



PARENT & FAMILY GUIDEBOOK



ACADEMIC
STUDIES
ABROAD

www.academicstudies.com

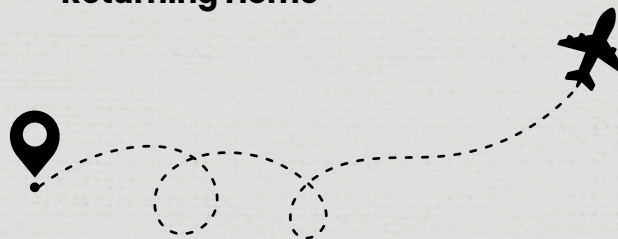


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STUDIES
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WELCOME TO ASA!

Where we provide students with tools necessary to ensure a memorable and fulfilling study abroad experience.



Academic Studies Abroad

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Needham, MA 02492

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hello@academicstudies.com

24-Hour Emergency: 857-366-6821

We are here for you

Throughout this guidebook, we provide tested advice and tips you will find valuable as we navigate your student's study abroad program together. We hope you take an opportunity to review this Parent & Family Guidebook in its entirety and if after reading or at any point you have a question, please feel free to contact us here at ASA. We are happy to be a resource for you along this journey.

SUPPORT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

ASA does everything possible to ensure that our students have a quality, immersive study abroad experience. We want them to feel a sense of belonging in their host city and learn from the local culture surrounding them. Cultural immersion is very important to us, and we achieve this through our small program sizes and personalized attention throughout the process.



We are there for your student every step of the way, but we know that we can never take the place of a parent's or family's support. Support from parents and family is crucial to a successful study abroad experience and therefore, we want to partner with you. We can work together to ensure your student has the support, advice and assistance they need to have an incredible experience abroad.

We know you want to support them in this life changing experience the best you can, so we created this special guidebook just for you.

In this guidebook, you will find information about the application process, financial information, practical steps to prepare your student, safety information, and much more.



MEET OUR STAFF

Staff Photos and Bios

U.S. based staff: The ASA team is a group of people who are well traveled, experienced in foreign education, always there to assist you and best of all, they are people who have studied abroad themselves. We know what it's like to move to a new country, with a new language, and it's this first-hand experience which makes us true professionals when it comes to studying abroad. We are knowledgeable about the ins and outs of academics, housing, visa procedures, the host city, local culture, transportation, safety, and security.

Site Directors: ASA's on-site (local) staff abroad are in constant contact with the U.S. offices and are available to your student on-site for advice and support once abroad. They give students an in-depth orientation, coordinate housing, work with our host institutions, are available for student emergencies, facilitate cultural activities, and accompany students on ASA excursions. They pretty much do it all! The Site Directors are also available for advising, information on the city, or simply to chat.



☁️ Say YES : ☁️
☀️ to NEW ☀️
ADVENTURES

BENEFITS OF STUDY ABROAD

We know how scary it can be as a parent or family member to let your student embark on an adventure such as study abroad so far away from home. You've spent the majority of the last two decades raising them to be the men and women they are today, and now they have decided to take their next big step to travel the world.

Opening Minds, Expanding Employment Opportunities

Studying abroad has a way of broadening worldviews, cultivating independence, and instilling in students a desire to make the most of life. It's one of the greatest growing experiences a student can experience. Not only will your student learn to plan trips and navigate different cultures, they will also learn how to take care of themselves and will gain a new perspective of the world. Studying abroad is not a vacation. Sure, they will see beautiful sites and make friendships of a lifetime, but they will also be challenged in new academic ways and taught to truly LIVE in another culture, not just be a tourist.

Studying abroad teaches real-world skills that aren't found in classrooms. Cultural awareness and second language proficiency are two skills employers desire. Employers are also looking for confidence and problem-solving skills, which study abroad helps students develop in spades! A recent study found that "90% of students who studied abroad found employment within 6 months of graduation as compared to just 49% of the general graduating population" (IES Abroad). That same study noted that study abroad alumni have salaries that are \$7,000 higher than their peers who did not study overseas. In an increasingly globalized world, your student's international experience can make them an incredibly desirable job candidate!



EMERGENCY CONTACT PROCEDURES

1. Your student's Site Director contact information is located in the Site Specific Pre-Departure Guidebooks found here: www.academicstudies.com/pre-departure
2. "Safeture" Emergency Mobile App – your student will be asked to download this app just before their program starts.
 - a. The Safeture App has an SOS button that your student can press at any time if they are in trouble and need help. This button will connect them to local emergency services wherever they are in the world (i.e. the local "911").
 - b. While emergency services are helping your student, ASA will also receive a notification that your student has pressed the SOS button, with a map of their physical location.
 - c. Safeture sends push notifications to your student notifying them of safety threats nearby, such as natural disasters, public health threats, strikes, demonstrations, etc., things your student should avoid, wherever they are in the world.
3. CISI medical insurance card – CISI's 24-hour emergency number is listed on the student's insurance card. ASA will email students their insurance card about 2 weeks before the program starts. You can download a copy of the CISI Insurance policy on ASA's website at <https://academicstudies.com/health-safety>
4. ASA maintains a 24-hour US emergency phone number: 857-366-6821

WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EMERGENCY?

When your student calls you distraught from 5,000 miles away, everything can feel like an emergency. It may be difficult, but the best help you can provide them is to take a deep breath and help them distinguish between a crisis situation that necessitates activating a 24/7 emergency system and a challenging situation that can be addressed during normal business hours.

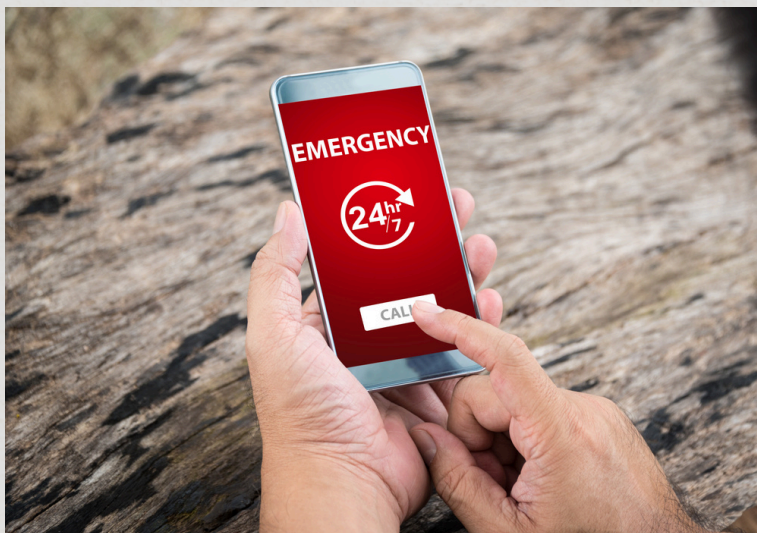
Some situations that cause students to be highly distressed actually cannot be resolved by our emergency response procedures and instead will take time, patience, and problem-solving skills to resolve.

During a crisis, it is not only important for ASA to do its part, but for our students as well.

During orientation in each city, our staff will talk to the students about the measures they must take to stay safe. While most students heed our advice, there can be students who make bad decisions, which can lead to bad consequences.

Please talk with your student about the importance of making good decisions while abroad so that they are getting the same message from all sides.

Like you, there is nothing we want more than for our students to have a safe and memorable experience. If at any point you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any of the ASA staff.



HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

What constitutes an Emergency?*

*that which necessitates calling the 24/7 emergency helpline

Ask yourself two questions:

1. Is my student in imminent danger?
2. Is this my student's issue or MY issue?

Not an Emergency

- + Lost Baggage
- + Credit Card Theft
- + Passport Theft
- + Roommate Issues (snoring, messy, noisy)
- + Homesickness

We acknowledge these situations are of great importance and can be extremely stressful, but they are generally not emergencies.

Emergency

- + Assault
- + Arrest
- + Suicidal Thoughts
- + Urgent Medical Issue (broken bone, appendicitis, etc.)
- + Roommate Issues (Abuse/Harassment [sexual or verbal], Violence, Assault)

The student should ALWAYS contact their local Site Director or a local emergency responder immediately.

If your student is unable to call our 24/7 emergency helpline, you can!

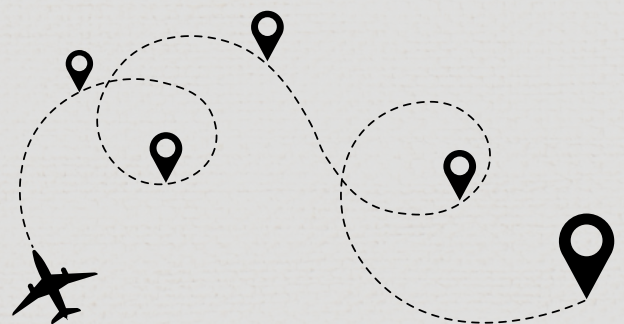


TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

ASA strongly advises all participants to insure their program costs against losses, in case your student needs to withdraw from the program after fees are non-refundable.

ASA program fees become non-refundable before the program starts. ASA is not responsible for losses should your student not attend the program for any reason after unrecoverable program costs apply.

Helpful information about Trip Cancellation Insurance can be found on our [website](#).



HEALTH & SAFETY

The health, safety, and security of your student are of the utmost importance to us.

During your student's time abroad, it is likely that problems will arise. Problem solving is a part of everyday life and this will be no different when your student is abroad. We encourage you to support your student through any challenges, while remembering to let them solve problems on their own and seek help from their ASA Site Director on-site when necessary.

The challenges that students experience abroad can be some of the most significant life-learning experiences, ones you will likely hear stories about for years to come, and your student will be proud of the fact that they solved the problem on their own. Again, problems are to be expected and we will help your student find a solution.

As you are probably aware, over the last couple of decades we have seen some horrible events both here and abroad. In every one of these incidents we have used the procedures we have in place to keep our students and staff safe, debriefed after to evaluate if there was anything else we should have done, and revisited the insurance that all of our students have to make sure we are providing adequate coverage.

We feel very confident that in all of the situations we have encountered, we were prepared and provided the level of care that any parent or family member would want.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Prior to departure, your student is required to fill out ASA's Medical History Form and Housing Questionnaire.

These documents are shared with the On-Site Directors and will be referenced in the event medical attention is necessary. The details on these forms are also taken into consideration when assigning housing, coordinating excursions, etc. It is very important that the information provided on these documents is accurate and up to date. If your student faces any new medical conditions once these forms have been submitted to ASA, or if they neglected to disclose any medical conditions, please have them provide the updated information to ASA as soon as possible.

Health and safety are also discussed during our virtual Pre-Departure Orientation and in-person On-Site Orientation shortly after arrival.

During these meetings, ASA staff will outline important details such as "do's and don'ts", local laws, transportation and pedestrian safety, emergency contact information and facilities, city orientation, cultural norms, and much more.



HEALTH & SAFETY

What if my student has a medical or safety emergency?

If your student faces a medical and/or safety emergency at any time, day or night, they should contact their ASA Site Director immediately and/or the 24-hour emergency number listed on their CISI medical insurance card. Their ASA Site Director can assist in arranging medical attention, accompany them to the doctor, and/or assist with insurance matters.

All ASA students (except for those from University of Minnesota Duluth) have comprehensive worldwide medical coverage provided by ASA through CISI (www.culturalinsurance.com). (Students from University of Minnesota Duluth receive comprehensive medical insurance from their home institution.)

ASA medical coverage is provided for the official dates of your student's program. If students will be traveling outside of these dates, they should purchase additional international medical insurance to cover them during that time.

Here are a few insurance companies you and your student can contact for supplemental coverage outside the official program dates:

- www.culturalinsurance.com
- www.insuremytrip.com
- www.geo-blue.com

In addition to the support provided by the ASA Site Director, we also have a U.S.-based, on-call staff member who can be reached at our US 24-hour emergency number.

HEALTH & SAFETY

How will ASA notify parents or family members if there is a crisis affecting my student's program location?

On a daily basis, ASA monitors worldwide events and often use our Site Directors, who are our eyes and ears in every ASA city, to make sure our students are safe. We also employ a security and risk management company, WorldAware (formerly iJet), from whom we receive regular updates during a crisis overseas, whether a natural disaster, terrorist attack, or political unrest. When an event that affects an entire program location occurs, information and instructions are first disseminated to affected students, and then we will send an email to parents. We may also post updates on our website www.academicstudies.com

HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

Encourage your student to keep the Safeture App open/running in the background of their smart phone. (The Safeture App pings your student's location and can provide real-time safety and security updates, but if your student closes the App, it will only geo-locate your student and notify them once they re-open the app.)

Encourage your student to enter trip info into Safeture App, this includes any travel done during their time overseas.

The Safeture App only uses 2% battery.



HEALTH & SAFETY

What if my student takes prescription medication?

The U.S. State Department recommends that travelers do the following:

- Bring a letter from their doctor: A traveler going abroad with a pre-existing medical condition should carry a letter from the attending physician, describing the medical condition and any prescription medications and doses, including the generic names of prescribed medications.
- Any medications being carried overseas must be stored in their original containers with clear and legible labels. Your student must bring enough medication to last the full duration of their program – it may be difficult to find the exact equivalent of their medication in other countries.
- Travelers should check with the foreign embassy of the country they are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics. For example, in some countries Adderall, Vyvanse, Ritalin, and certain other medications may be considered controlled substances that are illegal to possess without a prescription.
- All prescription medication and copies of the prescriptions **MUST** be packed in carry-on luggage.

HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

It is important your student bring enough medication to last their entire stay because not all of the same medications available in the USA are available abroad, and the manufacturer and formulation or dosage may be slightly different.

It is always better to bring what your student is used to taking and enough to last their entire stay.

Some past students have made the mistake of only packing enough medication in their carry-on for their first few days. Lost luggage can take a week or more to be returned, so if your student can't pack a whole semester of medication in their carry-on (which is recommended), your student must always pack at least 2 weeks of their medication in their carry-on.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Are vaccinations needed?

All students should ensure that their MMR, Meningitis, Hepatitis, and Tetanus vaccinations are up-to-date before traveling abroad. Please see this link for our latest COVID-19 vaccination policy:

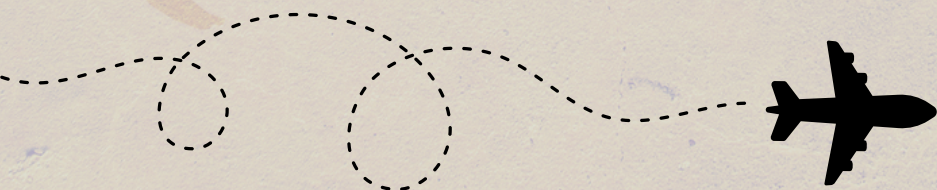
<https://www.academicstudies.com/coronavirus-future/updates>

If your student is going to South America and they plan to travel to rural areas, it is recommended they get the Yellow Fever vaccine 4-6 weeks before departure. Apart from this, no specific vaccinations are required for any ASA locations at this time.

If your student plans to travel outside their host country, they are responsible for researching the immunization requirements for each country.

Visit the Center for Disease Control's website: www.cdc.gov.

Please get any new vaccinations 4-6 weeks before departure to allow time for them to take effect.



INTRO TO THE ASA WEBSITE



ACADEMIC
STUDIES ABROAD

HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

In the top right hand corner of our website, you will find a helpful search tool.

Feel free to use this tool to search for answers that you might have.

We also have a dialog box/bubble which will start a chat with one of our staff.

If you cannot find what you are looking for or you don't want to have an online chat, please give us a call at 617-327-9388 or send us an email at hello@academicstudies.com

The ASA website, www.academicstudies.com, is an invaluable resource for both students and their families. While reading this guide, we recommend having the ASA Website open to use as a supplemental tool.

We have created a "PARENTS" section that can be accessed from our main drop down menu.

You will find information on the following:

Checklist for Parents – Review helpful tips, including our 3-part Webinar videos

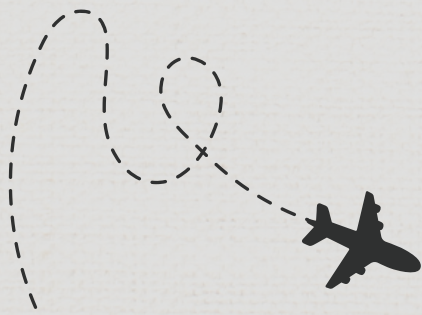
Health & Safety – Medical Insurance, Safeture Emergency Mobile App, 24-Hour Emergency Contact

Financial & Billing– Paying for the program, Cancellation Policies, Financial Aid & Scholarships

Cancellation Insurance – Review policy options and compare price quotes for coverage

Price Breakdowns – Outline of what you and your student can expect to spend on items not included in the program price, like airfare, books, suggestions for spending money, local transportation and meals

Frequently Asked Questions – Answers to some of the most request asked questions. Be sure to reach out to ASA if you have questions not answered on this page.



ASA EMBARK PORTAL

This is a snapshot of the student application portal in Embark. Once your student has decided on a program, they are directed here to apply. Once they are accepted, this is also where they will find pre-departure forms, billing statement, and pre-departure information.

The screenshot displays the ASA Embark Portal interface. The top header features the ASA logo and the text "ACADEMIC STUDIES ABROAD". The main content area is divided into two primary sections: "Application" and "Pre-Departure Forms".

The "Application" section, highlighted with a blue box, includes the following items:

- Traveler Information
- Passport and Citizenship
- Transcripts
- GPA & Recommendations
- Conduct Form
- Credits and Release Form
- Program Code & Application Fee

The "Pre-Departure Forms" section, highlighted with a green box, includes the following items:

- Eligibility and E-sign
- Billing Statement
- E-SIGN DOCUMENTS
- Housing Questionnaire
- ASA Scholarships
- Course Pre-Registration For Florence University Of The Arts - Semester
- Financial Aid Verification
- Emergency Contacts
- Site Specific Guide
- Pre-departure Guide
- Student Visa Information
- Flight Itinerary Form
- Shared Apartment Contract
- Florence Course Fees and Schedule
- Review

On the right side of the portal, there is an "Introduction" section with a welcome message and contact information. Below this, there is a "Traveler Information" section with fields for:

- Program City*
- Academic Institution*
- Term*
- Year*
- First Name*
- Last Name*
- Middle Name
- Preferred First Name*
- Phone Country Code*
- Phone Number*
- Home Institution*
- Email*
- Secondary Email*
- Date of Birth*
- Sex (as indicated on your passport)*
- Gender*
- Current Address
- Street 1*

Passport Upload – Must be valid for 6 months AFTER student plans to return from study abroad program.

Financial Aid Verification – Must be filled out by your student's home institution's Financial Aid Office if they plan to use financial aid to pay for program fees.

Visa Information – It's SUPER IMPORTANT to review this section! If a visa is required for your student's program, they may need to begin applying for it several months before departure!

Course Pre-Registration – This is where students tell us which classes they want to take. Students must have courses PRE-APPROVED by their home institution BEFORE filling out this form. Most students will need to get DOUBLE the number of courses approved than they actually plan to take – this protects them against course cancellations, schedule conflicts, or changes in availability.



PRE-DEPARTURE TIMELINE

1

Generally 4–9 months before departure student applies to program:

- Apply for a passport, or ensure current passport is valid for at least 6 months AFTER RETURNING FROM study abroad program
- Student completes Home Institution study abroad application
- Student completes ASA's application in our Embark portal
- Contact ASA with any questions at hello@academicstudies.com or 617-327-9388
- Student completes Home Institution and ASA scholarship applications (optional)

Within 1 week of completing ASA Application:

- Student receives ASA Acceptance Email. ASA pre-departure forms and Course Pre-registration available in ASA Embark student portal

3

6–12 weeks before departure:

- Apply for visa, if applicable. Consulates will keep student's passport while processing the visa, and this can take 4–6 weeks. Make sure there is no international travel during this time, as it may interfere with visa process!

4–8 weeks before departure:

- Student uploads flight itinerary to ASA Embark student portal. Needed at least 4 weeks ahead of travel to plan for ASA airport pick up.
- Watch ASA virtual Pre-Departure Orientation (will be announced by email)
- Check out ASA's YouTube video library for helpful videos on topics such as: what to pack, money & banking, culture shock, mental health & self-care, etc.
<https://www.youtube.com/user/ASAstudyabroad/videos>
- Read ASA Pre-Departure Handbook
<https://www.academicstudies.com/pre-departure>

2

Within 2 business days after being accepted by ASA:

- ASA Billing Statement produced

Within 1–2 weeks after being accepted by ASA:

- Pay non-refundable confirmation deposit, if applicable, deposit amount will vary, depending on program/term (see [Financial & Billing](#) for details).

Approximately 12 weeks before departure:

- Pay ASA Billing Statement or provide verification of financial aid

4

1–2 weeks before departure:

- Students receive by email: housing assignment, CISI medical insurance card, arrival instructions, and other final details. Documents must be printed and carried during travel.
- Good time for parents and students to discuss communication plan, culture shock, safety, and other topics – suggestions can be found later in this guidebook.

5–10 days before departure:

- Student receives email with instructions to download Safeture App
- Pack bags – Packing list can be found at <https://www.academicstudies.com/pre-departure>

MONEY MATTERS: BILLING & BANKING

How does disbursement of Financial Aid work?

Students can defer any portion of their ASA program fee that is covered by financial aid and pay it to ASA within 10 days of receiving their disbursement, as long as we receive their completed Financial Aid Verification Form (FAV) by our Payment Deadline. The Financial Aid Verification Form (FAV) must be completed by your student's home institution's Financial Aid Office.

Some programs require a Confirmation Deposit in order to secure your space, which must be paid within 1-2 weeks of being accepted and CANNOT be deferred with Financial Aid.

Search Financial Aid on our website for a more thorough explanation.

How should my student protect their financial and personal information while abroad?

Your student should make photocopies (or take photos on their phone) of all their important documents, such as passport, visa (if applicable), credit cards (front and back), driver's license, ID cards, medical insurance cards, etc. They should save one set to their phone, save one set on their laptop or in a cloud storage system; give another set to parents/family to save on their phone, cloud storage system or laptop and/or safely at home.

*Your student should bring their driver's license to use as everyday ID while abroad, AND MUST carry a photocopy of their passport, visa (if applicable), and their medical insurance card in their wallet at all times. They should NOT carry their passport unless they are traveling. When not traveling, their passport should be locked inside their suitcase in their housing.

Your student may also want to share their bank account details with a family member in the event they need emergency funds deposited or transferred into their account. Your student should notify their bank and all credit card companies of travel dates and locations or the financial institution will assume fraud and put a hold/stop on their account.

What if their wallet is stolen?

Your student should access the copies they have previously made of the items in their wallet and contact their bank and credit card company to cancel the cards, or have the card put on hold. Your student should also notify their ASA Site Director as they can assist with next steps such as filing a police report.

MONEY MATTERS: BILLING & BANKING

Best ways to get access to money while abroad:

- DO NOT bring U.S. cash or travelers checks. Student will lose money when they exchange the currency.
- The best way to get cash abroad is to use an ATM card at an ATM machine. Student will get the best exchange rate of the day this way.
- DO bring an ATM/debit card, as well as a credit card (for emergencies).
- DO make sure ATM/debit card has a 4-digit PIN (not 5-digit).
- DO make sure ATM/debit card says MasterCard, Visa, Cirrus, or Plus. If it doesn't, it will probably not work abroad.
- DO try a different bank's ATM if the first one you try doesn't accept card. In some places, student may have to try several different banks' ATM machines before they find one that will work.
- DO use an ATM that is attached to a bank, or even better, inside a bank. These are less likely to be tampered with than ATMs in convenience stores or other locations.

Have a Rainy Day Fund – Be Prepared for Unexpected Expenses!

It is a great idea to be prepared in case unexpected expenses arise, as they can often do during travel. Experience has shown that setting aside at least \$2,000 in savings or having a credit card available for any emergencies that arise can help alleviate some stress. For example, a parent may have to visit a student who is sick, or a student having to come home suddenly for a sick relative or funeral.



ACADEMICS

What courses will my student take abroad?

Students can take courses overseas that meet major, minor or general education requirements at their home institution. Students can also take courses of interest. Your student's home institution is the final arbiter of whether a course will transfer, if the grade will count toward the cumulative GPA or if the course fulfills degree requirements.

Prior to departure, your student is required to fill out and submit the Course Pre-Registration Form to their ASA Embark Portal. Students must ensure that they have the necessary prerequisites to take their desired classes abroad.

How many courses does my student have to take?

Students must be enrolled in full-time coursework for their entire term abroad. What constitutes full-time is unique to each program location and duration. Students are advised to review course enrollments with their Site Director to ensure compliance.

If a student falls below full-time, they may be dismissed from the program; ASA may notify embassies, consulates, law enforcement and immigration authorities which may result in revocation of legal status, visa revocation, deportation, fines or arrest with no credits and no refund granted.

How long will it take for my student to receive their transcripts? Are rush transcripts available?

About 6-12 weeks after your student's program end date, the host institution will send the final transcript directly to the ASA office in Boston. ASA will then send the final transcript to the student's home institution. At that point, your student's home institution will begin the process of transferring in their classes, grades, and credits, which can take up to 6 weeks. The home institution will determine what classes students receive transfer credit for, how many credits, and grades.

We strongly encourage all students to collect and save all course syllabi, assignments, grades, etc. from their classes abroad. Having this information may assist with the credit transfer and approval process.

If your student is graduating soon after returning from abroad, they should inquire with the financial aid, scholarship, and registrar offices if there is a specific deadline by which the transcript must be received at their home institution. Some ASA programs have the capability of offering rush transcripts and some do not. Inquire with ASA before your program starts if this is a concern of yours.



HOUSING

Our goal is to provide students with healthy and suitable accommodations, facilitating a successful academic experience abroad.

ASA offers multiple types of housing, varying by the program location.

In some cities we have host families and shared apartments available, while in other cities we might only offer residence halls. Please see our website for the type of housing available in your student's host city.

All housing is located within a reasonable distance or commute to the university.

The ASA Site Directors review each student's Housing Questionnaire (completed after acceptance) to assign accommodations based on the information that your student has provided on this document. The more your student has shared on this document, the more information their Site Director will have to use as a basis for housing and roommate assignments.

Expectations

Students and parents should not expect that housing abroad will be similar or comparable to housing in the US. In general, things are smaller outside of the US, from the size of a bedroom to the size of the refrigerator. Students should not expect that their housing abroad will be better or worse than in the US, it will just be different.

Something to keep in mind: It is important to mention that because you are your student's safety net, you may often times be vented to regarding certain aspects of their study abroad that may be, at the time, frustrating or upsetting. We encourage you to support your student through any and all challenges, while remembering to let them solve problems on their own. In the event a problem arises, urge your student to speak with their Site Director to discuss possibilities of bettering the situation. Although it may be an uncomfortable situation for your student, they can be assured that the Site Director is there as a resource to assist with any issues firsthand. Furthermore, while ASA welcomes feedback from our students' parents/guardians, in order for us to address a problem, we must hear the concerns from the student directly.



HOUSING

What if my student has an issue with their housing?

While it is possible that your student may experience housing conflicts while abroad, they may have also experienced similar conflicts in their housing at their home institution. How they resolved these issues at home will be similar to how they should resolve them abroad. Below are some common housing issues and helpful ways to help navigate your student through them.

Roommate Conflicts

Frustrating as they may be, your student should approach roommate conflicts with a mature and respectful attitude. It is important for you and your student to also keep in mind that all students are going through an adjustment process when learning to live among new people and new cultures. Encourage your student to first communicate with their roommate(s) about any conflict. If an agreed upon resolution is not met, they should then communicate their concerns with their ASA Site Director who can assist as mediators to the conflict at hand. If the ASA Site Director is not aware of the conflicts your student is experiencing, they cannot extend their assistance.

Homestay conflicts

ASA offers homestay in a number of program locations. If your student decides to live in a homestay, we aim for their experience to be one of the best aspects of their time abroad. A homestay experience ideally provides your student with a unique window into and access to the host culture. However, communication misunderstandings can happen. If your student finds that they're having trouble communicating with their host family, please encourage them to keep trying, and let their ASA Site Director know what is happening – They can offer recommendations or serve as a mediator. In most cases, conflicts can be attributed to a simple linguistic or cultural misunderstanding, or an element that is lost in translation. If your student continues to have difficulties within their homestay accommodations, they should always talk with their ASA Site Director and we will work with them one-on-one toward a solution.

Food concerns

Your student should already be aware that depending on their program location and housing selection, the ability to accommodate specific food preferences will vary. However, if your student has specific dietary needs, please be sure they outline those needs/requests on their ASA Housing Questionnaire (completed after acceptance).

If they are living in a homestay, we will communicate any dietary needs to the family ahead of time, based on the information given to us by the student on their Housing Questionnaire. Once on site, your student will also want to communicate food likes and dislikes directly to their host family. If your student expresses a concern about the meals being provided, they should try their best to communicate with the family about it, and if that doesn't resolve it, they should contact their ASA Site Director who can assist in the communication with the host family.

PASSPORT & VISA

Does my student need a Passport?

Yes! All international travelers are required to have a valid Passport from their country of origin. As a reminder, the passport must be valid for 6 months AFTER your student would return home from their study abroad program.

US Passport processing times are averaging 10-13 weeks so it is CRITICAL your student apply for or renew their passport immediately. If your student must apply for a visa for entry into their host country, they need to submit their passport to the host country Consulate.

The US State Department processes Passports and unfortunately ASA and staff have no sway with how quickly an application will be reviewed and fulfilled. Please see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html> to "Track My Application Status".

Does my student need a Visa?

A visa is an endorsement placed within a passport that grants the holder official permission to enter, leave or stay in a country for a specified time period.

This response applies to US Passport Holders ONLY: Students going to Spain, France, Italy, or Chile for a semester/academic year and students going to the UK for an internship (any length) or academic year – you will have to apply for a visa AND leave their passport at the Consulate while their visa is being processed – for up to a full 60 days prior to your departure date. Typically, U.S. passport holders do not have to apply for a visa for summer programs. However, if your student's passport is from another country, they may have to apply for a visa for a summer program and should not plan any international travel during the 3 months prior to your trip. PLEASE DO NOT PLAN ANY INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DURING THE 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE START OF YOUR STUDENT'S PROGRAM.

What if my student loses their passport?

They must report it to their ASA Site Directors and local authorities immediately. The ASA Site Director will be able to provide the contact information for the local consulate/embassy and assist with the process of obtaining a replacement. Please note your student will not be able to legally travel across international borders without a valid passport.

We advise students to make a photocopy, and/or take a picture, of their passport and visa (if applicable), as well as provide a trusted friend or family member with a copy. It is faster to get a new passport if you can provide the Consulate/Embassy with a copy of the original. Please be aware that if your student was issued a visa for their program, it was likely affixed to the inside of their passport.

Should I, as a Parent(s)/guardian(s), have a valid passport(s)?

Please make sure that you have a U.S. passport that is valid for at least another year. In the unlikely event that you need to get abroad quickly, it is imperative that you have a valid passport.

MENTAL HEALTH ABROAD

mindhamok is a 24-7 service designed to support study abroad students' mental, physical and social wellbeing throughout their journey – both when it's good and not so good.

ASA includes a paid subscription to mindhamok for every semester and summer program participant. mindhamok's curated online and live resources give ASA students tools to succeed throughout their term abroad and on to the rest of their lives.

ASA students can use mindhamok to:

- Request an appointment with a coach/counselor
- Live chat with a coach/counselor about concerns such as roommate issues, relationships, etc.
- Discuss homesickness, culture shock, or adjustment concerns
- Access online Gen Z-centered content to help them understand common study abroad topics, such as: culture shock; how to maintain physical wellbeing while overseas; equity, diversity and inclusion as a study abroad student; networking events; how to switch off and enjoy experiences without social media; relationships while abroad; safe socializing; and a host of other important topics.

Prior to departure, students must attend a mandatory mindhamok orientation which outlines their services and provides students with opportunities to ask questions about health and safety, culture questions, or anything on their minds.

Once abroad, students meet and work with ASA Site Directors, trained student services professionals, who complement the mindhamok pre-departure meeting with an in-person, city-specific orientation outlining in-country safety, emergency contacts and resources, culture, transportation, accommodation and utilities use, academic regulations and differences, as well as hospital and pharmacy locations in their city.

ASA Site Directors are available to provide in-person support for many things students may encounter while overseas and may refer students to mindhamok for additional support as necessary.

ASA and mindhamok understand the challenges that study abroad students face and are here to address many of the wellbeing needs they might have. We both take a preventive and proactive approach to mental health and student engagement. Together, we give students tools to grow personally and academically and get the most out of their time abroad!



HOMESICKNESS

It is likely that your student will experience some degree of homesickness while abroad. Please keep in mind that other students are likely experiencing these feelings as well. While these feelings can be short or long lived, your student should look to their roommates, peers and their ASA Site Director for support and encouragement through this challenging time.

Homesickness can be a common part of culture shock. Please look at the Culture Shock section of this guide for a further description and ways you can support your student through it.

REMINDER: This is a once in a lifetime experience for your student, and it will be over before they know it! Encourage your student to get out and about to explore their city, make new friends and, in general, make the most of their time abroad! This will help them overcome homesickness much quicker.



How You Can Help Your Student Mitigate Homesickness?

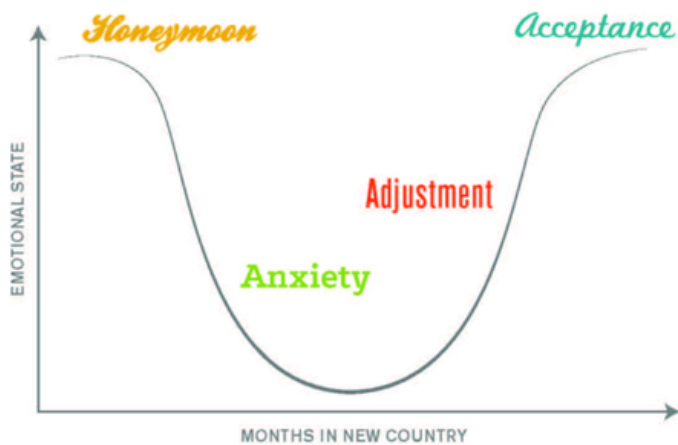
As global communication has become easier and affordable, we have noticed that the incidence of homesickness has increased dramatically. This has resulted in a greater number of students experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression during their stay. We have seen this negatively affect our students' ability to focus on their studies, transition into living in a different country, make friends, and embrace the study abroad experience.

Although we understand the desire to share every detail of their experience with you as well as with friends and other family at home, too much interaction during the first weeks can be detrimental. By maintaining such frequent communication with you, they are leaving one foot in the U.S., so to speak, which keeps many students from ever leaving their comfort zone. What happens is that some are left in a "no man's land" where they feel grounded neither in their host country nor at home.

What we would kindly ask of you is this: After confirming that they have arrived safely, please make just 2 appointments to speak with your student during their first week. For example, we would suggest a quick check-in on day 3 and again on day 7. We realize this may be difficult to do, but it will give your student the opportunity to immerse themselves in their new culture, get to know their new surroundings, and connect with their peers with fewer distractions of homesickness. We assure you that if there's a serious issue we will contact you immediately or ask your student to contact you.

CULTURE SHOCK

STAGES of CULTURE SHOCK



The phenomenon of “culture shock” has been experienced to varying degrees by almost every traveler who spends an extended period of time outside of their own country, including virtually all study abroad students.

The difficulties and challenges that lead to culture shock are very real. The climate, time zone change, unfamiliar food, different business methods, different concepts of time and punctuality, and the language barrier can all result in a feeling of isolation.

Immunity to culture shock does not come from being open minded, although this may help your student adjust more quickly. Individuals differ greatly in the degree to which culture shock affects them, and luckily, few people will be unable to make the necessary adjustments. Some people get by with very few, if any, adjustments. However, the majority of students go through a common series of distinct stages as they adjust and adapt to a different culture. Stages of Culture Shock – Honeymoon (Excitement), Anxiety (Withdrawal), Adjustment, Acceptance (Enthusiasm).

If your student is expressing initial discontent and frustration (remember this is a normal and expected process), remind them that they have a support system available to them on site. Encourage them to speak with their ASA Site Director. They can help them understand the complexities of the host culture, interact with international students on a daily basis, and give advice on how to best adapt and enjoy the host culture.

When communicating with your student, take into consideration that your student’s response will likely reflect your attitude and reaction to their emotions and concerns! If you adopt a positive attitude about the culture and reassure your student that these challenges can be overcome, they are much more likely to succeed!

With time, most students adjust and see the experience as the life-changing opportunity that it is. It is important to realize that the feelings your student is experiencing are normal and will eventually subside. In doing so, they will be better able to adjust and will come away from the experience with a greater understanding of culture and, most importantly, themselves.

HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

CULTURE SHOCK PEP TALK:

- "You're doing fine! Remember that."
- "Don't compare yourself to others who are seemingly coping better than you. Instagram lies!"
- "You're learning and pushing your comfort zone and that will come with some growing pains."
- "Leave negative self-talk behind. None of this 'Well, when I was doing X in Y I didn't feel this way' or 'What's wrong with me?' and definitely don't even think about saying 'I should be enjoying myself more. Nah-uh, no more.'"
- "Try your best each day, that's all."
- "Be patient with yourself."
- "There's no right or wrong way to manage culture shock."

CULTURE SHOCK

When you should be concerned about your student

Teary phone calls during the first few weeks of a study abroad program are not that unusual and typically are not cause for concern, especially if your student is doing things like attending classes, eating regularly, and going out on program activities and socially with other students. It is entirely normal that your student will call home when feeling lost or lonely and want to hear the comforting and consoling voice of a parent or family member. These healing moments where you help them through their distress – while difficult for the parent or family member – are key for helping your student to work through the adjustment process and progress in their learning and development.

However, If you notice a pattern in which your student is exhibiting one or more of the following behaviors, you should recommend that your student seek advising and counseling from their Site Director: a very negative attitude toward the host community over a sustained period of time with little or no sign of enjoyment or appreciation; you hear your student blaming and criticizing in an exaggerated manner the country, culture, host family, or school for their own feelings of discomfort; physical manifestations that can no longer be attributed to jet lag (which can last up to a week) such as frequency and intensity of headaches, stomach aches, loss of appetite, irregular sleep patterns, heightened anxiety, depression, crying or angering more easily. These emotional and physical manifestations can be debilitating and need to be addressed. Please encourage your student to seek local help through their Site Director.

Ways to communicate

Broad questions such as "How are you?" can be difficult to answer for a student who is dealing with culture shock. You may want to consider asking more specific types of questions, such as "What did you see today on your walk home?" or "What do you have planned for this weekend?" can serve to remind your student that exciting things are happening around them, and they have much to look forward to. The best thing to do is to provide them with support and positive reinforcement as they face the challenges of culture shock. REMEMBER: This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience – your student should face each day with a positive attitude and an open mind!



COMMUNICATION

Your student is about to embark on a voyage of independence and growth. This time abroad will be a tremendous opportunity for them to gain problem solving skills and learn about themselves.

Effective communication between the student and their family and friends back home, as well as parental/guardian support, are important elements of a successful study abroad experience. We know you want to be supportive and so we want to share with you a time-tested approach.

During our many years of sending students abroad, we have learned what approaches work and what don't – and it may surprise you! Simply put, constant texting and talking with your student can actually hinder their adjustment and integration process and increase their feelings of homesickness and culture shock. This is especially true during the first couple weeks of the program. The first weeks are so important for students to focus on what is in front of them and not on what is at home. They need to connect with their peers, get to know their new city, and begin adjusting. They'll also need plenty of energy and space to absorb tons of new information.

We recommend you pre-arrange a couple times each week to catch up with each other. Figure out a schedule and mode of communication that works for both of you and then keep it going throughout the semester. This way, you get regular reassurance that they're safe, your student will feel connected and supported, AND they'll be able to be more present abroad and immerse themselves into their new surroundings.

Another thing we ask is that parents be careful what you tell your student while they are abroad. Keep in mind that what you say and what they hear might be two different things. For instance, if you tell them that you had to bring the dog to the vet, what they may have heard was that your dog only has days to live. It seems funny, but we deal with this on a regular basis. Our students contact our staff very upset and wanting to go home because their parents have told them something that greatly upset them.



COMMUNICATION

HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

Free Apps for easy communication:

WhatsApp
Facebook Messenger
Facetime (iPhone to iPhone)
Instagram Messages
Viber
Zoom
Skype
Google Voice
Libon
WeChat

Call cell phone carrier a few weeks before departure to request phone be unlocked in case your student opts to get a new SIM while abroad and not carry an international plan from their current carrier.

Review Student Pre-Departure Guide for additional advice regarding cell phones and affordable plans

Although it sounds unthinkable to a current college student, not that many years ago, study abroad students maybe spoke with their parents once a week or even once a month.

Prior to that, students wrote letters and postcards to their family at home, or made an occasional, brief phone call, usually from a pay phone. Believe it or not, those students were still able to have successful and rewarding study abroad experiences, without nearly as much communication with family and friends back home as students have now!

Fast forward to today, and video chats and WhatsApp – while convenient – can make students feel almost as though they’ve never left home and actually interrupt the adjustment process. Although we realize it can feel comforting and familiar to check in so frequently, we strongly recommend that students and families limit such close contact. Doing so may be difficult, but it’s the best way to encourage your student’s integration into the experience AND help them avoid becoming overwhelmed by homesickness and culture shock.

Please look at this as an opportunity for your student to grow and mature. We regularly get calls from parents regarding issues that could have easily been remedied if the student had simply contacted their Site Director. If your student calls to tell you that they can’t sleep because their roommate snores, please ask them to talk to their Site Director first. If you call us, we are simply going to contact the Site Director, just as your student could have done.



CONVERSATIONS TO HAVE BEFORE DEPARTURE

Congratulations – you’ve made it this far and your student is about to leave for the adventure of a lifetime.

There’s a lot of new information your student needs to learn/absorb before they depart – from banking to cultural differences to new roommates. If your student has never been abroad before, they may not be informed about the following essential topics. This is very normal, so we’ve come up with this list of ‘conversation starters’ to help you have these important and productive conversations with your student before they depart. Having these conversations will give you peace of mind that they’re ready to go, while ensuring your student is prepared.

HEALTH & SAFETY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Can you show me a map of your city, where your school and housing are located?
2. Are you planning to continue any medication while you are abroad?
3. Have you thought about how to avoid an unsafe situation or unwanted attention?
4. How will you stay safe while traveling?
5. If your wallet, phone or passport is stolen, what will you do?



HEALTH & SAFETY RESOURCES TO SUGGEST

1. Students generally receive their housing address about 2 weeks prior to departure
2. Students should bring enough Rx to last the duration of their time abroad. Pack Rx in carry-on bag.
3. Try to blend in, dress like a local, avoid public protests, travel in groups, do not walk alone
4. Carry a map/local guidebook, make sure you bring phone charger, open Safeture App upon arrival to ping new location, inform Site Director of travel plans
5. Before departure, ask student to make copies of all important documents; contact Site Director immediately after theft/loss

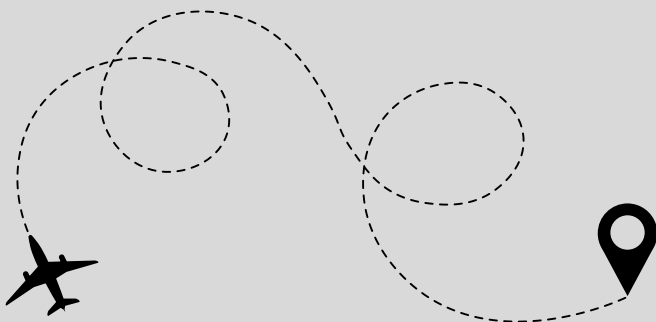
MONEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What is the local currency and common form of payment where you are headed?
2. What have you budgeted for weekend trips?
3. Have you contacted your bank and credit card company to let them know you will be traveling?
4. How will you get cash?
5. Do you have bills in US to pay while you're overseas?



MONEY RESOURCES TO SUGGEST

1. Debit/credit cards are accepted in most places; Review [Oanda Currency Converter](#)
2. Discuss budget; Discuss whether you will help supplement student's spending money and determine deposit frequency
3. Banks and credit card companies will put a hold or stop on cards, thinking they are stolen; Funds will be inaccessible
4. Large banks can give student foreign currency before departure (commission charged); visit ATM upon arrival
5. Discuss payments or cancelling unnecessary services



CONVERSATIONS TO HAVE BEFORE DEPARTURE

CULTURE QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Can you tell me about Culture Shock? What are some ways to cope with this if you think you are experiencing it?
2. What are the cultural norms of your host country (religion, government, gender roles, social norms)?



CULTURE RESOURCES TO SUGGEST

1. Review Culture Shock section above
2. Review state.gov country & area information; review travel info; Discuss any modifications students may have to make to accommodate (cover hair, modest dress, bow vs. handshake, etc.)

COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What's the best way to stay in touch? I really want to follow your adventures and be supportive, but not bug you too much.
2. How much do you plan on communicating with your friends at home?
3. If there's an emergency, do you know who to contact from ASA and how to reach them?



COMMUNICATION RESOURCES TO SUGGEST

1. Review Communication Tips above
2. Encourage your student to focus on what they are experiencing abroad; help them avoid FOMO or comparing themselves to friends on social media
3. See Emergency Contact Procedure section above; ASA Site Director contact information can be found in our Site Specific Guides as well as the checklist students receive 1 week before departure; Encourage student to put Site Director phone number in phone before departure

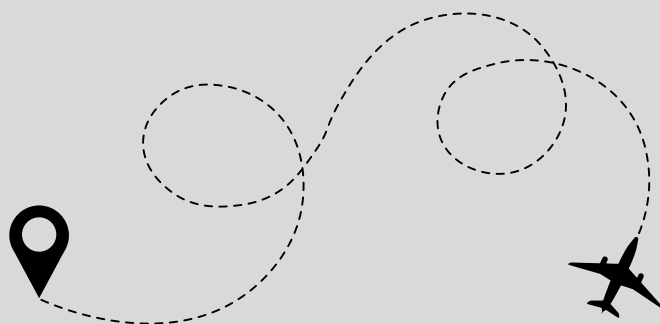
GOALS QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What are your goals for your time abroad?
2. How will you accomplish your goals?
3. What do you anticipate being your biggest challenge abroad?



GOALS RESOURCES TO SUGGEST

1. Language acquisition, cultural immersion, degree requirement completion, etc.
2. Encourage student to speak with Site Director or their university about language partners, attend cultural events, visit historical sites, etc.
3. Remind them you are proud of them and that you are available for support, counsel, comfort. Talk about ways to overcome any challenges they anticipate and ways to cope with anxiety, fear or nervousness. Remind them it is NORMAL to be nervous, unsure or feel out of sorts -- they are strong enough to overcome any challenges they face!



VISITING YOUR STUDENT*

When to visit

It's a good idea to work around your student's class schedule (remember - he/she is studying abroad!) Students will finalize their academic schedule and excursion dates once they arrive on site. We recommend planning a visit around a long break or at the end of their program. We do not recommend visiting at the beginning of your student's program as it is a very busy time and also important for them to be able to take this first step on their own.

Where to stay

Due to liability reasons, ASA arranged housing is for ASA students only. Visiting family and friends will therefore need to arrange for their own accommodations. Your student can tell you where their housing is located and you can search for accommodations nearby through the numerous online booking resources that you can explore (i.e. [booking.com](https://www.booking.com), [hotels.com](https://www.hotels.com), [Airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com)).

Let your student be your tour guide

We encourage you to let your student be your personal tour guide; they will want to show off their new host city to you and what they have learned since being abroad. However, it's still a good idea to familiarize yourself with your destination's culture and customs (tipping, etiquette, current events, etc.).

Your Packing List

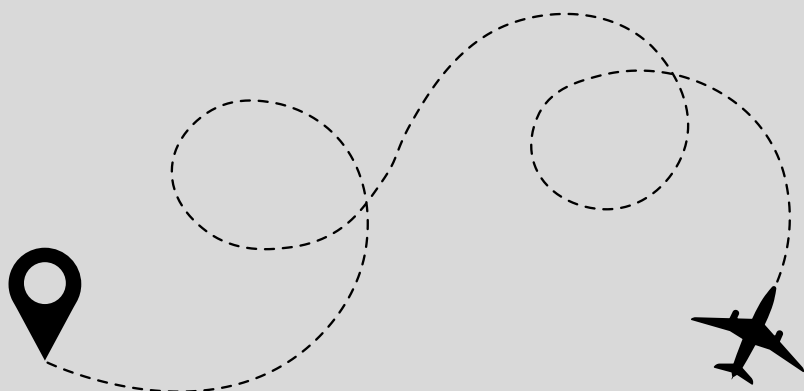
Below are some suggestions you may want to think about while you are packing:

- A small care package for your student, possibly with items they may miss from home (i.e. homemade goodies, peanut butter, box of mac and cheese, specific toiletry brands, etc.)
- Consider bringing an extra suitcase or saving space in your suitcase to bring back items that your student no longer needs (i.e. winter clothes if you visit halfway through the spring semester) or did not find necessary once they arrived.



HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

During your visit, try to balance seeing tourist sites with taking time to relax and connect with your son/daughter. Keep in mind, that something as simple as spending an afternoon at a local café with your student is a nice way to reconnect as well as giving you great insight into the local culture.



***ASA does not make travel arrangements for parents/families.**

RETURNING HOME



HELPFUL TIP FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

Stages of Reverse Culture Shock

Disengagement

Student will start to focus on returning home; Will begin thinking how to wrap up time abroad and make plans for "When I get home..."

(Student returns home)

Euphoria

Student will get excited about the food, friends and activities they missed; Students who were unhappy while abroad may not experience returnee shock beyond this stage.

Dampened Euphoria

Characterized by feeling like a "foreigner" in their home country; May begin to feel frustrated, alienated, bored or critical of their own culture; Things that were previously completely normal, now stand out; Begins to feel like no one really wants to hear about their experience or people cannot relate.

Gradual Readjustment

Things are no longer shocking so student becomes less critical of own culture; Begins to analyze what they learned abroad and how they will apply it to life back home; May decide to adopt a certain host culture characteristic, practice or habit into daily life.

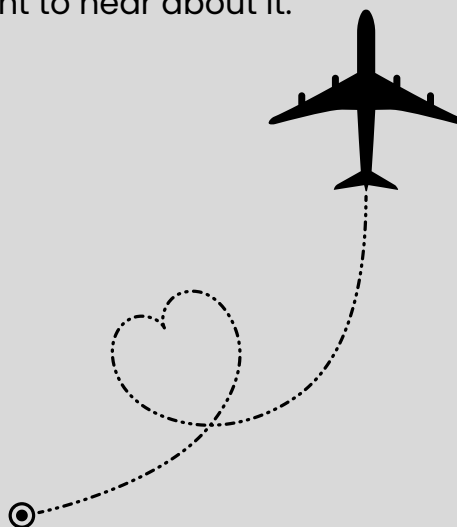
Reverse Culture Shock

Culture shock is not only a process that occurs when going abroad, but it can also occur when returning home. This is referred to as Reverse Culture Shock and can be just as challenging as the initial culture shock.

Upon return, a student may experience difficulties in returning to their previous routine. This is a normal part of the re-entry process due to the fact that they have learned to live and identify with another culture. It's a good idea for the student, family, and friends to be aware of the challenges of reverse culture shock.

Listed below are some common characteristics of newly returned study abroad students:

- Your student had a life-changing experience and has most likely has changed. Recognize and understand that it may take them some time to re-adjust and be comfortable in his or her new identity.
- Your student may express cravings for different food(s). This offers an ideal opportunity for your student to share the international experience with you by preparing some of his or her favorite dishes. Have fun by going to the grocery store together, buying what is needed and cooking together.
- A common complaint among study abroad alumni is that people ask, "So, how was it?" and expect an answer in 10 words or less. Take the time to listen, not just for the first month but over the course of the following year, as it can be surprising how quickly friends on campus will lose interest and not want to hear about it.



RETURNING HOME



Help your student cope with Reverse Culture Shock and maximize their study abroad experience

Encourage your student to do some of the following to help provide an outlet to talk about their experience and remain connected to it:

- Get involved with international students on home campus. Your student has learned first-hand that it can be challenging to adjust to living in another country and make new friends. Encourage your returnee to take the opportunity to help international students feel more welcome. Your student can offer to assist with arrival and orientation for the incoming international students on their campus or join international student or language buddy groups.
- Offer to help with pre-departure orientations and Study Abroad Fairs for future students. Sharing their experience with others will be gratifying for your student and valuable for students who are about to embark on a study abroad experience.
- Encourage your student to stay in touch with the people they met while studying abroad; these friends can be their best link to the experience.
- Challenge your student to go to an elementary, middle, or high school language class and do a presentation about the country where they went.
- Ask your student to integrate their international experience into their résumé and LinkedIn profile. Engage them in a dialog to think about how they will highlight their experience in job interviews (include specifics such as personal growth, managing group dynamics, problem solving, language acquisition, etc.)

ASA ALUMNI

Returned ASA students are encouraged to visit our [Alumni](#) website for more information about Reverse Culture Shock, requesting a Transcript for Graduate School Admissions, Studying Abroad Again and more!

IT HAS BEEN OUR PLEASURE TO PARTNER WITH YOU !