



ACADEMIC
STUDIES ABROAD

Pre-Departure Guide for All Programs

Contents:

- ASA Contact Information
- Packing
- Luggage
- Shipping Packages Abroad– Do's and Don'ts
- Vaccinations and Prescription Medication
- Medical Care and Insurance
- Money, Banking and Budgeting
- Cell Phones
- Apps You Need to Download Before You Leave
- Safety
- Travel Tips
- Adjusting to Life Abroad: Culture Shock
- Information for LGBTQ Students
- Grades and Transcripts
- Reverse Culture Shock

Please see the [ASA Site-Specific Guide](#) for your program location for additional important pre-departure information.

ASA CONTACT INFORMATION

Academic Studies Abroad
16 Cohasset St.
Roslindale, MA 02131-3013
Tel: 617-327-9388
Fax: 617-327-9390
24-hour emergency cell: 413-221-4559
www.academicstudies.com

General email:	info@academicstudies.com
Lee Frankel, Director	lee@academicstudies.com
Chelsea Kaloupek, Assistant Director	chelsea@academicstudies.com
Cayleigh McCarthy, Programs Advisor	cayleigh@academicstudies.com

Please see the [ASA Site-Specific Guide](#) for your program location for emergency phone numbers specific to your program location.

PACKING

How to Dress

You should expect to dress a bit more formally abroad. You won't be living on a U.S. college campus. This doesn't mean you need to take the next few weeks to shop for clothes, but you should not plan to wear extremely casual clothing in public, such as sweatpants, pajama pants, flip flops, yoga pants, etc. You may visit churches or religious sites on excursions or field trips; in such places, shorts, sleeveless tops, midriff blouses and short skirts are often prohibited.

In Europe, people tend to: 1) Wear dark/neutral colors (black, gray, beige, brown). 2) Re-wear the same outfits/clothing several times, even in the same week. People tend to own less clothing in other countries because homes/apartments (and therefore, storage space) is much more limited than we are used to, and you will find that clothes washing machines are much smaller than they are here. Do as the locals do – don't be afraid to re-wear your clothes! You can save space in your suitcase by bringing fewer clothes in colors that you can mix and match.

Finally, you will be walking MUCH more during the next few months than you normally do, so it cannot be overstated that you must bring shoes that are comfortable to walk in! Many European cities have cobblestone, and walking on cobblestone with ANY sort of heel (even a low heel) can result in ankle sprains and broken heels/straps. It is *strongly* recommended you leave your high heels at home! It is not worth the risk of spending the semester on crutches!

DO NOT Overpack...

Don't overpack – you will regret it later! You really only need a week's worth of clothing. Once again, you should plan to mix & match your clothes and re-wear them. Three pairs of jeans/pants are enough. Also, don't forget that you will probably do some shopping while you are there, so leave some empty space for when you come home!

You will be responsible for transporting your own luggage at ALL times, so DO NOT bring more luggage than you can carry on your own. Start by packing everything you want to take. Then try to carry it around the block by yourself. If you can't – downsize and try again!

BEDDING/TOWELS CHART – You will need to bring or buy items marked “No.”

Program Location	Housing Type	Is bedding provided?	Are towels provided?	Is kitchen equipment provided?
AIX-EN-PROVENCE	Homestay	Yes	No	N/A
BARCELONA	Homestay	Yes	Yes	N/A
	Shared Apartment	Yes	Yes	Yes
BUENOS AIRES	Homestay	Yes	Yes	N/A
	Shared Apartment	Yes	No	Yes
CAMBRIDGE	Residence Hall	Yes	Yes	No**
CUZCO	Homestay	Yes	No	N/A
	Dorm	Yes	Yes	N/A
DUBLIN - Griffith College	Shared Apartment	Yes	No	Yes
DUBLIN - Maynooth University	Shared Apartment	Yes	No	No**
FLORENCE	Shared Apartment	Yes	Yes	Yes
LIMA	Homestay	Yes	No	N/A
LONDON - LSBU, Semester	Residence Hall	No*	No	No**
LONDON - LSBU, Summer	Residence Hall	Yes	No	Yes
LONDON - UAL	Shared Apartment	No*	No	No**
OXFORD	Shared Apartment	No*	No	No**
SAN JOSÉ	Homestay	Yes	No	N/A
SEVILLA	Homestay	Yes	Yes	N/A
	Shared Apartment	Yes	Yes	Yes
SORRENTO	Homestay	Yes	Yes	N/A
	Dorm	Yes	Yes	Yes
VIÑA DEL MAR	Homestay	Yes	No	N/A

* = If you want to save money, bring bedding with you. If you do, consider bringing bedding that you won't mind leaving behind, as this will give you room in your suitcase for things you bought abroad. **Beds are regular twin size (not long)**, but if you already have long twin sheets, there's no need to buy a new set – the long twin size will work fine. You can pack your bedding in SpaceBags to save space in your suitcase.

** = DO NOT bring kitchen equipment with you or purchase any kitchen items until you move in and meet your roommates. They may have already brought these items, or you may be able to share costs with your roommates.

PACKING LISTS FOR ALL PROGRAMS

The Basics

- At least one pair of shoes that are comfortable for walking long distances (VERY IMPORTANT!)
- Everyday clothing—the style of dress will be much like it is in the U.S., but slightly less casual.
- A nicer outfit for dining out or cultural events
- A light jacket or sweater for cool weather (fleece jackets or vests are good for layering)
- Underwear and socks
- Pajamas and lightweight robe
- Slippers/flip flops to wear around the house

Additional Items for Summer Months

- Bathing suit
- Beach towel (or buy when you get there)
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen—please note that higher SPF may be hard to find in some locations.
- Shorts (*Note: Women should avoid wearing very short shorts, as this may draw unwanted attention.*)

Additional Items for Fall/Winter Months**

- Clothes you can layer, such as long-sleeve t-shirts
- 3 or 4 sweaters
- Winter coat
- Scarf, mittens/gloves
- Warm, waterproof shoes or boots for rainy days
- Waterproof jacket for rainy days
- Warm pajamas

****Homes abroad are usually not heated as well as homes in the U.S.** Students have reported that although the winter weather was not terribly cold, it felt colder because the heat did not work as well as at home, or it only turns on during certain times of the day (which is normal in some locations abroad). Layering your clothes will help, as well as warm pajamas. Your coat needn't be a heavy parka; a North Face jacket, wool coat or any mid-weight winter coat will be fine.

Toiletries

NOTE: All of the toiletries listed here can be purchased when you arrive, so unless you use a brand you can't live without, bring only enough shampoo, toothpaste, etc. to last one week and buy more when you get there. The one exception is ANTIPERSPIRANT – see below.

- Antiperspirant - IMPORTANT! In many countries, deodorant is more commonly used than antiperspirant. While you should be able to find antiperspirant, you may not find the same variety of brands. **Bring enough antiperspirant to last the duration of your program.**
- Shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc. (Just enough to last the first week!)
- Sunscreen (Note that higher SPFs may be hard to find in some locations)
- Vitamins
- Over-the-counter meds, such as Advil/Tylenol, cold/flu/allergy medication, Pepto-Bismal, Immodium, etc. **You will not be able to find exactly the same over-the-counter meds abroad, so we strongly recommend that you bring the ones you are used to taking!**
- Band-aids, Neosporin
- Hand sanitizer
- Dramamine (if you are prone to motion sickness)

- Feminine hygiene products - You can certainly buy these abroad, but brands differ, and tampons are usually the O.B. type. In South America, tampons are typically available only in big cities, so if you're going to a rural area in South America, bring some with you.
- Contraceptives
- Glasses, contact lenses, contact lens solution, AND your prescription
- Prescription Medication— Pack these in your carry-on luggage in the original pill bottles, along with your physician's written description of the medical problem and the prescription, including the dose of the medication and the GENERIC name(s). *You MUST bring enough medication to last your entire time abroad, as some medications may not be available outside the U.S.! If you are unable to fill your prescription medication for the full duration of your program, please call ASA asap at 617-327-9388.*

Miscellaneous

- Laptop
- 1 or 2 Universal Plug Adapters (*See section on Plug Adapters and Voltage coming up!*)
- Cell Phone (*Please read "Cell Phones" section later in this guide!*)
- TSA-approved luggage locks (found at luggage stores, Brookstone, Amazon, etc.)
- Backpack
- Sunglasses
- Small gift for your host family (if your accommodation is a home stay)
- Credit card and ATM/debit card (*See section on Money & Banking later in this guide for important details about handling money abroad!*)
- Money Belt – This is the safest way to carry your passport and money and is a MUST if you plan to do a lot of traveling. It is worn underneath your clothes, either around your neck or waist.
- Refillable water bottle (you'll save money from not buying bottled water!)
- Rolling duffel bag, backpack, or small rolling suitcase for weekend trips
- Digital camera (optional)
- Playing cards (optional)
- Umbrella (optional – you can also buy one when you get there)

► Check out www.magellans.com for virtually any travel necessity you can think of, including luggage, voltage adapters, money belts, luggage locks, luggage tags and other useful gear.

What NOT to Bring

- U.S. dollars in cash – Exchanging U.S. dollars cash for the local currency isn't preferable because you will be charged a commission! (NOTE: U.S. cash is accepted in most South American countries, but you will pay a lower price if you use the local currency.)
- Discover credit card (usually not accepted outside the U.S.)
- Knives of any kind (including Swiss Army!), mace, pepper spray, Kubaton, weapons, or other self-defense paraphernalia. All of these could be illegal in your host country, and possession could get you arrested!
- College, university, fraternity, or sorority shirts and caps; Clothing or accessories with the American flag; Clothing with American sports teams (these draw attention to you as being a tourist and increase the chances you could be pickpocketed!)
- Baseball caps

- Ripped jeans
- Very short shorts/skirts (these can draw unwanted attention)
- Flip-flops (except if you will only wear them at home). Wearing flip-flops out of doors will immediately identify you as American.
- Valuables or anything you would be upset to lose
- Expensive handbags or jewelry
- Pre-paid phone cards (They may not work in abroad—plus, there are much better options for communicating nowadays, such as Skype and Facetime.)
- Clothes that wrinkle easily or need to be dry cleaned or hand washed
- American hairdryer, flat iron, curling iron, etc. (*See section below on Plug Adapters and Voltage for full details!*)
- Expectations that services and amenities will be as they are in the USA! You should expect things to not always go as planned and consider it a blessing when they do!

Advice from Past Students

- 1) “I brought way more clothes than I needed”
- 2) “Leave room in your suitcase for all the things you’ll buy”
- 3) “I didn’t need to bring extra toothpaste/shampoo/conditioner”

How to Carry Your Important Documents

Make photocopies (or take photos on your phone) of **all** your important documents, such as passport, visa (if applicable), credit cards (front and back), driver’s license, ID cards, medical insurance cards, etc. Save one set to your phone, save one set on your laptop; give another set to your parents to save on their phone or laptop.

Bring your driver’s license to use as everyday ID while abroad, and **you ABSOLUTELY MUST carry a photocopy of your passport (and visa, if applicable) and your medical insurance card in your wallet at all times.** Do not carry your passport with you unless you are traveling. When you are not traveling, keep your passport locked inside your suitcase.

Plug Adapters and Voltage

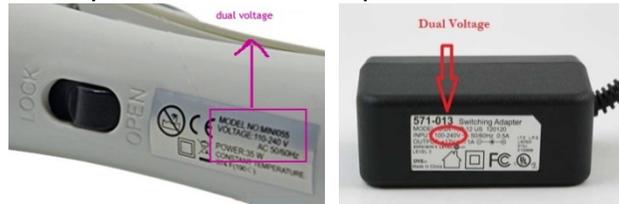
Where you’re going, electricity voltage is twice as high (220-240 volts instead of 110-120 volts). Your hair dryer, straightening iron, curling iron, and electric razor are made for 120v and will overheat and break if plugged in to 220v. It will look like the picture below – not fun. (You will probably also blow the fuses. Please remember that you will be responsible for any damages that result from use of American appliances.)



You can buy a travel hair dryer, straightening iron, or curling iron before you leave. “Travel” appliances are compatible with both voltages. (Just be sure to flip the switch from 110v to

240v.) BETTER YET, buy a hair dryer or other appliances when you get there! It will work *so much better* than a travel version of your appliance, and you can be sure it won't overheat. You may be able to share a hair dryer with roommates and split the cost.

Luckily, many devices (such as laptops and cell phone chargers) are already equipped to operate safely at 110v and 240v. This is called **dual voltage**. Dual voltage appliances and devices will have a label that says "110-240v." Examples:



The wall socket will be different, so you will need a Plug Adapter. **Buy 1 or 2 universal plug adapters** so you can plug in multiple things. We recommend one with USB ports. A universal plug adapter will cover you anywhere in the world – for example, the socket is different in the UK versus the rest of Europe. You can buy universal plug adapters on Amazon, magellans.com, and at luggage stores. Example:



LUGGAGE

How many suitcases should I bring?

One large suitcase (i.e. your checked bag) and one carry-on will hold enough necessities for your program! Once again, **storage space will be more limited where you will be living!** You may find it difficult to store 2 large suitcases plus a carry-on. If you choose to bring 2 large suitcases and a carry-on, make sure all 3 can be “nested” for storage.

Luggage Tips

Rolling suitcases are ideal. Don't forget to bring a duffel bag, backpack, or small rolling suitcase for weekend trips. To bring items you purchase while abroad, consider packing a lightweight, empty bag inside your checked bag.

Airline Luggage Requirements

- Each airline has its own size/weight limits and fees for luggage, which can vary depending on which countries you are flying to/from. **Check the luggage limits on the airline's website for EACH ticket you buy, even if it's an airline you've flown before. Once again, the limits can vary depending on where you are flying to/from.**
- Make sure your luggage is within the limits, otherwise you will have to pay overage fees or your luggage may be refused.
- If you are using more than one airline to reach your destination, make sure that your luggage complies with the weight and size limits of BOTH airlines.
- **The luggage allowance when flying within Europe or within South America is usually MUCH lower than when flying nationally inside the U.S. or internationally from the U.S. to another continent.** And, if your flight originates and lands in the same foreign country, the luggage limits may be stricter still. This means that if you plan to travel around Europe or South America by plane, you may only be able to bring a VERY small bag on those trips! **Discount airlines, such as RyanAir, are extremely strict about luggage limits and WILL charge you if you are even an ounce over the limit.**

IMPORTANT! Luggage Delays

Up to 30% of students experience luggage delays. It can take anywhere from **1-4 DAYS** to get your bags back, so...

Pack the following "must-have" items in your carry-on!

- 1) At least one extra **change of clothes**
- 2) **Essential personal items** like prescription medication, contact solution, glasses, small bottles of toiletries, laptop, cell phone charger, etc.
- 3) Your **Last-Minute Checklist (emailed to you by ASA)** and any items on that checklist indicated you should bring with you on the plane.
- 4) Your **local address abroad.** (*Write it on your Last-Minute Checklist and save it to your phone's Notes.*) Your local address will be emailed to you 1-2 weeks prior to departure. If your luggage is lost, don't forget that you'll need to have your local address available, otherwise you won't be able to tell the airline where to deliver your luggage! Be sure to also give your cell phone number to the airline so they can contact you.

If the airline makes you check your carry-on at the gate (they will do this if it is oversized or if the overhead bins are full by the time you board), be sure to TAKE THE ABOVE ITEMS OUT OF THE BAG before handing it to the airline! Once your carry-on is checked, you will not get it back until your final destination...and once it's checked, it could get misdirected by the airline, as any checked luggage can.

SHIPPING PACKAGES ABROAD – DO’S AND DON’TS

► **We DO NOT recommend mailing packages abroad unless it is absolutely necessary!**

It can be expensive to receive packages abroad because you usually have to pay a customs tax, which can be expensive, especially if the sender declared a value. Therefore, it is not advisable to mail anything of a non-urgent nature (clothes, gifts, etc.) **DO NOT plan to ship your clothing or other belongings ahead of time.** One student in Europe was asked to pay €400 (\$530) to receive a camera that was shipped to him from home.

If you choose to send something, the following information will assist you. On the customs form, mark your items as “used” whenever possible (e.g. “used books” or “used clothing”), or “FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY – NO COMMERCIAL VALUE.” You will have to declare a value on the customs form. The higher the declared value, the higher the tax will be on the receiving end. We recommend FedEx, UPS, or DHL because they will give you a tracking number. Although FedEx, UPS, and DHL are more expensive, they are the fastest and most secure. You may visit these companies’ websites for a price quote and estimated transit time by giving them the weight, dimensions and destination of your package. For sending mail (letters, cards, etc.), we recommend the U.S. Postal Service.

► *If you need to mail important paperwork (a replacement ATM card, etc.), ALWAYS use FedEx, DHL, or UPS. Send it to your school or Site Director rather than your dorm, apartment or host family’s address. Contact ASA for the appropriate address, should this situation arise.*

Keep in mind that YOU are responsible for all of your packages! Neither ASA nor your host institution, host family, or residence hall will accept packages for you or pay the customs tax in your absence. Anything you ship to yourself will probably also need to be shipped back home, and this will be your responsibility.

Overnight Mail

“Overnight” from the U.S. does NOT mean overnight to other countries! If someone in the U.S. sends you an overnight document, it will arrive to you AFTER 2 BUSINESS DAYS OR MORE. For urgent documents, ATM cards, etc., use a reliable service such as FedEx, UPS, or DHL. Example: If a FedEx letter classified as “overnight” leaves the U.S. on a Monday morning, you will likely receive the item *at the earliest* on Wednesday or Thursday of the same week. USPS tends to take a bit longer than FedEx, UPS, or DHL.

VACCINATIONS AND PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

VACCINATIONS

Please ensure your MMR, Meningitis, Hepatitis and Tetanus vaccinations are up-to-date before traveling abroad! Please get any new vaccinations 4-6 weeks before departure to allow time for them to take effect.

If you plan to travel outside your host country, you need to research the immunization requirements for each country. Visit the Center for Disease Control's website: www.cdc.gov.

- Please note: **Typhoid and Yellow Fever vaccinations are recommended** if you are planning to travel to **remote areas of South America.**

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

U.S. Department of State Recommendations

- Bring a letter from your 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.

- 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. **(Ex: Adderall, Vyvanse, Ritalin and certain other medications may be considered controlled substances and may be illegal to possess without a prescription in some countries.)**

- All prescription medication and copies of the prescriptions **MUST** be packed in your carry-on luggage.

- If you have allergies, reactions to certain medications, foods, or insect bites, or other unique medical problems, consider wearing a "medical alert" bracelet.

- If you have a medical condition that may require attention during your time abroad, please be sure to have your doctor prepare a full summary of your condition and treatment so that you can be properly treated abroad. Bring one copy with you abroad; leave a second copy with your parent(s).

Availability of Prescription Medications

If you take any prescription medication, you must bring enough to last the duration of your program. Medications such as **Ritalin****, **Adderall****, **Vyvanse****, **Cylert**, **Wellbutrin**, **Prozac**, **Paxil**, **Zoloft** and others are often **not** available outside the U.S. You may not be able to find the exact equivalent of your medication in other countries, and if your parents try to ship your medication to you, it will likely be confiscated by Customs.

****Adderall, Vyvanse, and Ritalin are controlled substances in many other countries, making it illegal to possess without a prescription.** If you take one of these medications, you **MUST** bring your prescription and a letter from your doctor, and it is advisable that you contact the U.S. Consulate/Embassy in your study abroad location for guidance.

If you are unable to bring enough medication for the entire duration of your stay abroad, the insurance provided by ASA will cover the doctor visit necessary to obtain a prescription in-country. *However, this is contingent upon the availability of your medication abroad.* If you cannot bring enough medication to last the duration of your program, please contact ASA **several weeks before departure** so that we can work with our insurance company to determine whether or not your medication is available in your host country.

-When you return to the U.S., please keep in mind that as a general rule, the FDA does not allow the importation of prescription drugs that were purchased outside the United States.

Over-the-Counter Medication

Pharmacies abroad sell over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin, cold medicine, antihistamine, Dramamine, etc. which you can purchase without a prescription. **However, because over-the-counter formulas can vary from what you're used to using, we do strongly recommend you bring with you your preferred over-the-counter meds, in particular cold, flu and allergy medication, Immodium, Pepto-Bismal, etc.**

It is a common myth that pharmacies in other countries can administer prescription medication, such as antibiotics, without a prescription; with a few exceptions, this is not true.

***If you have any special medical needs or conditions,
please notify ASA immediately.***

MEDICAL CARE AND INSURANCE

Medical Care Advisories

If you receive ongoing medical treatment (such as psychotherapy, allergy shots, physical therapy, etc.) talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to continue treatment while abroad. If you do, contact ASA as soon as possible!

If you get sick or injured, please notify your ASA Site Director or host institution immediately!

Your Medical Insurance with ASA

- **All ASA students (except for those from the University of Delaware and University of Minnesota Duluth) have comprehensive worldwide medical coverage through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). (www.culturalinsurance.com)**
- (Students from University of Delaware and University of Minnesota Duluth receive comprehensive medical insurance through their home institution instead of from ASA.)
- **ASA will E-MAIL you a CISI insurance card prior to your program start date. BE SURE TO PRINT THE CARD AND PUT IT IN YOUR WALLET!** You can download a copy of your insurance policy anytime on ASA's website [here](#). (Students from University of Delaware and University of Minnesota Duluth should check with their home institution about receiving their insurance card prior to departure.)
- **If you have an iPhone/Smartphone, please download the "CISI Students" Mobile App! Once downloaded, register for the app. Once registered, you will have access to:**
 - View/Email your insurance documents anytime
 - Onscreen display of your insurance card
 - Search for medical providers worldwide!
 - Offline document availability
 - Claim help
 - View country-specific travel alerts and warnings
 - Learn more about the region to which you are traveling
 - Personal security assistance information
- Once you've registered for the app, you can also sign into your account online on the [CISI website](#) and locate providers online, view your insurance documents and submit claims online, etc.

Going to a Doctor VS. Going to a Pharmacy

In many foreign countries, people routinely go to a **pharmacy** for ailments that Americans would typically see a doctor for. *Examples:* cough, cold, flu, fever, nausea/vomiting, rash, eye

infection, birth control, bug bites, swelling, sunburn, etc. However, if you have a sinus infection, bronchitis or another illness that requires antibiotics, you will need to see a doctor in order to get antibiotics.

So, for example, you tell your Site Director or host mother that you have a rash that you'd like to get checked out by a doctor. They will probably tell you, "Go to the pharmacy." Do not be offended by this – it is simply a cultural difference. You just go to the pharmacy, wait in line to speak with a pharmacist, tell him/her your symptoms and he/she will recommend a medication that you can purchase there, or recommend you see a doctor. If you purchase medication and you're not feeling better in a week, do see a doctor immediately. *Be sure to tell the pharmacist any allergies you have to medications or foods!*

Always follow your instincts when it comes to your health. For example, if your condition has persisted more than a week, or if you feel your condition is serious, don't hesitate to see a doctor, even if someone tells you to go to the pharmacy!

What does my ASA medical insurance cover?

Your medical expenses (e.g. doctor visit, hospitalization, etc.) are covered up to \$250,000 per injury/sickness, including partial coverage for pre-existing conditions, and you have \$100,000 Emergency Medical Evacuation coverage. Coverage is provided for the official dates of your program through CISI (www.culturalinsurance.com).

You can download a copy of our policy anytime on ASA's website at <https://www.academicstudies.com/information-library/>

What doctor or hospital should I go to? How do I make an appointment?

Although our insurance will cover any doctor or hospital (public or private), CISI has "Preferred Providers" in many locations, which means that the insurance company already has a billing agreement in place with the doctor, clinic or hospital, allowing the provider to bill CISI directly so you don't have to pay up front. **To locate a provider AND have CISI make the appointment for you, simply call the phone number on your insurance card or send an email to the address on your insurance card.** You can also use the "CISI Students mobile app" to locate medical providers. Be sure to bring your CISI insurance card to your appointment!

► **NOTE: If you don't go to a Preferred Provider, you will need to pay for your medical care up front** and then **file a claim** with CISI to be reimbursed, as detailed below.

Once again, please download the "CISI Students" mobile app and then complete the registration! Using the app, you can locate a CISI Medical Provider anywhere in the world, view/email your insurance documents, and view your insurance card. You can also locate a provider by simply calling the phone number listed on your insurance card, or you can email the address listed on your card.

If I pay for medical care out-of-pocket, how do I file a claim for CISI to reimburse me?

1. **Get an itemized receipt after paying for your medical care and keep any and all paperwork they give to you.** CISI will reimburse you for medical expenses covered under the insurance plan, as long as you submit your claim and itemized medical receipts to the insurance company within 30 days of treatment.
2. You can easily submit claims online or via email! **To submit a claim online**, create your account (or sign into your existing account) on CISI's website: <https://www.mycisi.com/CISIPortalWeb> **To submit a claim by email**, send a completed Claim Form and scans of your itemized receipts to: claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com. (You can download a Claim Form from the "CISI Students" mobile app, from the CISI website, or you can ask ASA to email you one.)
3. **Be sure to put your permanent U.S. address on the claim form** and NOT your foreign address or college address.
4. CISI will typically process your claim send you a reimbursement check in about **6 weeks**. They will mail the check to the address you put on the claim form, so once again, be sure to put your permanent address.

If the hospital or doctor doesn't have you pay upon completion of your treatment, you should expect to receive a bill in the mail – possibly even after you return home! **If you receive a medical bill after your treatment is completed, simply email it to claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com along with a completed claim form, and CISI will pay the hospital directly.**

Can I extend my insurance coverage if I'll be traveling after the ASA program ends?

No, it is not possible to extend your ASA-provided insurance coverage past the official last date of your ASA program. If you plan to travel after the official last date of your ASA program, we strongly recommend you purchase international medical insurance to cover the duration of your travels.

What should I do in a medical emergency?

If you have a life-threatening illness or injury anytime during your trip, you can contact your ASA Site Director and/or the 24-hour emergency number listed on your medical insurance card.

MONEY, BANKING AND BUDGETING

Currency

- EURO (€) – Italy, Spain, France, Netherlands, Republic of Ireland (incl. Dublin) [and additional countries](#)
- POUND (£) – United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland (incl. Belfast)
- ARGENTINE PESO (\$) – Argentina
- CHILEAN PESO (\$) – Chile
- COLON (₡) – Costa Rica
- SOL (S/.) – Peru

Exchange Rate

The exchange rate fluctuates daily. **€1 is not equal to \$1.** EXAMPLE: If the current exchange rate is €1 = \$1.18, this means that every €20 you spend actually costs you \$23.58. **The exchange rate can make things more expensive, so watch out!**

The best way to keep track of the exchange rate and how much you're spending is to check www.xe.com OR **download the "XE Currency" app to your phone.** This has real-time exchange rates, so you can check the app before making a purchase to see how much you are spending in U.S. dollars. The app logo looks like this:



Money Do's and Don'ts

- DON'T bring U.S. cash or travelers checks. You will lose money when you exchange the currency. **The best way to get cash abroad is to use your ATM card at an ATM machine.** You will get the best exchange rate of the day for cash by getting it from an ATM.
- DO bring an ATM/debit card, as well as a credit card (for emergencies).
- DO make sure your ATM/debit card has a 4-digit PIN (not 5-digit).
- DO make sure your ATM/debit card says MasterCard, Visa, Cirrus, or Plus. If it doesn't, it will probably not work abroad.
- DO give your parent(s) Power of Attorney so they can handle your banking for you (e.g. deposit checks).
- DO notify your bank and credit card company that you'll be abroad and for how long. Notify them of any and all countries you may visit. If you don't notify them, they will assume the foreign transactions are fraudulent and cancel your card. It will take at least 2 weeks for you to get a replacement card if yours is canceled!
- DO ask your bank and credit card company if they charge a foreign transaction fee. If they do, consider switching to Schwab Bank for your ATM/debit card, and getting a

different credit card that doesn't charge a foreign transaction fee (see next section for details on this).

- DO understand how exchange rates work! (See above)
- DO spend conservatively during your first few weeks until you get used to factoring in the exchange rate.
- DO budget your money for the duration of your program. Many students overspend during the first few weeks and then run out of money later. Setting up a budget will help avoid this.
- DO try a different bank's ATM machine if the first one you try doesn't accept your card. In some places, you may have to try several different banks' ATM machines before you find one that will work.

Banking Recommendations

A **foreign transaction fee** is typically **2-3%** of the transaction amount and is charged by some banks for debit transactions made in other countries, as well as by some credit card companies for credit card transactions. As mentioned above, **call your bank and credit card company to find out if they will charge a foreign transaction fee.** If they do, consider switching:

- ✓ For ATM/debit card, you can open a checking account with Schwab Bank. There is no foreign transaction fee for debit transactions, and you are reimbursed for ATM (cash withdrawal) fees. Be sure to apply for this several weeks before departure to ensure you receive your card in time. Go to www.schwab.com – click Bank.
- ✓ For credit card, search Google for: “credit card without foreign transaction fee”. There are dozens of different credit cards out there that do not charge a foreign transaction fee. Again, if you plan to apply for a new card, be sure to do this several weeks before departure.

Please note, ASA has no affiliation with Schwab Bank. Always read the fine print before opening any bank account or credit card.

What expenses are not included in the ASA program that I should budget for?

1. Damage Deposit (if applicable)
2. Meals, unless you are living in a homestay and meals are provided
3. Meals on excursions
4. Laundry
5. Books, materials, and course fees
6. Local transportation
7. Spending money and personal expenses
8. Transportation back to the airport at the end of the program
9. Housing and other ASA services during the break between semesters or terms
10. Cell phone & usage

***The list above is a general list for all programs. For example, if you are living with a host family, laundry may be included for you. Refer to the [ASA Site-Specific Guide](#) for your program location for detailed budget amounts.*

CELL PHONES

Most of us can't imagine being without our iPhone/smartphone and, naturally, want to bring it abroad. Assuming you have a Smartphone/iPhone, you have 2 options:

OPTION 1: Sign up for an international plan with your current carrier (e.g. Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, etc.). You will keep your same phone number, but this may be more expensive than Option 2. Example international plans:

International Travel Packages: 3/16/2016

Package	Passport	Passport Silver	Passport Gold
Charge (One-time for 30 days or monthly recurring)	\$30	\$60	\$120
Unlimited Texting³ (Text, picture & video)	Unlimited ³	Unlimited ³	Unlimited ³
Talk (Per minute*)	\$1.00	\$0.50	\$0.35
Cellular data (Includes email, Web browsing, social media posts, etc.)	120MB Overage: \$0.25/MB	300MB Overage: \$0.20/MB	800MB Overage: \$0.15/MB
Wi-Fi access at participating hotspots⁵	Not included	Unlimited ⁵	Unlimited ⁵

Option 1 Pros:

- Your friends and family can call and text you on your U.S. number just like they do at home, without paying for an international call/text.
- You won't have to change your phone number.
- If your phone is connected to WiFi, you can Facetime for free and use your phone's Internet and apps for free (i.e. without using data).
- Your international data plan will allow you to use apps and Internet even if your phone isn't connected to WiFi. This is useful, as an example: if you are lost, can't find a WiFi connection, and want to look up directions on your phone.

Option 2 Cons:

- While international plans are certainly more affordable now than in the past, they still tend to be expensive. You will probably spend more on your cell phone every month than you're used to – as much as double your usual monthly plan. You are basically paying for the convenience of not having to change your phone number or carrier. For some people, this is worth it. Be sure to investigate the international plans offered by your carrier and make sure you understand the cost, plan limits, and overage charges.
- Most of us are used to having unlimited data and never even think about how much data we're using. Your international plan may NOT have unlimited data! This may be the first time you will need to keep track of how much data you are using – if not, you will pay expensive overage charges!! (You can keep track of your data usage in your iPhone's Settings. Search Google for instructions on how to do this on your phone.)

Option 1 Tips:

- Companies like Verizon, AT&T, etc. offer different international packages at different price points. The more you pay, the more data and talk minutes you get. (See previous page for an example chart.) Each package gives you a set number of international talk minutes and a set data allowance, which may be **lower** than you're used to having. Because we are all so used to having unlimited talk, text, and data, it is easy to go over the limits on your international plan and incur expensive overage fees. Most of us have no idea how much data we use in a month. Check your phone bill to see how much data you use in a month – you may be shocked!! 😊 Compare your typical monthly usage to the international packages offered by your carrier and decide if they will work for you.
- T-Mobile, for example, now includes unlimited international text and data with many of their plans. Although this is very attractive, be aware that this doesn't mean the international data will always work well! 😊 It is usually 2G and there may be places where you can't get a connection. This goes for all U.S. carriers, not just T-Mobile, because when you use international data, you're a guest on one of the host country's local carriers and get lesser priority than direct subscribers of that carrier. This translates into possibly a slower data connection and less availability.
- You may not be able to connect to a WiFi network anytime you want, especially when you're traveling, so it **IS** important to have a data plan while you're abroad. In fact, it can be a huge safety risk to rely primarily on WiFi because you may very well find yourself in an emergency but can't find a WiFi network! Know that **you cannot rely on WiFi 100% of the time** – you WILL need to use your plan's data, texting, and minutes. Be prepared to keep track of how much you use AND be prepared to pay an occasional overage – for example, if you end up in an emergency situation and have to use data. (If you don't want your phone to automatically connect to data when you're not connected to WiFi, you can always adjust that in your phone's settings!)
- Receiving phone calls may use your minutes, or they may charge you roaming fees in certain areas or if/after minutes are used up. Be sure to check with your carrier.
- Some U.S. carriers support WiFi calling, but WiFi calling isn't always free, so check with your carrier to see if you are charged for it before you use it. (If you are connected to WiFi you can use Whatsapp for voice and video calling, or Facetime for video calling.)
- **Questions to ask your carrier:** How many texts do I get, and does that include incoming and outgoing? How much data do I get? What are the fees if I go over my data limit? How many talk minutes do I get (incoming and outgoing)? What is the cost if I go over my minutes? When might I incur roaming charges?
- **Finally, iPhones are a big theft risk abroad!** Do not walk down the street texting, have your phone out in plain sight on the subway, or leave it out on the table at a bar/restaurant. *Ways past students have had their iPhones stolen:* 1) Left in coat pocket at coat check, 2) Lifted from back jeans pocket, 3) Left out at on the table at a bar/restaurant, 4) Grabbed out of their hands on the subway. 5) Left in a restroom; was gone when they came back for it.

OPTION 2: Before you leave, ask your carrier to unlock your iPhone/smartphone. (See below for more on what “unlocked” means.) **Once abroad, purchase a local SIM card and put it in your phone. You will have a new (foreign) phone number and a new phone plan with a local carrier. But, this is usually cheaper than Option 1.**

Option 2 Pros:

- The biggest upside to this choice is that you will likely spend a lot less on your monthly plan than you would if you got an international plan with your U.S. carrier. You can go to any cell phone store after you arrive and find good deals on SIM cards that include unlimited talk, text, and data just like you have at home. And, since you’ll be signed up with a local carrier, your data connection may be faster and better. Your ASA Site Director can tell you what store to go to and help you translate. However, going with this option does mean you’ll have a foreign phone number (see next section):

Option 2 Cons:

- You’ll have a foreign phone number, so friends/family who don’t have an iPhone/smartphone would have to call or text an international number to reach you, which can be expensive. (However, if your friends/family have an iPhone/smartphone, you can still use Whatsapp, Skype, or Facetime to talk for free while connected to WiFi.)
- The SIM card may not work in other countries, so this could be problematic if you plan to travel. Before you buy a new SIM card, ask if it will work in other countries and what the cost will be – there could be roaming fees or data fees for using it in other countries.

Option 2 Tips:

- **IMPORTANT:** Your phone must be **UNLOCKED** in order for your phone to work with any SIM card other than the one you got from your U.S. carrier! So, this is not a physical unlocking, but an electronic unlocking which allows you to use any carrier’s SIM card in your phone. The unlocking process varies based on the type of phone you have, your plan, and your carrier. Some phones these days come to you unlocked already; others do not. Some carriers may charge a fee to unlock your phone, and it can take several days to several weeks to process, so **DO NOT LEAVE THIS UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE.**
- If your carrier says you have to pay to unlock your phone, try calling Apple (or Samsung, etc.) directly and see if they can unlock it for free.
- DO NOT “jailbreak” your phone!!
- **In case you haven’t seen a SIM card before, here is an infographic of how to change out your SIM card.** Your phone probably came with the SIM pre-loaded, so you may not have had a reason to take it out before. *A SIM card is TINY, so if you remove your U.S. SIM, keep it in a safe place – you’ll need to put it back in your phone when you get home!*



ADDITIONAL PHONE TIPS & REMINDERS

- **If you are considering Option 2 (buying a SIM card in your host country), call your U.S. cell phone provider NOW and ask if they will unlock your phone, as the process can take anywhere from several days to several weeks.**
- Check out this [informative article](#) from the New York Times about how to pick a cell phone plan for traveling abroad!!! *(If the link is dead, please email Chelsea@academicstudies.com and she can email you the article as a PDF.)*
- If your phone is connected to WiFi, you can access the internet and your phone's apps for free. If you're not connected to WiFi, you will need a data plan in order to use your phone's internet and apps. Ex: If you don't have a data plan and you are lost but can't find a WiFi connection, you will not be able to look up directions on your phone! You need a data plan to look up directions if your phone isn't on WiFi. To avoid this situation:
 - **Use your phone's Google Maps app to download maps to use offline. This will mean you can get directions on your phone, even if you don't have a WiFi or data connection. The Google Maps app will let you download maps to use offline for any city or location in the world – so download all the maps before you go for any cities you plan to visit.**
- Here at home, your phone's settings allow your apps to automatically connect to data as soon as you leave a WiFi connection, allowing your apps (and internet) to seamlessly remain connected and working at all times. Most of us never think about how much data this uses because most people have unlimited data plans. However, your data plan while abroad may *not* be unlimited! You may have a monthly data limit and risk being charged expensive fees if you go over the limit. **Make sure you are aware of how much data you have per month, and if you want to be sure not to go over your data limit:**
 - **Learn how to keep track of your data usage. You can do this in your phone's Settings.** Search Google for instructions on how to do this on your phone's model.
 - **You can adjust your phone's settings so it doesn't automatically connect to data.** If you don't make that adjustment, your apps will automatically connect to data (and start using your data) as soon as you leave WiFi!
 - **You can adjust your phone's settings to not allow roaming.**
- **FREE ways to keep in touch if your phone is connected to WiFi:**
 - Texting on iMessage. *(Must turn off "Send as SMS"!)*
 - Texting on Whatsapp (including photos and video). Whatsapp also has voice and video calling.
 - Facetime and Skype.

APPS YOU NEED TO DOWNLOAD BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Whatsapp (mandatory)  *Free texting and calling to any phone number in the world.*
- CISI Students (mandatory)  *Medical Insurance access.*
- XE Currency (recommended)  *Real-time exchange rates.*
- Safety Global** (mandatory) 

*** Safety is not misspelled. ☺ ASA provides a subscription to Safety for all our students to help keep you safe while abroad. You can download the Safety app for free at any time, but you will not be able to use the app until about 5 days before your program start date. ASA will email you about 5 days before your program start date with instructions for registering and using your Safety app. Once you have registered your Safety app, it will allow you to notify emergency services in any country in the world that you need immediate help and it will give them your exact location. In addition, it will allow ASA and emergency services to know your exact location in the event of a crisis. You do not need to have local data or WiFi service for the app to work (it can access the local phone lines to transmit information).*

SAFETY

The best safety tip we can give you is: **Be aware of where you are, where your belongings are, and what is going on around you at all times. Remember that alcohol will impair your awareness and judgment.** Always remember that you are in a CITY. It is easy to feel you are immune to danger, but when you let your guard down too far, you can become a target.

Theft

Pick-pocketing is especially common abroad! IPHONES AND SMARTPHONES ARE A HIGH THEFT RISK. (See “Cell Phones” section for tips on keeping your iPhone safe.)

On the street, the main technique pick-pockets use is distraction. They may spill food/drink on your clothing, ask you for directions, show you a map, try to shine your shoes, hand you a flower or some herbs, or read your palm to divert your attention from their accomplice who is stealing from you. If someone does spill food/drink on you, beware of a “good Samaritan” who offers to help you! **Be especially careful on the subway, bus, escalator, and in large crowds.**

On the subway/bus or in any large crowd, the most popular technique is the “crush and grab.” You may be swarmed by several people all trying to get on or off the train/bus, or you

may be surrounded by people in a crowd. While they are pushing up against you, they might be picking your pockets. Another trick is to wait for the train/bus to stop, grab the purse/backpack of someone sitting right by the door and hop off just as the doors are closing. To avoid being a victim, find a seat away from the doors. If you can't sit, stand against the side of the train to minimize access to your pockets or purse/backpack. **There is also “the grab” technique, when a thief will snatch your purse/backpack that you have left sitting on the floor or hanging on the back of your chair.**

In a crowded bar or club, a popular technique is to weave through the crowd, lifting wallets along the way while people are distracted. With people dancing, chatting, and pushing up against one another, it is easy not to notice if someone is picking your pocket or purse. **Some thieves will steal a dozen wallets in one night, just weaving through a crowd of distracted students.** The best way to avoid this is to carry your money in a money belt, or keep your wallet in your front pocket, or carry a small cross-body purse that you can keep under your arm or against your body at all times.

Any time someone offers you flowers, herbs, or a palm reading, WALK AWAY! It is always a scam, even if they insist that it's free.

Be SUPER careful if you are approached by a stranger while using an ATM machine!

Whenever possible, make your withdrawals during the day when plenty of people are around, and bring a friend to be your “lookout.”

Alcohol and Drugs

The overwhelming majority of safety issues our students face involve alcohol and could have been avoided had the students' judgment not been compromised. You will be held responsible for your behavior, whether it is a result of alcohol or otherwise.

ALWAYS DRINK IN MODERATION. The disinhibiting effects of alcohol, plus the feeling of invincibility that many students feel while they're abroad, can result in poor judgment and bad decisions. Getting drunk makes you a target for those who want to take advantage of you. Never accept a drink from a stranger, and never leave a bar or club with someone you have just met. Avoid alcohol if you take any prescription medication, as alcohol can interact with certain medications. Finally, drunkenness is frowned upon in many cultures and creates a bad impression of Americans.

Drug use of ANY kind and inappropriate alcohol use are strictly prohibited under the ASA Code of Conduct. Inappropriate alcohol use includes drunkenness/intoxication. Violation of the Code of Conduct may result in expulsion from your housing and/or from the ASA program, with no refund or academic credits.

- While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws! The laws may not be the same as in the U.S. and as a foreigner, you may not have the same protections under the law.

SAFETY TIPS: Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
✓ Do contact your parents to let them know you arrived safely! They will worry until they hear from you!	✗ Don't leave your belongings in the care of new "friends" you have made on a train, in a bar, in a hotel/hostel, etc. Students <u>have</u> been robbed this way.
✓ Do use ATM machines during daylight hours when plenty of people are around. If possible, use an ATM inside a bank and bring a friend to be your lookout.	✗ Don't use ATM machines inside a convenience store – they are more likely to be tampered with than bank ATMs (ATM tampering can result in your card number getting stolen.)
✓ Do put rubber bands around your wallet. This makes it harder to pull out of your pocket without you noticing.	✗ Don't leave your purse or backpack hanging on the back of your chair or sitting on the floor at a bar or restaurant– this makes it very easy for someone to take it without you noticing.
✓ Do put your money safely away and zip up your purse/backpack BEFORE leaving a cash register or ATM.	✗ Don't carry valuable items (e.g. wallet, passport, money, phone) in your pants/coat pocket or in the outside pocket of your backpack/purse.
✓ Do use a <u>cross-body</u> purse or bag. This makes it harder for someone to steal your purse/bag.	✗ Don't ever leave your belongings unattended in a public place.
✓ Do keep your backpack/purse fully zipped AT ALL TIMES. Wear it on the <u>front</u> of your body.	✗ Don't make yourself a target—try to dress like the locals.
✓ Do carry your money, credit cards, passport, etc. in a money belt while you're traveling.	✗ Don't answer the door at your apartment or hotel room without verifying who it is.
✓ Do make sure that all doors and windows are closed and locked when staying in a hotel.	✗ Don't consult your map or travel book on the street—duck into a restaurant or business.
✓ Do lock your valuables inside your suitcase when not in use (passport, camera, etc.). If you're staying in a hotel and your room has a safe, use it!	✗ Don't go out in large groups (6+), especially if you're speaking English, as this will draw unwanted attention.
✓ Do ask your ASA Site Director or, if traveling, your hotel to recommend a cab company.	✗ Don't carry large amounts of cash. If you withdraw a large amount, head straight home and lock excess cash in your suitcase, then take it out as needed.
✓ Do lock your apartment door <u>AT ALL TIMES</u> , even if you are at home!!	✗ Don't wear expensive handbags or jewelry. Leave these at home!
✓ Do be cautious when approached by any stranger – even if they seem harmless.	✗ Don't go to unfamiliar places or neighborhoods alone, especially at night.
✓ Do watch out for each other. Don't let a friend walk home alone or leave the bar by themselves.	✗ Don't accept a drink from a stranger or leave your drink unattended.
✓ Do program important phone numbers into your phone: Police, Fire, ASA Site Director, U.S. Embassy, Taxi.	✗ Don't let the front door of your apartment building swing shut. Always turn around and make sure the door shuts and locks behind you.
✓ Do take a taxi home after 10 pm. Spending that small amount of extra money is worth it to be safe!	✗ Don't let someone you just met walk you home. Don't accept a ride from someone you just met. Don't invite someone you just met back to your apartment, hotel room, dorm, etc! Students <u>have</u> been robbed this way.
✓ Do report the loss or theft of your passport <u>immediately</u> by contacting the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy.	✗ Don't ride the subway alone after dark. If you will be taking the subway after dark, try to travel in groups of 3-4 people and avoid eye contact with strangers.
✓ Do <u>memorize</u> your local address and new phone number (if you change your phone number after arrival).	✗ DON'T ATTEND DEMONSTRATIONS, STRIKES, OR OTHER POLITICAL OR CONTROVERSIAL GATHERINGS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.
✓ Do keep your phone battery charged at all times!	✗ Don't be loud and/or intoxicated in public. It will only draw negative attention to yourself and label you as a foreigner. In fact, public intoxication is offensive to some local people.

The above precautions will simply help you prevent problems before they happen. There's no need to be paranoid – just be aware of your surroundings and USE COMMON SENSE!

Safety for Women

Female students should travel in groups of three or four, or with a male escort. Don't go out alone after dark, don't walk home alone at night, and don't leave a bar/club by yourself. Foreign women often draw more attention than local women, so be extra careful not to draw unwanted attention to yourself by wearing revealing clothing. Ignore any inappropriate comments or gestures directed towards you; don't make eye contact, and keep moving.

TRAVEL TIPS

DO NOT BOOK ANY PERSONAL TRAVEL UNTIL AFTER YOU ARRIVE AND CONFIRM YOUR CLASS SCHEDULE. Travel plans **DO NOT** justify an absence from class. Students have made this mistake in the past and were stuck with non-refundable tickets. Another good reason to wait to make travel plans until after you arrive is that you may make new friends you'll want to travel with!

If you plan to travel, consider reading a guidebook such as Let's Go, Lonely Planet, Frommer's, or the Berkeley Guide. These guides are often written by students and backpackers who like you, are on a budget. A guide book will give you ideas for places to visit and details on transportation, lodging, places to eat, and much more. When you get there, you can also ask your ASA Site Director for recommendations.

If you plan to travel outside your host country, you must research the entry/visa requirements for ALL countries that you plan to visit. The U.S. Department of State website (<http://travel.state.gov>) is a great place to start. It has info about entry requirements for various countries, as well as travel advisories.

Eurail Passes (EUROPEAN PROGRAMS ONLY)

A Eurail pass is a great idea if you plan to travel within one country or to several neighboring countries for at least 5 days in a row. There are a variety of Eurail passes available for European countries, and you can choose validity dates of anywhere from 5 days to 3 months. With the pass, you'll get unlimited train travel in the countries you chose, for the timeframe you chose (prices vary depending on the duration of the pass and the number of countries it covers). Once you activate your Eurail pass, it is valid only for the number of days/months you chose when you purchased it and expires at the end of that timeframe, so you would need to travel continuously during that time to make the pass worthwhile. If you only plan to take weekend trips here and there but not travel continuously for at least 5 days, then a Eurail pass is NOT a good idea – you'll be better off buying individual train or plane tickets for your trips.

To make the best use of your Eurail pass, you should wait until the last possible moment to activate your pass and then travel as much as possible by train while the pass is valid. There are a variety of passes available with various terms and restrictions, so it is important to do your

research first to determine which pass is most suited to your particular travel plans. You can read about and purchase passes online at www.raileurope.com.

Tips for Travelers

- ❖ Outside the U.S., **DATES are often written differently** (DD-MM-YY instead of MM-DD-YY). EX: Instead of 12/1/18 for December 1st, 2018, they may write 1/12/18. Before purchasing any train or plane ticket, always double check the date first so you are sure of what date you are booking!
- ❖ Outside the U.S., **TIMES are often listed in 24-hour time (military time)**. EX: 7:00 may mean 7am, NOT 7pm! 7pm may be listed as 19:00. Always double check the times carefully before purchasing any train or plane ticket!
- ❖ Check the luggage limits ahead of time for each ticket you buy, EVEN IF you have flown that airline before! Luggage limits can vary even on the same airline, depending on where you are flying to/from.
- ❖ Most budget airlines (RyanAir, etc.) have VERY strict limits and will charge expensive fees if your baggage is over the limit.
- ❖ It is mandatory to let your ASA Site Director know about any trips you're going on and when you expect to be back. In addition, make sure your parents or another trusted person has a copy of your travel itinerary and a number where you can be reached.
- ❖ Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries in which you are traveling. Remember, while in a foreign country you are subject to its laws, and you may not be afforded the same rights and protections as you have in the U.S.!
- ❖ Fill in the emergency contact information page of your passport.
- ❖ If you plan to travel after the official last date of your ASA program, we strongly recommend you purchase international medical insurance to cover the duration of your travels. ASA's insurance coverage starts on the official arrival date of your ASA program and ends on the official last day of your ASA program.
- ❖ Never leave your luggage unattended or accept packages or gifts from strangers.
- ❖ Try not to arrive in unfamiliar towns at night. Always make lodging arrangements in advance.
- ❖ When traveling in a group, you'll find that different people will want to see different things. Always make a rendezvous point so if anyone gets lost, you'll know when and where to find the group.
- ❖ Never leave your belongings, especially your money, passport, or phone, in the care of new "friends" you have met on the train, plane, bus, or hostel!
- ❖ Do not drink or brush your teeth with the water on trains or planes. Carry bottled water with you.
- ❖ If you suffer from motion sickness, take Dramamine ½ hour before your journey begins.

Time, Temperature & Conversions

Temperature

Fahrenheit to Celsius: $(F - 32) \times 5/9 = C$

Celsius to Fahrenheit: $(C \times 1.8) + 32 = F$

Military Time

AM hours 0:00 – 12:00

PM hours 13:00 – 24:00 (subtract 12 from the time, ex. 21:00 – 12= 9:00pm)

Weight

Multiply by:

Ounces to grams 28.35

Grams to ounces 0.035

Pounds to kilograms 0.45

Kilograms to pounds 2.20

Length, Distance, and Area

Multiply by:

Inches to centimeters 2.54

Centimeters to inches 0.39

Feet to meters 0.30

Meters to feet 3.28

Yards to meters 0.91

Meters to yards 1.09

Meters to kilometers 1.61

Kilometers to miles 0.62

Sq. miles to sq. kilometers 2.59

Sq. kilometers to sq. miles 0.39

Volume

Multiply by:

Gallons to liters 3.79

Liters to gallons 0.26

ADJUSTING TO LIFE ABROAD: CULTURE SHOCK

► Keep an open mind – In all respects, things will rarely happen exactly the way you expect them to while you are abroad. Practical matters (standing in line, filling out forms, registering or waiting for various things), may take longer or require extra steps that would be considered superfluous in the U.S. You must be flexible and patient in order to get the most out of your study abroad experience.

► Be respectful of the local culture – Sometimes Americans are labeled with a reputation for being inflexible, ignorant of other cultures and failing to adapt to the host country's environment. Although this reputation is not always justified, it is important to follow the social cues around you. For example, if you are in a public place that is relatively quiet, avoid speaking loudly. If you go into a local grocery store and notice that customers do not handle the produce themselves but instead make a request to the shop assistant, do the same. You will find that people are very gracious when they see that you are behaving in a way that respects their social values and customs. Even if you look a little confused, they will often try to help.

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 change, the unfamiliar food, different business methods, different concepts of time, 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 you 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. Eventually, if you adapt to the environment and change your attitude, you'll be able to get the most out of their experience!

What can be most frightening about a study or travel abroad experience is that the student's self-esteem and security may be threatened. But, with time, most students do adjust and see the experience as the great opportunity that it is. It is important to realize that the feelings you are experiencing are normal and will eventually subside. In doing so, you will be better able to adjust and will come away from the experience with a greater understanding of culture and, most importantly, yourself.

- Please note that students often feel physically sick at first when overseas. This is due to the climate change, pollution, etc. This feeling usually does not last more than a few days. Rest assured that you will recuperate, and don't hesitate to seek support from ASA or your host institution!

Symptoms of Culture Shock

- Sadness, loneliness, melancholy, homesickness
- Aches, pains, allergies or other physical illness
- Insomnia, desire to sleep too much or too little
- Changes in temperament, depression, feeling vulnerable or powerless
- Anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others
- Identifying with your home culture or idealizing your home country
- Trying too hard to absorb everything in the new culture or country
- Unable to solve simple problems
- Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity
- Developing stereotypes about the new culture
- Developing obsessions such as over-cleanliness
- Longing for family
- Feelings of being lost, overlooked, exploited or abused

Stages of Culture Shock

1. Excitement

- Feel very positive about the culture
- Are overwhelmed with impressions, possibly feelings of euphoria
- Find the new culture exotic and are fascinated

- Are passive, meaning they have little experience of the culture

2. Withdrawal

- Find the behavior of the local people unusual and unpredictable
- Small problems or annoyances seem insurmountable
- Begin to dislike the culture and react negatively to the behavior
- Feelings of anxiety
- Start to withdraw
- Begin to criticize, mock or show animosity to the local people
- Frustrations with the country may be based on stereotypes

3. Adjustment

- Begin to understand the local language better so feelings of isolation lessen
- Understand and accept the behavior of the people
- Realization that the situation may be difficult, but it's not hopeless
- Regain your sense of humor

4. Enthusiasm

- Enjoy being in the culture
- Functions well in the culture
- Prefer certain cultural traits of the new culture rather than their own
- Adopt certain behaviors from the new culture
- Feel you're an authority on the host country; you may share your knowledge of country with others in a knowing fashion

5. Re-entry to Home Country

- Frustrations with original country
- Reverse Culture Shock

How to Cope with Culture Shock

- First and foremost, don't hesitate to seek support from ASA!
- Never confuse your ability to speak the new language with your intelligence; it is easy to feel stupid and get down on yourself when you don't understand the language, but there is no reason to. It takes everyone some time to adjust and become comfortable with a new language. Don't forget that the language spoken in-country may be different from what you've learned in high school or college, so it will take you some time to adjust!
- Establish simple goals and evaluate your progress
- Develop a hobby
- Don't forget the good things you already have!
- Remember, there are always resources that you can use
- Learn to be constructive. If you encounter an unfavorable environment, don't put yourself in that position again. Be easy on yourself.

- Include a regular form of physical activity in your routine. This will help combat depression. Exercise, run, walk, swim, take an aerobics class, etc.
- Relaxation and meditation are proven to be very positive for people who are experiencing periods of stress
- Maintain contact with the new culture. Make an effort to learn the language. Volunteer in community activities that allow you to practice the language that you are learning. This will help you feel less stress about language and useful at the same time.
- Take advantage of services that your university, church or community offer
- Allow yourself to feel sad about the things that you have left behind: your family, your friends, etc.
- Find ways to live with the things that don't satisfy you 100%.
- Maintain confidence in yourself. Follow your ambitions and continue your plans for the future.

INFORMATION FOR LGBTQ STUDENTS

LGBTQ students may have questions or concerns before going abroad and face specific challenges while abroad. Since every person's study abroad experience is unique and personal, and since attitudes toward homosexuality vary from country to country, it will remain to be seen exactly what issues you encounter, if any, in your host country and city as an LGBTQ student. In an effort to help prepare LGBTQ students for living and studying abroad, we have compiled the following information.

Compared to the U.S., some countries have more progressive laws and more open social attitudes toward the expression of sexual orientation and gender identity. Students in more open countries may discover a new sense of freedom to express oneself during their time abroad, and possibly have a difficult transition coming home to the U.S. where attitudes could seem restrictive in comparison to their host country.

On the other hand, there are many countries that restrict and/or prohibit homosexuality and have negative social attitudes toward homosexuality. Students in more restrictive countries may find that open expression of sexuality and gender may not be tolerated, and you may feel as though the freedom afforded to you in the U.S. has suddenly been taken away from you. Of course, it is impossible to characterize a complex cultural and personal experience in such simple terms, so keep in mind that your feelings and perceptions before, during and after your study abroad experience may vary.

It is important to stay true to yourself while abroad, but also keep in mind that once you are outside of the U.S., you are required to follow the laws of your host country and U.S. laws no longer protect you. In general, ASA's host countries are tolerant of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. However, it is important to read about the laws and local attitudes of your host country before going abroad. Also, once you arrive in your host city, you should observe

the local culture and read the local papers in order to adapt to your new environment. Also, don't forget that you can always talk to an ASA staff member about any concerns or questions you have.

Resources for LGBTQ students abroad

LGBT Rights by Country & Laws around the World:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_by_country

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_laws_of_the_world

Gay Rights Organizations around the World:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_gay-rights_organizations

International Lesbian and Gay Association:

www.ilga.org

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission:

www.iglhrc.org/

Travel Guides for Gay and Lesbian Travelers:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

And finally, a useful link from Indiana University, addressing LGBTQ students going abroad:

<http://overseas.iu.edu/living/glbts.html>

Please do not hesitate to speak with one of ASA's staff members if you have any questions or concerns. ASA strives to provide a safe, supportive and non-discriminatory environment for all of our students!

GRADES & TRANSCRIPTS

About 6-12 weeks after your program end date, your host institution will send your final transcript/grades directly to the ASA office in Boston. ASA will *then* send your final transcript to your home institution. At *that* point your home institution will begin the process of transferring in your classes, grades, and credits, which can take several weeks.

▶ If you have an outstanding balance due to ASA, your transcript will not be released until you have met all your financial obligations.

▶ **ONCE AGAIN, please be aware it can take 6-12 weeks after your program ends for ASA to receive your final transcript/grades! This is normal processing time for foreign universities. Compared to U.S. universities, foreign universities always take MUCH longer to issue final**

grades and transcripts. Unfortunately, ASA has no control over transcript processing times.

Please rest assured that ASA will send your final transcript to your home institution as soon as possible once we receive your final transcript. (We will also email you a PDF/unofficial copy so you can see your grades and have an unofficial copy for your own records.)

As a reminder, it will take your home institution another several weeks to post your study abroad classes and grades to your record, after they receive your final transcript from ASA. Your home institution will determine what classes you receive transfer credit for, and how many credits.

Your final transcript WILL have grades. It is NOT possible for your host institution to award pass/fail grades. Most U.S. colleges and universities will only award transfer credit if you earn a grade of "C" or higher; however, this varies by school. Also, some schools transfer in study abroad grades as pass/fail; other schools transfer in the actual grades, which will then be calculated in your GPA. Check with your school's Registrar or Study Abroad Office so you are clear on your school's policy. Make sure you understand the minimum grade necessary to receive transfer credit, and make sure you understand whether your final grades will be calculated in your GPA or not.

As a final reminder, if you want to make sure you get credit for all the coursework you complete abroad, you must have all your classes approved by your home institution before you depart.

REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

Regardless of the length of time you were abroad, you'll undoubtedly experience some differences in self, family and friends, and surroundings. Life at home has moved on, and you have moved on as well, but in a different way. You may have had expectations about returning home that were not met. All of these changes can result in feeling a little out of place at home, as if you are a stranger in a familiar land. This is normal and is called "reverse culture shock." It may be counterintuitive to think that you could experience a difficult transition when returning home. But re-entry, or reverse culture shock, is actually a very common reaction to returning home from studying abroad. The reactions surrounding re-entry may vary, and may include one or more of the following:

- ◇ Restlessness
- ◇ Boredom
- ◇ Depression
- ◇ Uncertainty, confusion
- ◇ Isolation, wanting to be alone
- ◇ Reverse homesickness: missing the people, places, attitudes or lifestyle of the host country

- ◇ Changes in goals and priorities
- ◇ Negativity or intolerance towards the U.S., including American behavior, attitudes, customs, and common social practices.

It is much like the culture shock that you may have experienced when you first went abroad. Similar to having to adjust when arriving in another country, you must make some adjustments coming home, too. The coping skills and strategies that were successful in adjusting to your host culture will be just as helpful coming home.

Suggestions on How to Cope with Reverse Culture Shock:

- ◇ Attend a Study Abroad Re-Entry Conference! Many U.S. colleges and universities now arrange these, in an effort to support students who have recently returned home and promote study abroad on their campus.
- ◇ Continue writing in your journal that you used abroad. This will help you keep your experience fresh in your mind while keeping things in perspective.
- ◇ Know that you are not alone in your feelings. Most students experience reverse culture shock to differing degrees. Usually, the students who were the most immersed in the local culture have the most difficulty in adjusting to life at home.
- ◇ Understand that you may not come home and find everything just as you left it. Likewise, you may have changed, and you need to learn how to assimilate back into U.S. culture.
- ◇ Talk to both former and future study abroad students on your campus. Relaying your experience to others will be valuable to both you and them.
- ◇ Get involved with international students on your home campus and offer to help with pre-departure orientations and Study Abroad Fairs for future students.
- ◇ Stay in touch with the people you met while studying abroad; they can be your best link to the experience.
- ◇ Go to an elementary, middle or high school language class and do a presentation about the country where you went.