassies, private hospitals and U.S. military bases. For pre-departure information on AIDS and HIV, contact the CDC National HIV/AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS.

Financial Information

Money

If you can, bring a small amount of LOCAL CURRENCY for the country in which you will be arriving. This will help when you arrive in the country to cover expenses such as phone calls, bus or train rides, taxis, or meals. However, most airports have ATMs or an exchange kiosk so you will have the opportunity to obtain local currency upon your arrival.

Before you leave, be sure to find out how to get money wired or transferred to

- overseas. They **CANNOT** have you released but can provide a list of local lawyers to contact. A consular official will also visit you in jail and inform you about the laws and contact your family.

For more information, contact the U.S. Department of State at (202) 647-5225 or visit their website at <http://travel.state.gov>. In an emergency situation after hours, call (202) 647-4000 and ask for the Duty Officer.

Staying Healthy

While traveling abroad, it is important to keep in mind that the water supply in certain countries may not always be safe for drinking. Check to see if it is recommended that you drink bottled water during your travels. Also, it should be noted that foods such as salads, fruits and vegetables should be avoided in locations where consumption of tap water is not advisable. These foods are generally washed before being served and this can cause discomfort or illness.

It is recommended to carry a small medical kit with you while traveling. A simple kit should include: Band-Aids, pain relievers, sunscreen, sunburn ointment, skin moisturizer, insect repellant, anti-bacterial ointment, water purification tablets, anti-diarrhea and upset stomach remedies.

No matter what you choose to bring with you, be sure to check all expiration dates on pharmaceutical and medical products!

Spending Money

Keep all bills and receipts from transactions conducted abroad. This will help you should you have any problems with faulty merchandise or medical bills to be reimbursed by insurance companies.

Keep track of your traveler's checks as you spend them. You should already have a list of their serial numbers (to use in case they are lost or stolen), so it will be very easy to simply cross off the check numbers as they are spent. Do not keep the list with your checks.

AVOID EXCHANGING MONEY ON THE "BLACK MARKET"! In almost all countries, exchanging money with an unauthorized source is **ILLEGAL** and **DANGEROUS**. You should only exchange your money in banks and other established offices.

Legal Matters

While you are abroad, you are subject to the laws of your host country. Should you require legal assistance while overseas, contact your program director and a U.S. consular official immediately. Consular officials cannot serve as attorneys or give legal advice, but they can provide lists of local attorneys and help you find legal representation. Also, Consular officials **CANNOT** get you out of jail. However, if you are arrested, ask permission to notify a consular official—it is your right. American consular officials will visit you, advise you of your rights under local laws and will contact your family and friends if you wish. They can assist you with any money transfers that may be necessary.

General Information

Travel Issues/General Considerations

- Reconfirm all airline reservations at least 72 hours before departure. When calling the airline(s), don't forget to request a special meal if you are a vegetarian, eat Kosher, or have other dietary concerns.
- Do you have connecting flights? If so, be sure you allow yourself plenty of time to make your connection. Some airports such as JFK Airport in New York are enormous. A few hours between flights is recommended—check with your airline or travel agent for advice. Also note that some cities have multiple airports—Paris has two airports: Charles DeGaulle and Orly; the New York area has three: JFK, LaGuardia and Newark; London has two main airports: Gatwick and Heathrow; Tokyo has two airports that are more than an hour apart. Be sure you know from which one(s) your flights arrive and depart. Connecting between airports is a hassle you will want to avoid.
- Jet lag is something students will encounter during the first few days of their arrival overseas. Feelings of fatigue, disorientation, depression and/or homesickness are symptoms of jet lag and are completely normal. It will take several days before jet lag is overcome and adjustment to the new surroundings and time zone is achieved. Try to relax and take it easy during the first few days in order to alleviate any jet lag symptoms. Avoid alcohol, get plenty of exercise and drink plenty of water to ease the effects of jet lag.

Emergencies Abroad

Should you encounter an emergency abroad, be aware that there are several resources to assist you. The American Citizens Service (ACS) is an agency within each U.S. Embassy that serves to help Americans abroad in the following situations:

- **Passport replacements:** you can have your passport replaced usually within 24 hours, even faster if you can produce a photocopy of your original passport along with extra passport photos. Always be sure to have photocopies of the first two pages of your passport with you and leave copies at home that can be faxed to you in an emergency.
- **Financial assistance:** ACS can help transfer funds abroad in the event of an emergency.
- **Medical assistance:** ACS can provide information on local doctors, dentists, mental health specialists, hospitals and clinics.
- **Serious illness/injury:** ACS can inform your family if you are seriously injured or ill; they may also assist in arranging your return (at your expense) to the United States.
- **Disaster/evacuation:** ACS can provide a wide array of services in the event of a natural disaster or civil unrest, including help with evacuation.
- **Arrest:** Contact the ACS immediately if you are arrested

you should the need arise. You don't want to waste any time if an emergency situation arises while abroad. Know that bank drafts and wire transfers take time to clear—they can also be very expensive, depending on service fees. American checks take several days to clear in a foreign bank.

ATM CARDS are increasingly the easiest and least costly means of getting money. The exchange rates are usually good and fees minimal. Deposits made in the U.S. can be quickly accessed by an ATM. While you should have some other means of obtaining money, ATM access is often a good option. Some banks are being proactive in preventing fraudulent charges on accounts. Before leaving, notify your bank that you will be staying in a particular country for a specified amount of time. This will help prevent your bank from canceling your card.

CREDIT CARDS are widely accepted, with Visa, MasterCard and American Express the most common cards. Check with each company before your departure to see what services are offered. Credit cards earn a better exchange rate than cash or traveler's checks. Notify the credit card company that you will be overseas. This will help prevent your credit card company from canceling your card as some credit card companies are being proactive in preventing fraudulent charges on accounts.

TRAVELERS CHECKS can be purchased in either U.S. dollars or in foreign currency (e.g. Swiss Francs, British Pounds Sterling, Japanese Yen). The advantage of purchasing checks in foreign currency is that in some cases, there is no fee to cash the checks since they are already in the local currency; the exchange rate is locked in at the time of purchase. If you purchase your checks in U.S. dollars, then you will obtain the exchange rate in effect on the day you cash your checks. You should keep them in a safe place and with the receipts and a list of the check numbers in a separate location.

In most cases, you will need your passport to cash travelers checks overseas. Talk to students who have returned from your host country; they may be able to tell you the best option. For some countries, it is better to purchase travelers checks issued in US Dollars rather than in local currency.

FOREIGN BANKS usually offer the best exchange rates on cash and travelers checks. Do note that it is common for many banks, as well as other exchange bureaus, to charge a commission or service charge for exchanging money. In some cases, this may be a percentage fee, while in others, a flat fee will be charged. Ask before you exchange your money to see how much the transaction will cost. Bring your passport with you to the bank, since many transactions cannot be completed without it. Using your International Student Identity Card (ISIC) at certain locations around the world will allow you to exchange money without being charged a commission or fee.

Finally, the most important thing to do with financial concerns is to make a list of credit cards or bankcards you will be taking with you overseas. Write down the card number, the name as it appears on the card and the contact numbers should

the card become lost or stolen. Remember that toll-free “800 Numbers” do NOT work from overseas, so be sure to get an actual long distance phone number to call (collect) should a problem arise. Make several copies of this list; leave copies with your parents or guardian and bring your own set and store them in different and secure locations.

PACKING TIPS

- ❖ **Bring as little as possible!** Do not bring more than you can carry by yourself at one time. You may want to lay out everything you think you will need, and then force yourself to take only half. Remember, you will be shopping in your host country or at least bringing home some souvenirs. Leave room for them! Check with the airline to see what their weight and size limits are for each piece of luggage as they frequently change.
- ❖ When packing, take some things that you will not mind leaving behind if necessary. For instance, if you bring a towel, bring one that you could leave behind therefore making more room for your return home.
- ❖ Bring a backpack. This can come in very handy for school and for weekend traveling. You may also buy a large backpack for longer trips. Backpacks are a great piece of traveling equipment because your hands remain free. A good combination of luggage is to have a suitcase on wheels, a large backpack and a carry-on. With this combination you will be able to transport your entire luggage yourself.
- ❖ Be sure to bring clothing appropriate to the places you will be visiting. Read about the places that you intend to visit, as there might be restrictions on the type of clothing that you are allowed to wear. Keep in mind the season of when you are arriving.
- ❖ Take two or three pairs of shoes!! Choose pairs that are comfortable and go with all of your clothing. Shoes take up a lot of room in your luggage and make it very heavy. Remember less is better!
- ❖ Be sure to pack copies of your passport in each piece of luggage.
- ❖ Your luggage should be sturdy and durable, but not flashy. You do not want to draw attention to yourself while traveling.

family will permit guests of the opposite sex.

- If you smoke, check to see what the family rules are concerning smoking in the house.
- Talk to your family about entry/exit habits—that is, is it okay to come home at 2:00 a.m.? Do they have a spare key for you? Should you leave the door unlocked?
- Always be sure to notify your family if you are going to deviate from set plans. Even though they are not your natural parents, they may feel responsible for you if you do not come home when expected. It's always best to call and check in to let them know what is going on.
- Ask permission to use the telephone and pay for calls made. Don't be surprised if calling is limited. You may wish to find a local phone booth and use it for most of your calls.
- Do not raid the refrigerator without permission.
- Do not use an excessive amount of hot water and/or electricity. Don't leave lights on when you're not in the room. If you can control the temperature in your room, check with your host family to see what is acceptable and what isn't. Heat/air-conditioning may be very expensive.
- Watch your spending habits. If you are spending an excessive amount of money on shopping or other purchases, your family may feel uncomfortable, especially if their standard of living is lower than yours.
- If your family has a washing machine, ask for help the first few times you use it. Even though symbols may look like they do at home, the machine may still operate differently and you could end up having to mop a flooded floor! It is common in many places to have only a washing machine and no dryer.
- No matter where you are staying, make sure to have the name and phone number of the person or group picking you up from the airport when you arrive, if this is applicable.
- Periodic gifts to your host are suggested, to show your appreciation.

REMINDER:

Registration for the semester you return

While abroad, you must register for the semester of your return to campus. Make sure that you are familiar with Cougar Trail and the registration process, as this is the way you will register while overseas. Some departments (Political Science, Art History, and Honors Program) place advising holds on their majors. So, contact your advisor or the department chair before registering.

Please note that some of the courses that you are taking abroad may be prerequisites for courses you need to take next semester. Because Cougar Trail will not recognize your current courses until a final transcript has been received and processed, you will need to contact your academic advisor or department chair about registering for your desired courses. Please contact the CIE if you have any problems with the registration process while abroad.

You might consider getting a free e-mail account from “hotmail” (www.hotmail.com) or “yahoo” (www.yahoo.com), these accounts can be accessed any where with an Internet connection. You may also access your C of C Edisto account through the website (www.cofc.edu).

- **Standard Mail**, in some cases, can take up to several months for a letter to reach its destination. Be sure to remember that *airmail* and *surface mail* are two completely different things and cost different rates. Airmail is significantly faster, but more expensive. Write “air mail” or “surface mail” on your envelopes in the language of your host country—you must have “air mail” written otherwise your letter will arrive via surface (slower) mail.

Communication from Home

Make sure your friends and family know how to contact you and are aware of the time changes involved. To make calls from the United States to an overseas location:

- Dial **011 [Country Code] [City Code] [Local Number]**

If the City Code begins with a Zero (0), eliminate the zero when dialing from the U.S.

A list of telephone country codes can generally be found in the first few pages of most telephone books.

Homestays

If you will be living with a host family, keep in mind that arrangements can vary greatly from home to home. Understand very clearly what is expected of you and what guidelines you should follow. A homestay can be one of the most rewarding aspects of a study abroad experience where you can gain unique insight into the ways of another culture. Bring photos to show your host family what your family in the United States is like!

You should always ask what is included in your homestay so there are no surprises upon arrival. Is laundry included...? Are meals included...and if so, how many per day/week...? What if you skip meals...?

Some Dos and Don'ts of Homestays

- If you follow strict religious observances, have special health needs or allergies, require a special diet or a non-smoking host, notify your program sponsor well in advance of your departure. Often your homestay experience will depend as much on your cooperation, good will and courtesy, as it does on the family's.
- Bring a small, inexpensive gift and pictures of your family and friends. It's the thought that counts, not the price tag.
- Offer to help with household tasks, although your help may be declined.
- Be sure to keep your room neat and tidy.
- Don't always assume that you can have overnight visitors—be sure to
- ask before extending an invitation. And check to make sure your

WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD

Safety and Security

Basic Tips for Safety and Security

- Never carry large amounts of cash.
- Make a list of credit and debit cards and their emergency numbers—keep separate from your wallet.
- Make a copy of your airline ticket and passport—keep them separate.
- Don't attract attention to yourself by wearing provocative clothing or behaving boisterously.
- Avoid large crowds, especially protests and demonstrations, as they have the potential to become volatile.
- Know the local traffic laws. In some countries, such as the UK, they drive on the left side of the road. This is critical to remember when crossing the street. Be aware that pedestrians may not have the right of way in your host country.
- When out at night, make sure you are with friends.
- Only use official, marked taxis.
- When traveling, provide your program director and/or host family with your itinerary and lodging information. Then they know how to contact you in an emergency situation.
- Understand that as a foreigner you are more vulnerable than the local residents to petty theft. Be especially careful when consuming alcohol. Be aware that in some countries the alcohol content in beer is higher than in the U.S.
- Acceptable behavior for females in foreign countries varies, so it is important to learn the norms of your host country. Female students may attract unwanted attention by wearing skimpy clothing or through what might be perceived as flirtatious behavior.
- STDs are a worldwide health problem. Use the same precautions overseas as you would at home. Be aware that the quality of some contraceptives in some countries is unreliable.

Orientation

It is important that you attend your program's orientation session(s). This will help you make the most of your time abroad. You should take this opportunity to get acquainted with your program director and academic advisor. They will be able to provide you with any assistance you may need while abroad and with information particular to your program.

Register with the U.S. Embassy

In the event that a national emergency does arise, the U.S. Embassy will be able to contact you. Registering is also a good idea in the event that your passport becomes lost or stolen—the Embassy will have a record of it on file. You can contact the U.S. Department of State at (202) 647-5226 to find out the location of the U.S. Embassy closest to your foreign university.

Familiarize Yourself with the Environment

Once you arrive, take some time to learn about your surroundings. Learn your address and phone numbers, and emergency numbers; be able to locate the nearest bus/train stop(s), and learn the bus/train routes and fares, etc. Also, locate the nearest grocery store, post office, currency exchange, newsstand, hospital/doctor, and pharmacy. More importantly, you should learn your way around your university and be able to find your classes before the first day of school! Become familiar with the local currency and always remember to count your change. Foreigners can be taken advantage of easily if they don't know how the money units are arranged. Always remember that you are subject to the local laws of the host country, no matter what citizenship you may hold.

Contacts Abroad

If your family or friends have any contacts overseas, it is always a good idea to bring their names and numbers with you. Local contacts can provide you with information or suggestions, and help you in an emergency situation.

Living Abroad

If you are able, it is a good idea to arrive a few days before classes start, so you will have some time to adjust and learn your way around. You will be able to overcome the effects of jetlag within about two days, which will make adjustment to your new home easier.

Your living accommodations may be more modest than what you are used to here in the United States. Be prepared for less heat and less hot water, fewer electrical conveniences, and smaller bedrooms. Toiletries and other items you may use on a daily basis may not be available or could be more expensive. Keep this in mind when packing.

If you plan to take electrical appliances such as a razor or hairdryer, you may wish to consider purchasing an inexpensive model upon your arrival abroad. The standard for electricity in the United States is 110 volts/60 cycles; in most European countries it is 220 volts/50 cycles. Purchase a good converter in the United States, otherwise you run the risk of ruining your appliance and perhaps starting an electrical fire.

Culture Shock

Survival Kit for Overseas Living by L. Robert Kohls provides very useful information on Culture Shock. Culture as defined by Kohls is "an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. It refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people". Culture contains, but is not limited to, manners, customs, beliefs, laws, arts, values, and morals. Sometimes Americans have a difficult time understanding that what is important in our culture may not be important in other cultures and vice versa.

Kohl suggests looking at ourselves from a "cross-cultural perspective". Try and view yourself through the eyes of someone in a different culture and this can give you a different and new view of yourself. Remember that there are positive and negative aspects of every culture.

There are a few things that can make your adjustment easier once you are in your new culture. It is best to begin in the area in which you live and get comfortable with it. You can then begin to venture into the surrounding neighborhoods and learn local restaurants, transportation and government offices. It is also very important to know street signs, the monetary system, and landmarks. In addition to knowing your surroundings, it is extremely helpful to talk to people and accept the locals' help. Do not be afraid to ask questions! Always keep an open mind when getting to know your host country.

Everyone that lives abroad has some experience, some greater than others, in culture shock. Kohls states that culture shock "comes from the experience of encountering ways of doing, organizing, perceiving, or valuing things which are different from yours and which threatens your basic, unconscious belief that your encultured customs, assumptions, values and behaviors are right". There is believed to be four stages of culture shock: initial euphoria, irritability and hostility, gradual adjustment and adaptation/biculturalism. Do not panic because you will reach the stage of adaptation.

Communication

Communication from Abroad

For calling back to the United States, it is easiest to buy prepaid phone cards once you are in your host country. These seem to have better rates. You may also contact your long distance company and get a calling card from them; however, this may be expensive.

Don't forget about time differences! You don't want to be calling home to ask for money when it's 3:30 a.m. on the East Coast.

Depending on where you are studying abroad, you will have several options for communicating with family and friends back home. Phone, mail and e-mail are the most common methods.

- **Phone Calls:** Contact your phone company before departure to find out exactly what collect calls or calling card calls will cost from abroad—you do not want your parents to be surprised with an \$800 phone bill that could have been avoided. Again, the best is to purchase a prepaid phone card once you arrive in your host country.
- **E-mail** is available around the world. Many major cities have "Cyber Cafes" where you can have a cup of coffee while surfing the net. Be sure to show your student I.D. card as discounts are often granted for students—be prepared for the use, it generally costs \$6 to \$10 an hour for online time.