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# Pre-Departure Orientation Guide

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SUNY Geneseo

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## Welcome!

**Congratulations! You have confirmed a place on a Geneseo Study Abroad Program. This guide is designed to help you consider all of the necessary steps in preparing to go abroad.**

## Travel Documents

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### Passport

A passport is “an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the holder” (NAFSA). You cannot travel internationally without a passport. In addition, your passport must be good for at least 6 months after you return from your international destination.

Apply for a passport right away if you are considering doing any international study or travel while at Geneseo. You must apply in person if you are applying for your first passport.

For the most up-to-date and accurate passport requirements, plus everything else passport related (lost or stolen passports, passport corrections), consult the US Department of State passport website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html/>).

There are two places in Geneseo where you can apply in person for a US passport:

1. The Livingston County Clerk’s Office: located in the Livingston County Government Center, room 201. The Clerk’s Office processes passport applications and fees, but does not take photos; you must have your passport photos taken BEFORE you go to the Clerk’s Office. You can have passport photos taken at the Wal Mart portrait studio, or at most other major drug stores.
2. US Post Office: located on Rt. 20A/South St. right next to the intersection of Main and 20A (in the plaza next to the Bank of Castile). The Post Office processes applications, fees, and takes pictures for a fee of \$15.

If you already have your passport, be sure that it is valid for at least 6 months after your intended return from studying abroad. Otherwise, you must renew your passport, this can be done at the Department of State website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/renew.html>).

Immediately after being admitted to a program you must apply for a passport if you do not have one already. If you do have a passport, check to see if it is valid for the period you will be abroad plus at least six months beyond the end date of your program. If not, renew it immediately. If you have questions about how to obtain a US passport, or other travel documents, consult with the Study Abroad Office at Geneseo or the study abroad advisor at your home campus.

### Visa

A visa is a conditional authorization granted by a country to a noncitizen to enter and temporarily remain within that country. The US Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs provides country-specific information regarding entry requirements for US citizens traveling abroad.

I am a US citizen travelling abroad. Do I need a visa?

Go to: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/americans-traveling-abroad.html>

If you are not a US citizen, notify the Study Abroad Office right away, as your procedure for traveling abroad and obtaining the necessary visa may be different than most other students. You must also notify the ISSS Office that you will be studying abroad.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of participants to obtain the required visas (if any) for entry to the country in which the Overseas Academic Program is located and for return to the US. These requirements change frequently, and it is the participant's responsibility to keep informed about them.

Make photocopies of your passport and visa and scan and email the copies to yourself. Save them to a cloud-based password-protected server (i.e. Google Drive, Dropbox). In the event that your passport and visa are lost or stolen you will be able to access them via an Internet connection. Similarly, keep the hard photocopies with you throughout your program.

### **Inoculations & Passport Health**

The SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office staff members are not medical professionals. Therefore, we cannot require or recommend specific inoculations. However, the Study Abroad Office recommends consulting trusted websites for this information.

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Travel Health

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

Indicate your desired location. The CDC Travel Health Website lists vaccinations as either “recommended” or “required.” The SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office encourages all students going abroad to seek both recommended and required vaccinations.

World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

The World Health Organization (WHO) compiles health information from around the world and links to various helpful websites.

US Department of State – Before You Go website

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go.html>

Includes a “Traveler’s Checklist”, information about your intended destination(s), personal safety, and health abroad.

In addition to consulting trusted sources available online, the SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office recommends that every student meet with and discuss their travel plans with their primary care physician at least one month prior to their departure. Your primary care physician knows your medical and mental health history and can make recommendations for a smooth transition abroad.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of participants to obtain the required inoculations (if any) in preparation for their studies abroad.

- *SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad*

### **Registering with the State Department (STEP)**

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If you are a US citizen or national, you should register your time abroad with the US Department of State. Travel registration with the Department of State makes it possible for you to be contacted in case of an emergency in the US or in your host country.

Register online at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

Through this free service, your family can pass an emergency message to you through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services by calling 888-407-4747 (from the US) or +1-202-501-4444 (from abroad). In accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State cannot release your information without your express consent. Go to [usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov) to locate the nearest embassy or consulate.

- Adapted from *University of Missouri Study Abroad*

### **Benefits of Enrolling in STEP**

- Receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.
  - Help the US Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency.
  - Help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.
- *SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad*

## **Registration and Credit Transfer**

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Information can be found in **Section IV: Registration and Credit Transfer** of either the Host Institution or Faculty-Led Study Abroad Student Handbook ([http://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/forms-and-downloads](http://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/forms-and-downloads)).

## **Financial Aid**

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If you are planning to use financial aid for study abroad, please contact Que Palacz by email ([palacz@geneseo.edu](mailto:palacz@geneseo.edu)) or phone (585-245-5546) to initiate this process.

All students who intend to use financial aid for a study abroad program will complete a “Financial Arrangements Form” with the Financial Aid Office at their home campus.

Additional information may also be found in **Section V: Financial Matters** of either the Host Institution or Faculty-Led Study Abroad Student Handbook ([http://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/forms-and-downloads](http://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/forms-and-downloads)).

## **Scholarships**

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The Office of International Programs administers numerous scholarships available to Geneseo students participating in Geneseo study abroad programs. Some of these scholarships are available to any Geneseo student on any Geneseo study abroad program (by term). Others are program-specific. A complete list can be found here:

Geneseo Study Abroad Scholarships ([https://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/geneseo-study-abroad-scholarships](https://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/geneseo-study-abroad-scholarships))

In addition to Geneseo scholarships, students are also encouraged to investigate additional funding opportunities for overseas experiences:

Additional Scholarship Opportunities Not Administered by Geneseo  
([http://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/additional-scholarship-opportunities](http://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/additional-scholarship-opportunities))  
- *SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad*

If you have any questions or need additional information, please stop by the Study Abroad Office, Erwin 217.

## **Packing Tips**

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### **Where do I begin?**

Some basic considerations that will influence what and how much you pack:

1. **Less is More:** Keep in mind you probably won't need your three favorite pairs of jeans. We've never heard any student complain about taking too little. Even a very frugal person is likely to accumulate additional possessions while abroad, so make an effort to pack light.
2. **Mind the Weather:** Keep in mind the climate of your study abroad location when packing—check with students recently returned, or look at a guidebook to see what kind of weather you might expect. To check the weather in your program location, search “weather in (location) in (month)” in Google (<https://www.google.com>).
3. **To Travel or Not to Travel:** How much will you be moving from one place to another while abroad? Do you really want to lug several suitcases?

### **Luggage**

When packing, keep in mind that you will have to carry your own luggage. Do not pack more than you can carry and fit in the trunk of a SMALL taxi. Check with your airline for luggage allowances. Remember that you may have to get from the airport to the train station (which might not be near each other) and on to your study abroad center or meeting point by yourself.

Don't take more than you can carry by yourself for an extended period of time. You are responsible for YOUR luggage. Never pack more than YOU can carry by yourself. Many airports are large and may require you to move from domestic terminals to international terminals while traveling. This may require extensive walking. Good practice for your trip is packing your luggage and seeing if you can walk completely around the block by yourself (with your luggage!)

Because postage rates abroad are significantly higher than those in the US, it can be expensive to ship things back to the US. Also, most people tend to come home with more than they brought. Be mindful of the extra space you might need on the way back, or pack a small, light bag to bring things home.

Avoid bringing valuables, such as expensive jewelry, irreplaceable family items, unnecessary credit or ID cards with you abroad.

## Backpacks

When students want to undertake independent travel on weekends or holidays, we recommend daypacks - a bag big enough for a change of clothes and a few necessities, but small enough that you don't mind toting it around all day. Make sure that your bag is STURDY (you wouldn't want to spill your belongings in the middle of a busy intersection). Often manufacturers will offer lifetime warranties on their equipment. Backpack pockets can be secured with small combination locks if your pack will be carry-on luggage.

## Electrical Equipment

Electrical outlets differ abroad. To be able to plug in your electronics abroad, you will likely need an adapter. Adapters change the structure of the plug, but they do not change the voltage. It is often much less expensive to purchase an adapter in the US before traveling abroad. Information about electrical outlets abroad can be found at: <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

Plugs in the US use 110-127 voltage, whereas many places abroad use 220-240 voltage. The SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office discourages using voltage converters abroad, as they heat up and sometimes cause fires. If you have electronics that you want to take abroad, read the fine print and ensure that they can be used for both 110-240 voltage. Otherwise, plan to purchase those items abroad (especially hair straighteners, blow dryers, or other electronics that generate heat from electricity). For large electronics, like laptops, digital cameras, and most mobile phones, information about voltage range can be found in the fine print on the power cord.

## Medication

All medication, over-the-counter and prescribed, should be packed in your carry-on luggage. If traveling with prescription medication, it must travel in its original container with its original label. It is also ideal to get a note from your doctor to show to the customs officer upon arrival abroad. The doctor's note should say, "*Student First Name and Last Name* has been prescribed *this medication* to treat *this illness*."

The CDC website also provides a "Health Travel Packing List" on country-specific pages. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

The GeoBlue Students Website ([www.geobluestudents.com](http://www.geobluestudents.com)) provides tools to find your equivalent medication abroad as well as to find out if your medication is available abroad.



## Airline Regulations

Check that your luggage follows your airline's regulations (number of suitcases, weight, and size). Remember to put your name and address inside all luggage, backpacks, sleeping bags, etc.

ALWAYS pack money, travelers' checks, medicines, important papers or documents in your CARRY-ON luggage.

ALWAYS pack pocket knives or other

items prohibited on the plane in your checked luggage. Finally, if you lock any compartments in your checked luggage, do so with TSA-approved locks which inspectors are able to open.  
-“Packing Tips” adapted from *Santa Clara University Study Abroad*

## Managing Your Money

### Accessing Money

Students should rely on multiple sources of money (ATM/debit card, credit card, travelers’ checks, and cash) to cover expenses while abroad. This will ensure that if one payment method fails or is lost, you will have a back-up.

The amount of money you can access through any one source may at times be subject to limitations, so always have a second and third source of money immediately available.

Check with your local bank before you go to find out the maximum amount you can withdraw in a 24-hour period. In most countries ATMs are common in cities and at most major airports, but may be limited in other areas depending on the country.

It is recommended to travel with a small amount of US currency and a small amount of host currency when you first arrive abroad. This will require that you purchase host currency (\$100-200) prior to your departure from the US. Call your bank to find out if they can convert currency for you. Give your bank 2-4 weeks to do so. If your bank is unable to convert currency for you, contact AAA ([www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com)). Having cash on hand allows you to be ready for any immediate expenses (e.g. taxi fare) upon arrival.

### Expenses

In general, you should plan to spend at least as much in a given month abroad as you would at home. Keep in mind that the amount of money you spend ultimately depends on your chosen lifestyle, so be frugal and exercise restraint at least in the early part of your time abroad.

Students often discover that spending less money results in a better experience. Essentially, the more money you spend, the more you alienate yourself from the surrounding host country. Local university students, on average, do not travel out of the country as much and are not often found in discos and bars during weekday evenings.

This list may help you plan your expenses while you are abroad (<http://tinyurl.com/orggtpo>).

### ATM and Credit Cards

ATM and credit cards offer the best exchange rates. ATM cards that are marked with the Pulse, Cirrus, Visa, or MasterCard logo can be used to withdraw cash from just about any machine in the world. ATMs in many countries are quite sophisticated now and have sensitive anti-theft features that may be triggered by not immediately removing your card and/or money.

Before departing the US, notify your bank and your credit card company that you will be out of the country. This may help prevent your card from being blocked after you use it the first time abroad. You may also want to ask if they will waive the international transaction fee for the time

### TO DO

- **Call Bank and Credit Card**
- **Notify of your intended travel**
- **Convert Currency**
- **Ask About Fees**
- **Photocopy Credit Cards**
- **Set Emergency Money Plan**



you will be abroad. It is smart to take your bank and credit card company's contact information with you. Please note that 800 numbers DO NOT work from abroad.

Make photocopies of the fronts and backs of your cards and leave the copies with someone you trust back home, or scan and email the copy to yourself.

### **How to Carry Money?**

**Cash:** Only carry as much money as you are prepared to lose. We suggest only carrying the equivalent of \$40 to \$50 at a time. Local banks can order foreign currency for you. You can also exchange currency in most major airports, or use an ATM immediately upon arrival at your destination airport.

**Travelers Checks:** Although considered old-fashioned by some, carrying some money in the form of travelers checks can be useful. If lost or stolen they are replaceable. Most banks and credit unions sell travelers checks.

**Credit Cards:** Most US credit cards can be used worldwide. Visa is a commonly used credit card in foreign countries. American Express is not as widely accepted. Notify your card company if you lose these cards. Be sure to take your card's international phone number with you so you can call them in case of a problem.

**Exchange Rates:** Always rely on the most recent information for currency exchange rates. Major newspapers list daily exchange rates or you can access [www.xe.com/ucc/](http://www.xe.com/ucc/). Before you leave the US practice converting prices in your head so that you know what an item really costs.

**Emergency Cash:** Before leaving, you should discuss a plan for acquiring more money during the program with your family. If a debit card is your primary source of money, this should be easy, as your parents can deposit money into your US account and you can withdraw it in your host country. –“Managing Your Money” adapted from *Texas Tech University Study Abroad*

## **Computers, Phones and Mail**

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### **Computers**

Computers and Wi-Fi Internet access vary widely abroad. This access may increase or decrease the need to regularly carry your personal computer. When you arrive at your main study abroad location, it is safest to keep your computer locked in your room.

### **Internet and Email**

Whenever accessing the Internet on a foreign network you should take every precaution to protect your personal information. Most importantly, be sure to log out of all websites and close browsers before leaving any computer.

Skype has become the best method of calling family and friends from overseas. If you are taking a laptop computer or smart phone, download the application before leaving and become familiar with how it works. <http://www.skype.com>

## Mobile Phones

Most smart phones (Apple iPhone, Blackberry, Android, etc.) now have international call and data capabilities, so fully research costs and coverage before departure. In most circumstances, it will be cost prohibitive to call the United States. Be aware that using your phone's data plan can quickly run up your expenses.

Ask your provider if your phone can be “unlocked for international use.” If you’re considering asking your provider about an “international plan,” keep in mind that the provider will likely suggest the most expensive option.

You may also consider purchasing a disposable, pre-paid phone to be used during your study abroad program.

When you arrive in your host country, ask or research how to acquire a phone and a SIM card that will work with the local network.

Visit this link for more information and suggestions:

<http://frugaltraveler.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/calling-home-for-even-less>

## Social Networking

Facebook and Twitter may be useful when communicating with family and friends back home. You can easily share stories and photos from your travels.

Social media is also a great resource to help you make connections prior to departing for study abroad. There are usually Facebook groups formed for specific programs that can offer students valuable information on a variety of topics, from academics to transportation to places to eat. Keep an eye out for Facebook groups for your study abroad program!

## International Mail

Sending packages overseas can be VERY expensive, so it is best to place bulky items in check luggage and fly back with them. Sending postcards is an excellent way to share a small bit of your experiences with family and friends. Make sure you have addresses stored away online or in a physical address book to reference quickly.

- “Computers, Phones and Mail” adapted from *Texas Tech University Study Abroad*

## Electricity and Electronics Abroad

To use your electrical devices while you're abroad you need to know two things: the type of electric current used in the country and what type of plug adapter (<http://electricaloutlet.org/electricaloutlettable>) will need.

## Plug Adapters

A plug adapter allows you to plug an appliance designed for one type of outlet into another type. There are many different types of plugs in use. A typical travel adapter kit usually contains about five adapters that can handle outlets in most countries. An adapter plug will not change the electric voltage coming out of the outlet. It will help you get plugged into another type of outlet. If your appliance does not handle different voltages, you will need a voltage converter.

TO DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Determine which mobile option (if any) is right for you</b></li><li>• <b>Suspend mobile coverage while abroad</b></li><li>• <b>Research international plans</b></li></ul>

### **Converters/Transformers**

Converters allow you to change voltage from one amount to another, for example from 110v in the US to 220v used in most of the rest of the world. Most computers and other electronics have built in converters (sometimes called transformers). You can verify that yours does by looking on the bottom, or on the small box on the cord to see if it says something like: 110v - 240v. Small electronics can operate with a 50-watt converter. **The Study Abroad office at SUNY Geneseo does not recommend using converters while abroad.**

Devices that use a lot of heat (hair dryers, hair straighteners, etc.) should be purchased abroad, or look for dual-voltage appliances to take with you. These can convert the electrical current by turning a switch on the device.

- "Electricity and Electronics Abroad" adapted from *Texas Tech University Study Abroad*

### **Medical Information**

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The Center for Disease Control's (CDC) website (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel>) will provide answers to most of your travel and country specific questions. It contains information on destinations, outbreaks, diseases, vaccinations, safe food and water, and more.

#### **Physical Examinations**

It is recommended to have general checkups before you go - medical, dental, and optical. This may be a requirement for some programs. Inform your doctors that you are going abroad, as well as the duration of the program.

#### **Immunizations**

The CDC breaks immunizations into two categories: "required" and "recommended". Consult the website to ensure you have received all "required" immunizations. It is also suggested that students obtain the immunizations categorized as "recommended" as well. A full series of vaccines can take up to 6 months, so find out now if you will need any. See [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) for the most current list of "required" and "recommended" vaccines for your country of study.

#### **Medical Emergencies Abroad**

If you have a medical emergency, go to the hospital. One of the first things you should do when you arrive in your host country is develop a personal emergency plan.

Always keep the on-site staff or faculty leader informed of any medical issues/emergencies you have, since they can often assist with the situation. In an emergency, contact the SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office Emergency Phone number at **1-585-245-5900** or SUNY Geneseo Police at **1-585-245-5222**.

#### **Prescription Medications**

The matter of prescription medication has many caveats. If you regularly take a prescription medication you will need to bring enough medication with you for the entire time you will be abroad. In most cases you will NOT be able to refill your prescriptions abroad, so you must be sure that you have enough medication. Talk with your doctor/health insurance company to see if you can take a semester's supply of the prescription with you. If not, contact UnitedHealthcare to talk about how to access your prescription while you are

abroad. You should ask your doctor for the generic name of your prescription, so, in case of an emergency, you can try to refill it overseas.

If you are carrying medication, bring a letter from your doctor to present to customs officials. You should always transport prescriptions in your carry-on luggage, in their original containers. Include your glasses or contact lens prescription. If you have it, bring an extra pair of glasses.

TO DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ask your doctor the generic name of your medication(s)</b></li><li>• <b>Bring a letter from your doctor to show to officials at customs</b></li><li>• <b>Store prescriptions in your carry-on luggage</b></li><li>• <b>If you wear eye glasses bring an extra pair</b></li></ul>

#### DO NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION BY MAIL.

If you must receive medication by mail, check with the consulate for your host country about the legality of receiving your medication abroad. The consulate should also be able to inform you of the proper documentation, such as a physician's prescription, necessary for shipment. The Electronic Embassy (<http://www.embassy.org>) has direct links to the websites of all the embassies of our host countries.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Study Abroad Office at 1-585-245-5546 or by email ([studyabroad@geneseo.edu](mailto:studyabroad@geneseo.edu)).

#### **Health Hints**

**Water-**The CDC Travel Health website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>) offers country-specific information about drinking water abroad. If it is at all questionable, stick to bottled water, canned/bottled carbonated drinks, tea or coffee. Also, beware of ice in places with questionable water supplies.

**Food-** The CDC Travel Health website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>) offers country-specific information about eating food abroad. Changes in diet can cause stomach and other health problems, so look out for this. In areas with poor sanitation and hygiene avoid street vendors, milk and milk products, raw fruits, raw vegetables, and raw fish and meat.

**Respiratory Sickness-**While traveling, you will probably be more susceptible to colds, coughs, etc., so remember that the best safeguard is a balanced diet, liquids, rest, and common sense.

**Other-**If you happen to pick up an infection while you're abroad, whether it be a virus, a bacterium, or a parasite, you may not get sick right away, but weeks after your return. Some diseases can take up to six months to show up. If you get sick, tell your physician what countries you have visited and when. This information might prove to be helpful in making a diagnosis.

#### **First-Aid Kit**

Consider taking a well-stocked first-aid kit. Some items to consider (depending on where you are going) are: sunscreen, bandages, flashlight, cough/cold medicine, insect repellent, sterile pads, sterile wipes, adhesive tape, aspirin or other pain relief medication, antacid, anti-diarrhea tablets, anti-

malarial medication, feminine protection, and rubber/latex gloves. Always carry plenty of clean drinking water or a sealed beverage.

- “Medical Information” adapted from *Santa Clara University Study Abroad*

## Health Insurance

### **SUNY International Study Abroad Health Insurance**

SUNY mandates that all students have adequate health insurance coverage while travelling abroad on a SUNY sponsored program. Students going on Geneseo-sponsored programs are required to purchase SUNY sponsored medical insurance. This insurance is provided by United Healthcare Health Insurance. The cost of insurance depends on the duration of your program. Please see the program costs sections of the program's webpage for the exact cost of your insurance coverage.

The Study Abroad Office will register you for SUNY International Study Abroad Health Insurance. Once registered, you will receive an email from UnitedHealthcare prompting you to create an account on their website. It is very important that you create your account before you leave the United States.

Once you create your account you can print your health insurance card and explore the services found on the student portal. In the event that you do need medical attention while abroad and have to go to an out-of-network healthcare provider, you should contact UnitedHealthcare to set up direct billing or download a claim form from your portal.

- *SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad*

This policy provides comprehensive sickness and accident insurance and emergency travel medical insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation and repatriation of remains, which is generally not provided by domestic insurance companies. UnitedHealthcare has also identified a network of doctors worldwide who will provide treatment. In addition, UnitedHealthcare will set-up direct billing on your behalf and will assist students in establishing treatment for ongoing medical conditions while abroad (including doctor visits and continuing medications).

After you have been enrolled and have received your insurance card, you should go to

<https://www.uhcsr.com/>. Sign into the site to obtain comprehensive information related to this plan, including city health profiles and translations of medical terms and phrases.

For coverage details, please review the [SUNY International Study Abroad Health Insurance Brochure](#), read through the [Health & Safety Information](#) on our study abroad page or contact the SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office at 585-245-5546 or by email at [studyabroad@geneseo.edu](mailto:studyabroad@geneseo.edu).



## Health and Safety

### **Mental Health**

Studying abroad presents new stresses that students may not have encountered before, and existing mental health conditions may be exacerbated by international travel. Be sure to read the information in this handbook on culture shock. Be familiar with the symptoms of depression so you can identify problem signs and seek help if needed. Speaking another language all the time and adjusting to cultural differences can be tiring. Take care of yourself and be patient and flexible.

Sometimes students find that the stress of adjusting to another country can make it difficult to manage a mental health condition that they were managing well in the US (e.g., eating disorder, depression). Other students may experience the onset of a mental health issue for the first time while abroad.

It is important to be aware of the possible signs/symptoms of the following mental health conditions:

### Signs of Depression

1. Persistent feelings of sadness or anxiety
2. Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities that lasts for more than 2 weeks.
3. Changes in appetite (decrease or increase)
4. Insomnia or Oversleeping
5. Loss of Energy or Fatigue
6. Restlessness or Irritability
7. Feelings of worthlessness or persistent guilt
8. Difficulty thinking, concentrating remembering or making decisions
9. Ongoing body aches and pains or problems with digestion unrelated to physical disease.
10. Increased drinking, cigarette smoking, or using prescription or illicit drugs.
11. Thoughts of death or suicide.

### Signs of Anxiety (Panic) Attacks

1. Chest feels tight
2. Heart races
3. Dizziness or lightheadedness
4. Choking
5. Feel as if the end is near
6. Shortness of breath or tightness in the throat
7. Sweating
8. Trembling or shaking
9. Nausea
10. Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet
11. Hot flashes or chills
12. Sense of unreality or dreamlike sensations
13. Fear of losing control, doing something embarrassing, going “crazy” or dying

### Signs of Eating Disorders

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**Anorexia (a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss):** Students tend to be more introverted, below normal body weight.

Most noticeable trait: thin arms and legs.

**Bulimia (a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by a cycle of bingeing and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting designed to undo or compensate for the effects of binge eating):** High achievers that tend to be more extroverted; person maintains a normal to 10-pound overweight appearance.

1. High need for control, esp. regarding food intake
2. Extreme consumption behaviors: feast or famine
3. Excessive weight gain/loss
4. Making excuses for not going to meals
5. Playing with food- giving the illusion of consumption
6. Excessive exercise
7. Fainting spells
8. Sore throat
9. Chapped fingers

- “Signs of Mental Health Conditions” adapted from *Whittier College Study Abroad*

- “Anorexia/Bulimia Definitions” adapted from *National Eating Disorders Website*

If you find that you have a problem that is becoming more severe rather than getting better, ask for help immediately.

For more information on preparing for study abroad with a mental health condition visit Mobility International USA’s website: <http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/mentalhealthprep>

Finally, the SUNY Geneseo Department of Health and Counseling offer a wealth of information and resources at [http://www.geneseo.edu/health/counseling\\_services\\_home](http://www.geneseo.edu/health/counseling_services_home)

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Attitudes toward alcohol and drug use vary considerably from culture to culture. Remember, you are subject to the laws of your host country; and the countries you intend to visit; be sure to understand the laws surrounding drugs and alcohol. Although some countries have more liberal laws concerning drugs and alcohol, in many countries the laws and penalties are more severe. You are an ambassador of SUNY Geneseo and the United States. You will be held to SUNY Geneseo’s Code of Conduct, which you affirmed online.

If you are of legal age to drink alcohol in your host country, do so responsibly. Serving sizes and alcohol content vary by country, which, when coupled with your new environment, may cause alcohol to affect you differently than you are used to. Be cautious and don’t over indulge. Never let your beverage out of your sight- drugging drinks happens throughout the world.

Possession and use of illegal drugs will result in your immediate dismissal from your study abroad program. Drugs account for one-third of US citizens arrested overseas, and penalties can be severe. Remember, never agree to carry a suitcase or package for someone else- you do not want to become an unknowing drug smuggler.

- Adapted from *University of Missouri Study Abroad*

## **Sexual Health**

Doing what you can to stay in good health is essential whether you're at home or abroad. Eat well, sleep enough, exercise regularly, and practice responsible sexual behavior to guard yourself against sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies, and undesirable social consequences.

Incidence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STI) are much higher in some parts of the world than they are in the US, and these conditions know no boundaries of country, color, or sexuality. Know your HIV and STI status, learn safe sex practices, and communicate openly with sexual partners.

If you need health care overseas, choose a provider who is sensitive to sexual and gender issues if that could be relevant to your needs.

If you identify as transgender, research options for continuing treatments while abroad and restrictions on traveling with certain prescription medication.

-Adapted from *CIEE Study Abroad*

## **Sexual Assault**

Sexual assault is defined as any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient (defined by the *US Department of Justice*). It is estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime (*United Nations*).

This type of violence is not confined to any particular political or economic system, but it is prevalent in every society in the world. It cuts across boundaries of wealth, race and culture. (*UN Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women*).

For students studying abroad, the Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA) is a program that specifically address the needs for prevention and response to American sexual assault survivors overseas. The SASHAA website provides resources and support in the form of emergency contacts and counseling and legal services for victims of sexual assault.

For more information on SASHAA, please visit the website: <http://sashaa.org/>

The Geneseo Code of Conduct still applies to incidents of sexual assault abroad.

## **Law Abroad**

You are subject to the laws in the country where you are studying and the countries you are planning to visit. Information can be found throughout either the Host Institution or Faculty-Led Study Abroad Student Handbook ([http://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/forms-and-downloads](http://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/forms-and-downloads)).

If you break local laws while abroad, there is very little that the Study Abroad Office, or the US Government can do for you.



Legal protections and rights that are taken for granted in the US are left behind when you depart. US embassies and consulates are very limited in the assistance they can provide. They can provide the names of attorneys and doctors, but they can't provide financial assistance in paying for legal or medical services, nor can they intervene on your behalf in the administration of justice in the host country. Bail provisions as you know them in the US are rare in other countries. Pretrial detention without bail is quite common in other countries.



Prison conditions are often deplorable in comparison to conditions in the US, and the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” is not necessarily a tenet of the legal system abroad. It is your responsibility to become familiar with and obey the host country laws.

### **Preventative Care**

For your general well-being, it is advantageous to become familiar with your program site as quickly as possible. You should also familiarize yourself with cities you will be visiting before you begin to explore them.

Research the possible diseases or conditions present in your host country. The CDC website provides a list of conditions that travelers may be at risk of, including diseases spread through mosquito bites and prevention tips (<http://www.cdc.gov/features/stopmosquitoes/>).

### **Travel Guides**

You may want to purchase travel guides before leaving the US; they may be more expensive or unavailable in your host country.

These guides are the most popular among travelers:

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

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

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

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

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

Cities in other countries, just like US cities, have their safe and unsafe neighborhoods. You can find out what areas to avoid by asking at an information booth in a train station or airport when you arrive, or by asking your on-site primary contact person. Use your common sense and do not take risks.

Be cautious when meeting new people. Don't give out your address and phone number to strangers or divulge too much personal information.

When withdrawing money from an ATM, go with a friend who will help you stay alert to your surroundings. Pick your ATM locations for safety, not just convenience.

Do not attract attention to yourself by speaking English loudly in public places or wearing expensive-looking jewelry. These mannerisms will likely attract thieves, or worse. If someone does try to rob or mug you, remember that your life is always more important than any of your possessions. Let them go and run away if necessary.

Taxis are not safe everywhere, especially late at night. In some places, women do not ride in taxis by themselves. Anyone can be robbed or assaulted by taxi drivers. In many cities, taxis have become so dangerous that people go out of their way to call for and identify reputable taxis. It is hard to resist the temptation of just flagging down a taxi on the street, but the wait is worth it. When you call a taxi, make sure to get the identification number or other information so you can be sure to pick the right one.

In general, do not frequent well-known US tourist hangouts (e.g., restaurants, bars, clubs and associations, consulates and embassies). You should especially avoid these places if there is a terrorist threat, the US has just participated in a military action or there is a warning about an impending terrorist threat. During times of international crisis, many US embassies and consulates are picketed and threatened.

Do not hitchhike. Many people may tell you that it is perfectly safe- it is not.

Do not be afraid to be assertive when confronted with unwanted situations. Do not let anyone push you into taking risks. If you feel unsafe, you probably are, so listen to your instincts.

**Some factors that increase risk are being:**

- Intoxicated
- Alone at night, especially after midnight
- Alone in an isolated or high-crime area
- Asleep in an unlocked place
- Out after a local curfew
- New to the country
- Unable to speak the local language
- In a new place and making new friends

-“Health and Safety” adapted from *University of Missouri Study Abroad*

## **Emergency Abroad**

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In the event of an emergency while studying abroad, it is important to know the following contacts and the order in which to call them in such an emergency. The order of who to call is directly linked to who has the created sphere of influence. Often times, parents/guardians are not the most informed about a site abroad.

**1<sup>st</sup>:** Emergency Services (if needed)-please note that emergency service numbers (such as 911 in the US) vary from country to country. It is the responsibility of the student to find out the emergency numbers of the countries and cities they intend to visit. Different than the US, in some places, there are different phone numbers of ambulance, fire, and police. So know the appropriate phone number for your study abroad site.



The US State Department has compiled this helpful list: [http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/students-abroad/pdfs/911\\_ABROAD.pdf](http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/students-abroad/pdfs/911_ABROAD.pdf)

**2<sup>nd</sup>:** International Office of Host Institution or faculty leader

**3<sup>rd</sup>:** Geneseo International Office (or UP after hours)

**4<sup>th</sup>:** Parents/Guardians

How to stay in touch with Geneseo while you're away:

- SUNY Geneseo Police
  - +1 585 245 5222
  - To reach Study Abroad after-hours
- Skype: [geneseo.global.programs](https://www.geneseo.edu/global/programs)
- Use multiple communication media

### **Incident Reporting**

After taking the required steps to immediately respond to an emergency, all students are expected to report the incident using the Maxient Incident Report Form:

<https://www.geneseo.edu/standup/report-incident-form-page>. To ensure that the incident is recorded as taking place abroad, select "Study Abroad Program" as the location of the incident.

This form is sent to the Study Abroad Office, University Police Department, and the office of Student Conduct & Community Standards. All information submitted through Incident Report Form will be kept confidential and private by the University to the extent allowed by law.

Note, the Incident Report Form is reviewed during regular business hours and should NOT be used if you need an immediate response. For immediate assistance, contact the University Police Department at +1-585-245-5222.

## **Identity Abroad**

SUNY Geneseo believes all students should have the opportunity to study abroad because it can be one of the most profound ways to grow academically, professionally and personally during your time in college. The University understands all students have diverse interests, needs and challenges when it comes to studying outside the US, and it strives to provide the means to make study abroad accessible for all students. Our goal is to support you by providing resources that will empower you to take your different backgrounds, talents and experiences to a new community abroad; to bring new knowledge and skills gained abroad back to your home institution and to become a successful global leader.

With that said, it is important to acknowledge that aspects of your identity may be challenged or confronted more or less aggressively than in the US. It is important to educate yourself about what

you can expect, and Geneseo has compiled resources for students of many identity groups at Geneseo Study Abroad's Diversity Abroad webpage ([http://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/diversity-resources](http://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/diversity-resources)).

### **Women Abroad**

At the risk of sounding alarmist or perpetuating unfair stereotypes, women should be more careful about where they go, when they go and with whom they go than they may be accustomed to at home. This is not to say that they shouldn't go out and establish relationships of various kinds. It is to warn them about casual encounters, possible misreading of non-verbal cues, potential real misunderstandings owing to language difficulties and inaccurate notions about US women in the minds of people abroad.

In some areas abroad, US citizens' generally outgoing manner, especially on the part of young women, can be grossly misinterpreted: a friendly smile and warm "hello" on the streets of Rome could be easily interpreted as something more than mere friendliness. Therefore, it is wise to be more formal and restrained in social contacts. Uncomfortable situations can often be avoided by taking simple precautions. Women may want to dress more conservatively than they might at home. Although shorter skirts and tank tops may be comfortable, they may also encourage unwanted attention.

In many countries, if a woman is out alone — even during the day visiting a museum — solitude may be construed as an invitation for company. In some countries, being alone in a room with a person of the opposite gender can be misinterpreted as an invitation to be intimate. Take cues from the local women on behavior. Talk to people about what to do in certain situations before they arise. Asking older women for their help is often recommended as an effective tactic. Avoid walking alone at night or in questionable neighborhoods. Women should also be wary of going to unfamiliar places, like beaches and parks, with people whom they do not know well. Rape, especially date rape, is as much a reality abroad as it is in the US.

Women should not carry mace unless they are absolutely certain it is necessary and that carrying it is not in violation of the laws of their host country.

### **Men Abroad**

Men should prepare themselves for different gender norms. For example, in Scandinavian countries, women typically are more assertive and there is greater gender equality. In some cultures, there may be different norms for the treatment of women, and students may witness behavior that would be considered harassment and gender discrimination by US standards. Some cultures may have customs for friendship between members of the same or opposite sex that differ from what men from the US are used to. Men should behave conservatively at first until they figure out the best behavior.

### **LGBTQ Students**

Acceptance of the LGBTQ community varies by country; some countries are more open and progressive than the US, while in other countries it is illegal to be homosexual. Take time to research the host country and consider the following:

- Host country's cultural norms and laws related to the LGBTQ community.
- Deciding how and when you will express your sexual orientation and the potential impact(s) of sharing or not.

- Health resources abroad.
- Housing options and living with a host family.
- Challenges of gender expression and potential challenges when showing travel documents, such as passports.

**Resources for LGBTQ students:**

**NAFSA Rainbow special interest group:** <http://www.rainbowsig.org/>

**International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association:** <http://ilga.org/>

**National Center for Transgender Equality:** <http://transequality.org/issues/travel>

**Transportation Security Administration:** <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/transgender-travelers>

**Students of Color**

While study abroad can be rewarding, it can also be challenging for students of color and it is important to be familiar with the prevailing attitudes and stereotypes toward US citizens, as well as US citizens of different racial and ethnic populations that exist in one's host country. For example, students may be part of the racial/ethnic majority, but locals may still consider them to outsiders because they are US citizens. Identities may also be assumed to be different than what students claim because of preconceived notions of race and ethnicity. Or there may be different stereotypes than those that exist in the US that some may find frustrating.

However, having experiences in the US of stereotypes and preconceived notions may assist in some students' adaptability as compared to students of majority groups who are not accustomed to this experience. Students may also find that their identities as people of color can facilitate conversations and attract people from the host culture who may have never interacted with individuals who look like them; this could bring positive and negative feelings depending on one's own experience.

All students experience study abroad differently, and while they may or may not encounter discrimination of some sort, they should try to plan ahead for how they might reach out to their existing support networks if they need them. Geneseo has resources that students can still access while abroad, and they will also have new networks in their host country that can help them understand the local culture. The most important thing is to make sure that students talk to someone if they are struggling- they may gain new insight into their host culture that helps them learn how to respond to future challenges.

**Resources for students of color:**

**Diversity Abroad:** <http://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-inclusion/racial-ethnic-minority-students-abroad>

**The PLATO Project:** <http://allabroad.us/>

**Access International Education (University of Pittsburgh):** <http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/aie/students/>  
 -"Identity Abroad" adapted from *University of Missouri Study Abroad*

**For more information on Identity Abroad visit SUNY Geneseo Study Abroad Office's Diversity Abroad page:** [http://www.geneseo.edu/study\\_abroad/diversity-resources](http://www.geneseo.edu/study_abroad/diversity-resources)

## Traveling Abroad

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### Get Educated

When traveling away from your host location, it is important to familiarize yourself with the social, political, and economic situation in the places you are planning to visit. Additionally, some places require all visitors (including tourists) to obtain a visa before planning to visit.

Country-specific information can be found on the US Department of State website:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html>

You should also visit the local Embassy website: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>

Do you need a visa to visit your destination? Go to:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/americans-traveling-abroad.html>

Consider health requirements for where you intend to visit. Country-specific information is available on the CDC Travel Health website: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

### Register Your Trip

All students traveling away from their host location should register their side trips on the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Details about the STEP are included in the section titled, "Registering with the State Department."

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

### Pack Light

Bring only what you truly need. Also remember that you can buy many of the same things abroad (shampoo, clothes, etc.) that take up a lot of space when traveling. Travel-sized toiletries and over-the-counter medications can come in handy. A good rule to consider: bring half as many clothes as you think you'll need. Remember to take a smaller backpack/daypack for sightseeing; most hotels will allow you to leave your luggage locked up for the day.

### "Common Sense" Security

Attracting attention to yourself as a tourist (loud behavior, carrying wads of cash, etc.) can target you for pick-pocketing. Always keep your bag/backpack/purse in front of you, preferably with one hand on it, and an eye on your surroundings. Money belts/neck wallets are a great idea. Never pack tickets or passports in an outer pocket of your luggage or other easily accessible location. Consider luggage locks even on backpacks and other carry-ons. Also, keep copies of all valuable documents (i.e. passport) in a safe place in your new "home" as well as with your family in the US.

### Discount Fares

Find out if your host country offers special discount cards for traveling and/or passes such as EuroRail, BritRail, and InterRail; options will vary depending upon host country and your planned visitation spots. If you plan to buy a rail pass, you must do it before you leave the States, as it is difficult or impossible to buy them abroad.

Recommended student/cheap airlines include <http://www.openjet.com>, <http://www.easyjet.com>, and <http://www.ryanair.com>. Your on-site program staff at your study abroad location may be able to recommend cheap local airlines or other preferred methods of travel.

Also, the Student Travel Agency (STA) has offices worldwide, as well as a website at [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com). You can also try Student Universe for travel deals (<http://www.studentuniverse.com>).

The International Student ID Card (ISIC) is helpful for travel and other discounts, such as museums and hotels. It also provides some supplemental insurance. The card is available from STA Travel, although some programs provide them to students as part of the program fees. You can purchase an ISIC card directly online at <https://www.isic.org/>

- Adapted from *Santa Clara University Study Abroad*

### **Inform**

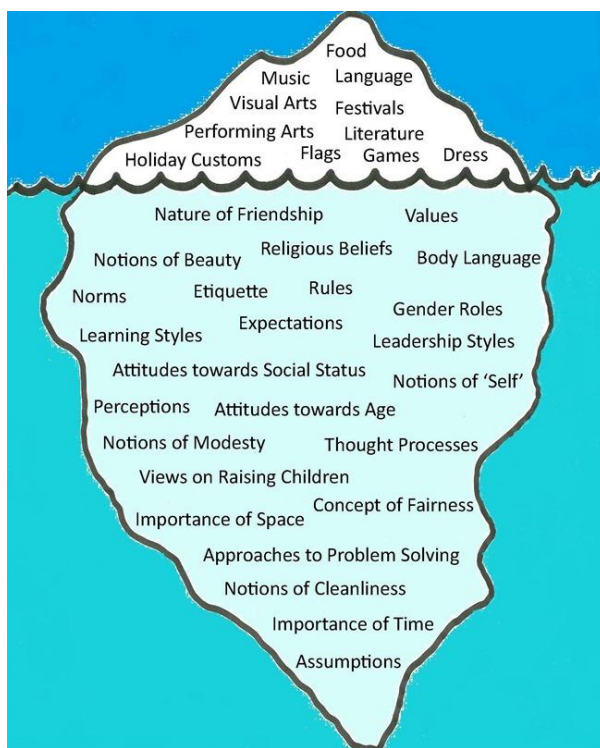
When traveling away from your host city/location, be sure to notify: family/friends, the faculty leader, the International Office of your host university, your host family and/or the Geneseo Study Abroad Office.

### **Passport**

It is important to bring your passport with you when traveling outside of your host institution/city. During class time and while on campus, keep your photocopied passport with you but leave your passport in a safe location in your room for the normal day to day of your study abroad experience.

## **Culture and Study Abroad**

Traveling abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. Or, it can turn out to be a series of bewildering and frustrating incidents that leave you longing for home. Aside from the basic preparation of the "how" and "wheres" of your trip, it is valuable to also take some time to investigate the "what am I likely to encounter" --that is, the things that will happen to you as you mingle with people who have values, traits, and characteristics which are different from your own.



Culture has been aptly compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the water line, so culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be suspected, imagined, or intuited. Also like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole.

### **Cultural Differences and Culture Shock**

We are surrounded by elements in our own culture that influence who we are and how we relate to the world. Because we have grown up with this culture, we are comfortable with it. Our values and attitudes about "who we are" and how things should be have been shaped by our experiences in our native culture. What happens when we suddenly lose cues and symbols that orient us to situations of

daily life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures, and words are no longer familiar? The psychological discomfort that we feel in this foreign situation is commonly known as "culture shock."

### **Reactions to Cultural Differences**

Culture shock is a logical reaction to differences we encounter in a foreign culture. Luckily, it is only one phase in the process of getting into the culture of a new country. The various phases that you might find yourself going through in this process include (in chronological order):

1. Being fascinated with all the new things you are experiencing
2. Feeling uncomfortable because you don't belong
3. Rejecting the host culture and people as being strange (culture shock)
4. Learning to decipher unfamiliar behavior and customs
5. Accepting and enjoying the host culture

Our emotional reactions to these various phases will influence how we relate to local citizens. Naturally, being excited and fascinated with host country's behavior and customs will help to pave the way for positive interaction.

Conversely, acting hostile and aggressive toward those "strange" and un-American customs will do little more than perpetuate the "ugly American image" (<http://tinyurl.com/od9l4vr>) and cause people from your host country to want to avoid US Citizens.

### **Preparing for Cultural Differences**

Read as much about where you are going as possible to gain some perspective. Your research materials might include guidebooks, international newspapers and magazines, novels, plays, poetry, and political and economic analyses. Talk with international students and veteran travelers who have been where you want to go. The Study Abroad Office has travel tips from returnees, many of whom are willing to be contacted and give advice in person.

Have a clear idea of what you specifically want to accomplish by going abroad. One experienced traveler advises, ". . . no matter what, keep in mind that you are there to enjoy yourself. If you enjoy sitting in a cafe watching the world go by, do that. Do whatever you enjoy and not what someone says you will enjoy or what everyone else is doing."

### **It might be helpful to try to figure out what you want to accomplish in your travels by answering the following questions:**

1. Who am I? (Awareness of your personal beliefs and attitudes.)
2. Where do I come from? (Awareness of US cultural beliefs and customs.)
3. Where am I going? (Awareness of host country's culture customs, behaviors, and values.)
4. What am I going for? (Interest in other countries, to see famous sights, to leave the US, to impress your friends, to practice a foreign language.)
5. What am I willing to consider? (How open will you be to different ways of doing things? Will you "try on" some of the behavior and values of the foreign people?)
6. Am I going for personal academic career goals?



## **Getting Over Culture Shock**

Knowledgeable travelers advise handling culture shock with adaptability, a sense of humor, and a lot of common sense. Give yourself some time to become accustomed to the cultural differences. You may even find that many of the differences are a pleasant change from the US way of life. If you have an active interest in finding meaningful patterns for unfamiliar customs, it expands your horizons and adds the wealth of another culture to your experience.

## **Successful Remedies**

- Exist in the moment: Focus on where you are
- Be active: Go for a walk, the gym, or play a sport
- Be social: Grab some friends and go to the café
- Be reflective: Write in a journal or blog
- Be patient: Keep your sense of humor

## **False Cures**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Skype
- Calling home

## **Past travelers advise:**

"...You can go with everything- strangeness, the inconvenience, the different customs- or you can fight it all, and be miserable in the very place where others are having the time of their life. . ."

"...When you're there, try not to compare everything with home. . ."

## **How Cultural Differences Relate to You**

Discovering cultural differences and experiencing "culture shock" are both powerful learning tools. Through these one gains a high degree of self-understanding and personal growth. Past travelers have claimed " . . . by traveling abroad you get a great education in what it means to be an US citizen and also in how the rest of the world's population lives and thinks." ". . . Don't try to find a 'little America' wherever you go. By doing so, you'll miss so many of the beautiful experiences your host country has to offer.

Remember, there may be difficult and even frustrating times for you overseas. But travelers have noticed," . . .bad moments (days?) are quickly forgotten, and even the bad experiences are priceless."

## **Coping Skills**

1. Learn the language, it will be easier to communicate.
2. Listen carefully to what other people are saying. This will also help you communicate.
3. Find a place where you feel comfortable and spend time there.
4. Have certain times during the week or day when you do not think about your studies or problems, just have fun.
5. Begin some kind of regular exercise program. Even walking a few days each week helps. It is important to maintain regular life patterns, for example eating meals at regular times, sleeping regularly, and exercising regularly.
6. Talk things over with friends and counselors, try to create moral support.

7. When problems seem to be building up, mentally step back from them. Divide your problems up, understand each one, and work on them one at a time.
  8. When headaches and stomachaches become a constant problem--realize that these maybe signs of emotional problems, not just physical problems. If medical doctors and medication do not work it might be time to see a counselor. The Geneseo Study Abroad Office can help or make referrals.
  9. When you begin to feel depressed- Ask yourself, "What did I expect?" "Why?" "Was my expectation reasonable?"
  10. Learn the culture and customs of the country you are in and respect them.
  11. Disregard your old assumptions and expectations. Be open to learning new things. Explore new ways of liking and compare these new ways to your own. Become more aware of both your values and attitudes and those of the host country.
  12. Adjusting to a new culture requires a good amount of re-examination of your own values and outlooks. Try to do that as you live in the new society
- “Dealing with Cultural Differences” adapted from *University of St. Thomas Study Abroad*

## **Making the Most of Your Experience**

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### **Explore the Territory**

Get a map and venture out. Get lost and ask directions. Ride the public transportation. Discover old or important structures, stare, and ask admiring questions (people love to talk to interested newcomers). In doing this your language skills will improve, your ear will grow keen, and you'll feel right at home.

### **Pick up the Silent Language**

Go sit in the park or a sidewalk cafe, stand in a market or store, and watch. How do people greet one another, visit, and say goodbye? How do friends act? How does one show respect? What types of mannerism do the people have? What seems to be typical dress for the different age groups? Can you spot an US citizen? What are the US citizen giveaways in dress, movement, voice, and gesture?

After noticing these different things chat with your Fellow study abroad friends about what you've observed, and then with your national or international friends and see if they agree or disagree.

Try to behave like a national, using the same silent language, blending into the culture. You might not be mistaken for a native, but that is okay. Compare the way you are treated when you act in this manner and when you act like a Tourist.

### **Do Not Limit Yourself to Other Study Abroad Friends**

If you hope to form acquaintanceships -much less friendships- in the short time you will be in your host country, you must open yourself up to others. The more you speak English, and go out with fellow Study abroad students the more you send out the message that you prefer Study abroad student friends. If you cannot stand isolation, avoid the insulation created by an all study abroad student gang. Avoid moving about in "parties." Go out with only one or two friends and venture to meet nationals and make new friends.

### **Master that language**

Force yourself into situations where you must talk -no matter how scary, difficult, or awkward it may seem. You'll be surprised how fast you win the trust and respect of nationals when you attempt to and can speak their language. Practice makes perfect!

### **Keep a Journal**

Keep a daily record or at least weekly review of what you observe, experience, learn, feel, and how you react to it all. Look for events or sensations that provoke a strong emotional response. Be a social scientist and observe yourself, along with everything and everyone surrounding you -with an open mind, of course.

### **Just Ask**

Ignorance is not bliss. If you do not understand something, are curious, or need any help, just ask someone. People's responsiveness may surprise you. Plus, questions are great conversation starters.

### **Blend In and Do Not Fight It**

Plunge right in -do not wait to adjust before you participate, you adjust by participating. Your host country has its own culture with its own traditions, customs, manners, and written and unwritten laws -immerse yourself. If you do all of the above, you cannot help but feel like a part of your host country.

Talk to as many people as possible, they have a lot to offer and you have a lot to learn.

- "Making the Most of Your Experience" adapted from *University of St. Thomas Study Abroad*

## **Re Entry**

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### **Cultural Adjustment-Coming Home**

Returning home can be more difficult than you thought. Perhaps more will have changed over the time you've spent abroad. There are many practical (and some very personal) details that you should keep in mind as you prepare for "re entry".

### **Preparing to Depart**

#### **Return Anxiety**

As you near the completion of your studies and face the prospect of returning home, anxieties can intrude. Strangely enough, the student who has adjusted the best to the new culture will often find the return home difficult. Most students realize how much they have changed since leaving home and wonder if it is possible "to fit back in." You will once again be leaving friends and what has become a safe and familiar environment. These feelings may be compounded by changes that have occurred at home during your absence.

#### **Practical Preparation**

- Confirm your flight arrangements.
- Get last-minute gifts or photographs that you know you will want in the future.
- Gather information for future class projects. You won't be able to find the same information (newspaper articles, books, pamphlets, etc.) back in Geneseo.
- Send your books home if the host country offers a cheaper book rate.
- Don't save packing until the last minute. It can make your last hours more stressful.

#### **Emotional Preparation**

- Think carefully about the ways this experience has affected your thinking, political views, interpersonal relationships, priorities, view of time, community identification, etc.
  - List some reasons why you look forward to coming home: Remember the things you pined for when you left.
  - Spend time with your host family and friends that you know you will miss.
  - Say a proper "Goodbye" to everyone and everything you'll miss. This includes people, friends, places and memories.
  - Be proud of how far you've come and what you've accomplished, and think of ways you can apply your new knowledge and experience to your life back in the US You are now a citizen of the world, and your horizons have permanently expanded. No one can take that away from you.
- Adapted from *Santa Clara University Study Abroad*

## **Back Home**

### **Reverse Culture Shock**

On return, students commonly experience "reverse culture shock" to different degrees. Past participants have expressed that re-entry can be more challenging than dealing with cultural adjustment abroad.

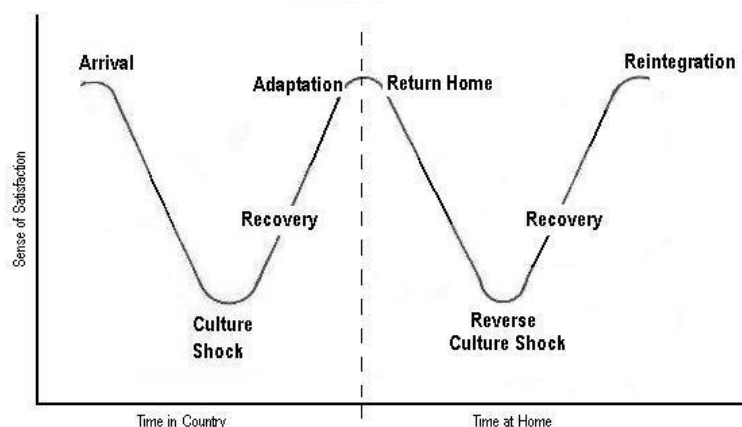
Returning home can produce mixed emotions:

- Excitement and satisfaction in telling friends and family about your adventures abroad, followed by a sense of disappointment when people's attention wanes.
- Happiness to see friends and family again, but sadness at leaving new friends.

A reassuring familiarity with US culture combined with a degree of alienation from your native country that now seems slightly unfamiliar when colored by the experiences and ideas you have gained while abroad. Just like culture shock itself, reverse culture shock is a process that you will slowly progress through and learn from.

### **The following ideas may help you to adapt more quickly to being home:**

- Discuss your feelings with sympathetic family and friends or people who also have studied abroad.
- Find new ways to continue your involvement in the international sphere and build on the new skills you have obtained abroad by joining internationally oriented clubs and events.
- Participate in the GOLD: Global Engagement Series.
- Become involved in groups or clubs that will utilize any skills acquired during your stay such as language conversation groups (contact the language department or political groups).
- Become a Study Abroad Intern. Meet and get to know international exchange students at Geneseo and share your experience abroad with Geneseo students planning to study abroad.
- Participate in Study Abroad events, a student panel on study abroad, or volunteer to help with study abroad fairs or orientation for students going abroad.
- Participate in a debriefing interview with a Study Abroad advisor to share details of your



experience. Write about your experience and share photos for the Study Abroad Website.

- Volunteer to teach English with a local immigrant community, Red Cross, or public library.
- Think about your next overseas experience; stop by the Geneseo Study Abroad Office to research other study abroad, exchange, or faculty-led programs or options for internships, or volunteer opportunities overseas.
- Research international career opportunities. Resources are available in Career Services.
- Consider joining an international or intercultural volunteer program such as Peace Corps or AmeriCorps

-Adapted from *Washington State University Study Abroad*

## Additional Resources

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### Pre-departure Health, Safety and General Preparation

1. The Center for Disease Control: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>
2. World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/en/>
3. Passport Health: <https://www.passporthealthusa.com/>
4. Michigan State University's Study Abroad "Student Guide":  
<http://studyabroad.isp.msu.edu/studenthandbk/>
5. Department of State webpage for student travelers: [studentsabroad.state.gov](http://studentsabroad.state.gov)
6. The Center for Global Education's "Study Abroad Student Handbook":  
<http://www.studentsabroad.com/handbook/introduction.php?country=General>
7. Generation Study Abroad's "Student Resources" page:  
<http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad/Students>
8. NAFSA's "Financial Aid for Study Abroad" page:  
[http://www.nafsa.org/Explore\\_International\\_Education/For\\_Students/Financial\\_Aid\\_For\\_Study\\_Abroad/Financial\\_Aid\\_for\\_Study\\_Abroad\\_An\\_Undergraduate\\_Student\\_s\\_Resource/](http://www.nafsa.org/Explore_International_Education/For_Students/Financial_Aid_For_Study_Abroad/Financial_Aid_for_Study_Abroad_An_Undergraduate_Student_s_Resource/)

### Culture Preparation

1. "What's Up With Culture?": <http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>
2. Santa Clara University's Study Abroad "Culture Preparation":  
<http://www.scu.edu/studyabroad/orientation/upload/General-Handout-General-Preparation.pdf>
3. Culture Crossing Guide: <http://guide.culturecrossing.net/>
4. The Peace Corps' "Culture Matters Workbook":  
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/interactives/culture-matters-workbook/>

### Re Entry

1. The "Life After Study Abroad" website is a useful resource for study abroad returnees:  
<http://www.lifeafterstudyabroad.com/>
2. SIT's Re Entry Toolkit:  
<http://www.worldlearning.org/documents/worldlearning/studyabroad-reentry-toolkit.pdf>

### Traveling Abroad

1. A list of useful travel planning Apps to use while abroad:  
<http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/8-essential-travel-planning-apps-to-take-abroad/>
2. Visit the State Department websites for the US and other countries:
  - a. US State Department (<http://www.state.gov/>)
  - b. Canada State Department (<http://www.canada.ca/en/gov/dept/>)
  - c. Australia State Department (<http://dfat.gov.au/pages/default.aspx>)
3. CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
4. US State Study Abroad: <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>