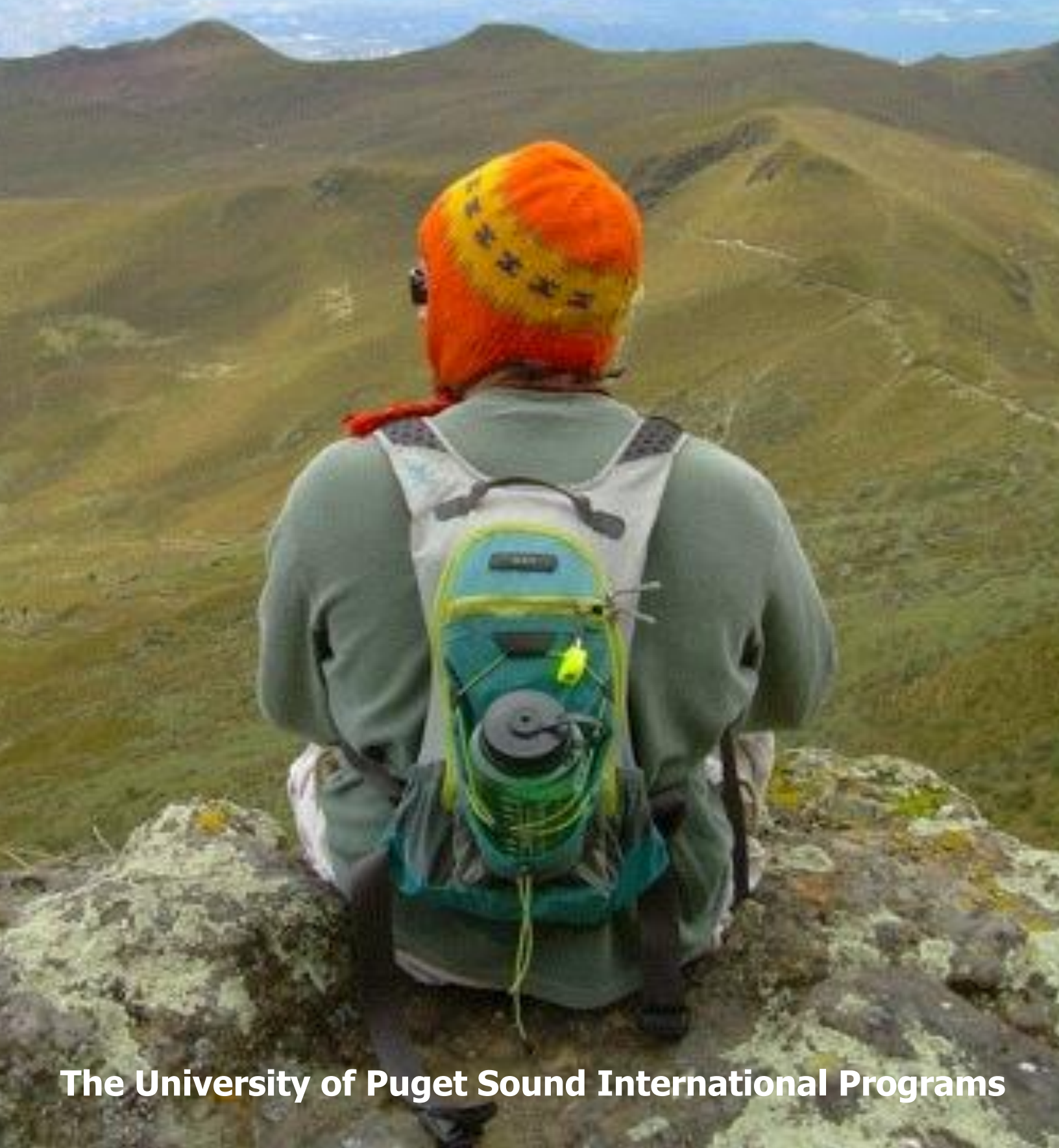


STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK



The University of Puget Sound International Programs

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“While seeing travel as a political act enables us to challenge our society to do better, it also shows us how much we have to be grateful for, to take responsibility for, and to protect.”

-Rick Steves, *Travel As a Political Act*

GOALS FOR STUDY ABROAD

1. Have a meaningful experience(s) in your host country.
2. Be open to participate, experience, and share in the daily life of the host country.
3. Reflect on the good fortune and privilege that allowed you to have the support and financial resources to spend time abroad at this stage in your life.
4. Challenge your personal and intellectual comfort zone.
5. Bring some values and beliefs back with you and leave some in your host culture.
6. Experience education in another country.
7. Appreciate your host culture, the people, and communicate it.
8. Learn to laugh at yourself and have fun!

What are your specific goals for your time abroad? What will you do to accomplish your goals?

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE



*The information in this section is meant to be very general. You will receive more specific information from your program directly.

IMPORTANT ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Things to consider before you leave:

- What bills do I have while I am away? How will they get paid?
- Do I have a power of attorney to handle my financial matters while I am away?
- What is the status of my relationship with my significant other and how will a study abroad experience change that? What expectations do you have for your significant other while you are away and what expectations do they have for you?
- How do I handle stress?
- How will I adjust to a new culture?
- How will I cope with homesickness?
- How will I register for classes for next term?
- How are you going to communicate with friends and family? What expectations do you have of them?
- How will I be able to obtain money while away? If I need more money, how will it be sent?
- What if something happens that changes the general functions of a country; mail strike, travel strike, political change, acts of terrorism, social strife, etc? Am I prepared not to talk to my family if lines of communication are shut off? What if there is a travel strike and I am stuck?
- What if I want to come home early- will my family support me?

Things to discuss with your family before you leave:

- What will be my family's role/responsibility while I am away? (i.e. filing taxes, paying bills, opening mail, etc)
- What if something bad happens, how should I be informed while I'm away? (i.e. Grandma breaks her hip or Fluffy gets hit by a car. Should my parents call, write, e-mail and how long should s/he wait to tell me, being that there is nothing I can do?) Should they tell me at all?
- What if something happens to me? (i.e. broken leg, skiing accident, abscessed tooth, assault, etc.) Will a family member come to be with me or do I deal with it on my own? Is it financially feasible for a family member to rush to my side if I am injured?
- How will we communicate? Phone? E-mail? Skype?
- How will holidays be spent in my absence? How will I cope? How will they cope?

PASSPORTS

You **must** have a passport to travel outside of the United States. Please allow yourself at least **six weeks** in advance to apply and receive your passport. Also, please check to see that your passport does not expire while you are abroad. Some countries require your passport to be valid up to **six months after** you return to the United States.

Applying for an American Passport in Tacoma:

Federal Building
[1102 South A Street](#)
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
(253) 471-6124

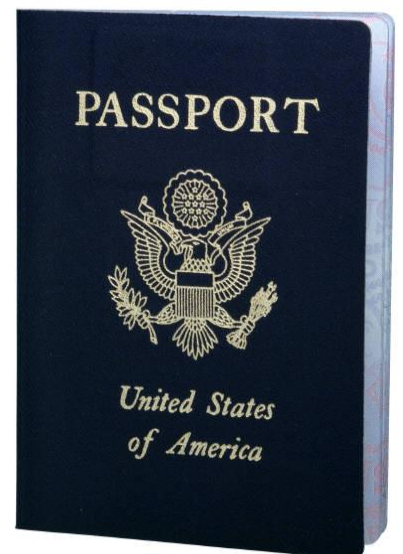
Pierce County Annex
[2401 S. 35th Street](#)
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
(253) 798-7445

You may also apply at most [U.S. Post Offices](#).

Please review the Department of State's website for passport application requirements: http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get_4855.html

Make **three photocopies of the photo page** of your passport; one to keep with you at all times, one to place in baggage while traveling, and the one to leave at home with your family. This will be very helpful in the event you lose your passport.

If your U.S. passport is lost or stolen while you are abroad, report it immediately to the local police and to the nearest [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#). A consul can issue a replacement passport, often within 24 hours. A **copy of your passport** and **three passport size photos** of yourself will help expedite the process.



VISAS

A visa gives you official permission to enter a country. Not all students will need a visa for their time abroad. If you do not require a visa, have your **acceptance letter from your overseas host school** available with you when you travel (not in checked baggage).

Your program will usually provide you with information and documentation for any required student visa.

If you are unsure, consult the U.S. Department of State's website:
http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html

POWER OF ATTORNEY

If you are receiving scholarships, loans or grants as part of your financial aid package, it is recommended that you complete the [Limited Power of Attorney form](#). This form will be provided at your study abroad pre-departure meeting. This form will require that your signature be notarized.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

If you are participating in a fall or full year study abroad program and wish to vote, you should follow this procedure

In July or August, write to the City Clerk in the city where you are registered to vote. You will need to send separate letter requesting absentee ballots for each election you wish to participate in. One absentee ballot for the September election and one requesting ballots for the November election. You should give the City Clerk the foreign address where ballots should be sent.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Check with your program provider to see what immunizations are required.

Also, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has information on health and immunization requirements on the web. It also has information on health risks specific to geographic areas and other health related travel advisories. There are costs associated with receiving travel immunizations.

The [Puget Sound Counseling, Health & Wellness Services](#) (CHWS) may be able to administer some of these immunizations, if you need them. Remember some of these immunizations are done in a series, **over a period of weeks or months**, therefore, it is important that you **plan ahead** to ensure that you receive effective protection. Please call the CHWS directly for the most up-to-date information on their services. Finally, keep your international certificate of vaccination with your passport at all times.

INSURANCE

ALL Puget Sound students going on study abroad programs are required to have adequate medical and accident coverage before leaving the States. In some countries, you are required to show proof of insurance before your visa is issued. Insurance coverage should include medical evacuation and repatriation coverage. Check your current policy to determine if you have coverage while abroad. In many cases, overseas coverage can be included for an additional fee. Your program provider may also have a mandatory insurance plan as part of your program charges.

It is extremely important that you verify your insurance coverage prior to leaving on your program.

Purchase of an [International Student Identity Card \(ISIC\)](#) entitles you to certain benefits. Please visit the link above to order an ISIC card online.

*material in this section has been adapted from Pitzer College Pre-Departure Orientation Handbook, Seattle University Education Abroad Student Handbook, and Pacific Lutheran University Off-Campus Study Programs Handbook

TRAVEL PLANNING



FLIGHTS

Some programs require participants to fly together on a group flight. If your program does not have a group flight, it is your responsibility to book your own itinerary.

[STA travel](#) in Seattle specializes in student travel and would be a great resource for booking flights to your host country as well as travel while you are abroad.

STA Travel
[4730 University Way NE, Suite 101 Seattle, WA 98105](#)
(206) 632-2448

Round-trip tickets tend to be less expensive than one-way tickets. Try to book your flight for the days you expect to fly; often times there are penalties for making changes to your ticket. Flying out of major cities like Seattle, Chicago, or New York can save you money. Don't be afraid to get creative; check lots of website and play around with dates and cities.

Also, consider purchasing travel insurance. Simple insurance plans are available at banks and travel agencies. Consider replacement costs for items in your bags; coats, clothing, electronics, etc. Plan to be covered from your departure date until the date you arrive home.

Working with a travel agent may seem old school but they often can save you time and many hassles. Think about the cost to change your ticket as you may want to travel after your program or leave earlier.

*Don't forget to sign up for **frequent flyer programs** so you can accrue miles towards free flights!

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD

The [International Student Identity Card \(ISIC\)](#) provides student discounts on airfare, hotels, transportation, restaurants, museums, etc. Features include a 24-hour help-line for medical, financial, or legal emergencies abroad and basic accident and sickness insurance for travel outside the U.S. The ISIC is travel insurance, NOT comprehensive medical insurance.



PACKING

Travel light! The amount of luggage that you carry, especially if you plan to travel extensively before or after your program, can make a tremendous difference in the enjoyment of your travels.

A rule of thumb is to pack everything you **think** you will need and then **reduce it by half**. Take your suitcase for a walk, carry it up and down some stairs, and then reduce it by half again. For valuable advice on the necessities of travel, we recommend the books [*Europe Through the Back Door*](#) and [*Asia Through the Back Door*](#) by Seattle travel writer, Rick Steves. Please be aware of [local dress code](#) (i.e. short shirts or shorts are not acceptable for women in some countries).

Something the International Programs staff hears time and time again from returned students is that the students took too much stuff. One returning student said, "In most cases you will not be leaving the comforts of the modern world; other countries have hair dryers, clothes, shampoo, etc. and you can buy those items overseas." Resist the temptation to over-pack and instead think about what you can live without during your overseas stay.

You will be responsible for carrying your luggage through subways, hoisting it into trains, and possibly even having to walk a few blocks with it. Luggage with wheels can be a life saver but probably won't fare well on uneven ground. And if you can't lift it by yourself now, you certainly won't be able to once you reach your destination!

Don't forget to research the [climate and topography](#) of the region to which you will be going; it may impact what you plan on packing. A good idea may be to prepare a box of warmer (or cooler) clothes to have your family send to you once you have settled into your new environment.

Clothing should be durable and comfortable. Try to pick clothes that coordinate well together. Bring clothes you like; you will be wearing be wearing them a lot!

Bring a change of **clothes** and any **essentials** (especially **prescription medicines**) with you **on the airplane!**

Label all of your bags with the address of your **final destination**. File a report with the airline baggage claim office, if your bags do not arrive at your final destination.

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS AND ITEMS

- Your **passport** valid for at least six months past the end of your program and two photocopies carried separately from your passport in other suitcases or wallets. Also be sure to carry your visa documents. Visas vary by country but may be either a stamp in your passport or notarized documents. Be sure to ask your consulate about any documents you are required to present upon entry. Leave an additional copy at home with your family.
- Your **airline ticket** (and photocopy of your ticket carried separately). Please note, if you have a paper airline ticket, it should be treated like cash. If you lose this paper ticket, it is the same as losing cash and you will have to purchase a new ticket, often at higher rates.
- **ATM cards, credit cards, & some cash in the local currency.** Traveler's checks are not widely accepted anymore. Before deciding what form of money to carry, see *Money Matters* section.
- **Three passport-size photographs.**
- An official **immunization record** from your doctor or health clinic and a photocopy
- **International Student Identity Card (ISIC)**
- Your **medical insurance information.** Check with your provider to see if you should carry specific claim forms with you in the event of hospitalization or other medical needs abroad.
- [Contact numbers](#) for your home institution.
- This **handbook** and other pre-departure reading materials, if necessary

Outside the essential documents, here are some items you shouldn't forget to pack;

- Comfortable pair of walking shoes
- Dress outfit(s)
- Dress shoes
- Slippers, flip-flops (shower shoes too!)
- Bathing suit (inquire about acceptable styles, bikinis may not be appropriate)
- Camera
- Face cloth & towel
- Umbrella (if it is small)
- Bathrobe
- Travel alarm clock
- Extra prescription glasses or your prescription
- Journal
- School supplies
- Travel guides
- Small medical kit (depending on your host country)
 - Band-aids
 - Sunburn ointment
 - Anti-diarrhea medicine
 - Gauze & adhesive tape
 - Antibacterial ointment
 - Insect repellent & bite relief
 - Alcohol wipes
 - Pain reliever
 - Antihistamines
 - Thermometer
 - Tweezers
 - Skin moisturizers
- Feminine items
- Adaptor and voltage converter
- [Gift for homestay](#)



If you can't bear to lose it, don't bring it!

THINGS TO KEEP AT HOME:

- Weapons (or items that can be mistaken for a weapon, such as a letter opener)—know your host country (in some countries, pepper spray is illegal!)
- Extra credit cards
- Police or military identification
- Membership cards
- Items with great sentimental value that would be hard to replace
- Political, religious or sexually explicit literature
- Financial statements or checkbooks
- Expensive or religious jewelry

MONEY MATTERS

How much should you take? Make a budget for your stay. In addition to the expenses outlined by your program provider, you should also plan for incidentals, extended vacations, and personal travel. Keep in mind [exchange rates](#)- is the U.S. dollar strong or weak in that country? Is the particular region relatively more or less expensive to the general [cost of living](#) in that country?

Travel to your host country with the **some local currency**. Most banks in the Puget Sound area can order foreign currency but allow for a few days for delivery.



All students should consider taking a [major credit card](#) such as Visa and Master Card. In many countries, you may use your card in an ATM to get cash. Make sure your credit card is eligible for ATMs and cash advances. Remember that these accumulate interest from the date of posting. Check with your bank or credit card to find out international bank fees. This may impact how you get money, for example maybe the fees associated with your bank are high so you only withdrawal money once a month.

Also, please ***let your bank and credit card company know that you will be abroad***. Otherwise, foreign transactions may signal fraud and prompting them to freeze your account.

Before leaving the U.S., check with your bank to find out if there is an affiliated bank in the city where you will be studying; it may be possible for you to transfer funds directly into a local account. If you are going for one semester only, it may not be worth your while to open a bank account in your host country, due to the fees and paperwork involved. If money must be sent from home, there are three methods which can be used:

1. Place money in an American account for which the student has a debit card. This is the most immediate and cheapest method.
2. Purchase a bank draft in foreign currency drawn on a bank in the city or a major city close to where the student is located and send through the mail.
3. Wire the money and it will arrive within 24 hours. The student need only go to the bank to which money is wired, identify him/herself, and pick it up.

All methods are very effective. Wiring money is fast, but it is also quite expensive. Your local bank can provide complete details on all three methods.

TAXES*

If you will be studying abroad spring semester, you may need to arrange to have federal (and state) tax forms sent to you or have your taxes take care of during your absence. Tax forms are usually available at [U.S. consulates or embassies](#). It is possible to ask for an extension. Be sure to know what your tax responsibilities are and how to comply while you are out of the country.

FAFSA

Similar to taxes, you will need to plan on completing your [FAFSA](#) abroad or have family members help. Be sure to leave your PIN with your family!

*International Programs is not qualified to give legal tax advice. If you have any questions about filing your taxes, consult with a tax professional.

COMMUNICATION

International telephone number consists of several different parts:



The [International Access Code](#)

Country Code (usually 2 to 4 digits)

Phone number (usually a 6 to 8 digit number)

To call the U.S. from your host country, enter 001 in front of the area code.

EMERGENCY

In the event of an emergency, **contact your program provider with the emergency numbers given to you.** He or she is best able to assist you. Calling home to speak with a family member first, though it may be instinctive or comforting, is not going to get you the immediate local help you need.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF PUGET SOUND

Roy Robinson, Director
(253) 879-3653
rrobinson@pugetsound.edu

Stephanie Noss, Study Abroad Advisor
(253) 879-2514
snoss@pugetsound.edu

Sally Sprenger, Int'l Student Advisor
(253) 879-2871
ssprenger@pugetsound.edu

Mailing Address:
1500 N. Warner Street #1055
Tacoma, WA 98416-1055

Office Hours
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

PHONES

Using your U.S. cell phone overseas can get expensive. It is best to purchase a pay-as-you go phone when you arrive in your host country.

You can also look into getting a long distance telephone card, which should be purchased in your host country.

Many students overseas use [Skype](#) to call home. Skype is free to download and free to use if both parties are online. If you wish to call a U.S. number from Skype, you must pay for the call. Skype has a pay-as-you go option and a flat monthly rate (very inexpensive and probably worth it!).

MAIL

In some countries, mail can be quite reliable and in others not. International mail can take anywhere from 5 days to 3 weeks to arrive. Occasionally, it can be misplaced or lost by the postal service abroad, just as it can in the U.S.

Although you can ship almost anything abroad, please keep in mind that certain items may require a special tax or exorbitant fees in order to clear customs. Think twice before shipping expensive items, such as a computer or books.



E-MAIL



It is your responsibility to check your [Puget Sound e-mail](#) frequently before, during, and after your study abroad experience. **This is the best way for the International Programs office to get in contact with you.**

If you have a limited amount of time to check e-mail or are paying for connection time at an internet café while abroad, investigate methods for labeling and filtering your inbox before you go so you do not miss out on important Puget Sound information.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION



All study abroad students are required to attend a mandatory pre-departure session the semester before they go overseas. While it is impossible to cover all specifics for every country/program that student may be going to, there will be a good representation of former study abroad students to answer individual questions and to give you lots of helpful hints.

You will receive several handouts at the pre-departure session which will include several UPS forms related to finances, insurance, conduct, etc. **It is your responsibility to submit these completed forms to International Programs by the forms deadline announced at the pre-departure session.**

The [required forms](#) are:

- Emergency Contact Information
- Student Agreement
- Study Abroad Liability Agreement
- Statement of Insurance Coverage

TRANSCRIPTS

Make sure you know your program's policy regarding automatic mailing of your transcript to the Puget Sound registrar. If it is not automatic, leave a written request for a transcript to be sent to the Puget Sound registrar and pay any applicable fees. Failure to do this could cause complications in your degree progress.

REGISTRATION

During the pre-departure session you attend prior to your study abroad semester, you will receive a handout on how to register on Cascade for your Puget Sound courses. If you don't think you will have access to a computer during your regular pre-registration time, the Puget Sound evaluator can register for you. Be sure to leave the evaluator your class schedule before you leave campus.

AMERICAN EXPECTATIONS ABROAD

The American system of semesters and quarters does not exist in many other countries. Academic courses at foreign universities are oftentimes year-long, with final comprehensive exams at the end of the year. Students are accustomed to year-end comprehensive exams that demand instant recall of topics covered months previously. Academic calendars often do not coincide with American academic terms, and some terms are shorter than American semesters, resulting with fewer credits transferring back to the home campus.

While American students usually take a variety of subjects in the first year or so of college before deciding on a major, most foreign university students have already chosen a major area of concentration before they even leave high school, and so take courses directly related to their major from the moment they start college. Therefore, you should be prepared to take courses that are open to freshman and sophomores, rather than the advanced specialized junior year courses.



Professors often do not assign homework nor will they cover all the materials listed in the course description. You are expected to cover these on your own. Syllabi may not be distributed in every class, or even at all. Independent study is emphasized over weekly quizzes and exams, and professors may not be as accessible to answer questions as Puget Sound faculty are. Please remember that professors are the same the world over- some are good, some are boring, some are gruff and some are inspiring. It is up to you to make the most of your academic experience, so take the time and initiative to learn as much about your host culture and country as possible.

Computers may not be as readily available to you at your overseas site as at Puget Sound. Library hours are often not as extensive as those at Puget Sound. Students may have to request a book in advance and wait for the library staff to fill these requests, so plan ahead when you have a research paper to write.

Finally, don't be fooled by the apparent lack of studying by some students in foreign universities! They often do not like to publicize their study habits and many American students have stumbled academically by believing that it is not necessary to study consistently throughout the semester.

HEALTH AND SAFETY



MEDICATIONS

The first thing to remember about medications is that health principles are no different abroad than they are at home. For a cold or cough, don't take any drugs that you would not take at home. The best safeguard for good health is rest and common sense.

If you are taking any prescription medicines, take an adequate supply and a copy of the prescription with you to show to customs officials. **Keep all medications, vitamins, etc. in their original containers.** If you will need to refill a prescription while abroad, ask your doctor to provide you with a typewritten diagnosis-prescription.

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take an extra pair with you and the original prescription. Contact wearers may want to consider taking extra bottles of solution(s) as cost for these items overseas can be quite steep.

Many students find that, once overseas, they are **more susceptible to colds at first.** It's strongly recommended that you take your "favorite" cold remedy with you on your program. You may not be able to find suitable over-the-counter equivalent, nor will you be inclined to venture out if you are not feeling well. This may also apply to aspirin, or other common (in the U.S.) pain relievers.

Many students coming to the U.S. for the first time are astounded at the variety of medications available in drug stores. You, by contrast, may be surprised by the lack thereof overseas, so prepare accordingly.

MEDICAL CARE OVERSEAS

Remember that medical care overseas varies from country to country and access to care may be limited. If you have special medical needs please contact your program provider to verify that medical accommodation can be made available. In some countries, emergency rooms are used only for immediate, life-threatening incidents, not hay fever attacks, sinus infections, bad sunburns, etc. **Payment is often required at the time of treatment, so be sure you have adequate funds for such emergencies.**

SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS

Inform your program director of any special needs including dietary restrictions and/or preferences, physical concerns, learning disabilities, allergies or strict religious observances in advance of arrival. It is easier to receive assistance and support for these if they are known ahead of time. Accommodations of special needs cannot be guaranteed.

Carry a card, tag or bracelet identifying any physical conditions that may require emergency care.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

STRESS OF TRANSITION

Students who have been through a variety of previous transitions may already have many of the skills, techniques, and instincts needed to adjust to a new country. It is useful for them to review the coping mechanisms they have applied in the past and recognize those that worked and those that don't.

It is important to be able to identify what it is that is bothering you. It is natural as a student to be overwhelmed from time to time. Just pinning down what's the matter can be something of a relief.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

The difference between what you expect and what you actually experience may determine the level of distress you feel. It is helpful, therefore, to review your expectations and visualizations so that you are not surprised or even shocked by what you find.

MANIFESTATION OF STRESS

Many emotions and reactions are to be expected when you are stressed. Some common manifestations are:

- Irritability over small things
- Difficulty concentrating
- Queasy stomach
- Constant feeling of tiredness
- Psychosomatic illness

- Excessive criticism of others
- Poor work performance
- Difficulty making decisions
- Unusually introspective
- Feelings of guilt, worry and anxiety

COPING CHOICES STUDENTS MAKE

When a student is in a low mood, he or she is vulnerable and people who are vulnerable can make poor coping choices. Examples of these include:

- Resorting to heavy alcohol use
- Staying in bed 12-14 hours a day
- Staying in your living quarters all day
- Eating excessively
- Avoiding friends and neighbors
- Escaping into sexual relationships

BETTER COPING CHOICES

The more coping strategies a student has identified and thought about before his/her struggles begin, the more likely he/she is to make good choices. Based on feedback from numerous students, the following five basic techniques are especially helpful in dealing with the stresses and strains of adjustment:

- Immerse oneself in study/reading that is satisfying
- Find a local person with whom one can talk regularly
- Write letters/e-mails to family and friends
- Visit fellow students
- Meet with Resident Director/faculty to talk about the stress

SEEKING HELP

It is “normal” to experience stress in your adjustment to being a student and other students will also have to cope with stresses, strains, low moods, etc.- such struggles are natural. However, whenever your usual coping mechanism are not working for you or you find yourself making coping choices that are not in your best interest, realize that you may need more support and seek help.

You should understand whether a discussion will be confidential and be familiar with all the available counseling and support services providers. Available support could include your resident director, local counseling and healthcare professionals at your host institution or health center, program administration representatives, and the [counseling center](#) at Puget Sound.

SAFETY

“Better safe than sorry” is the rule for travel anywhere, either here or in a foreign country. Use common sense while traveling and don’t engage in risky behavior.

Some examples

- Don’t walk alone at night
- Don’t be in an area of high crime
- Make sure the door is locked before you go to sleep
- Register with the local American consulate office (some program providers do this for you)
- Keep a low profile; don’t draw attention to yourself with flashy jewelry, logos, labels or ball caps
- Take precautions; don’t give out your phone number or address to people unknown to you
- Avoid situations where you might lose all control due to overconsumption of alcohol
- On trains and metros, select cars or compartments with lots of people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be aware of pickpockets and scam artists

Please listen carefully to the advice of the locals. In most cases, they are host country natives or Americans with much more experience than you have had with the host culture. The advice they give you will be based on the knowledge of previous students’ mishaps and a wealth of experiences living successfully in that country. Many guidelines that may seem to be extreme or overly cautious to you may have significant and negative consequences if disobeyed.

You should always keep in mind that no matter how immersed you are in a local community, you are still a foreigner and thus your chances of being a victim of criminal activity may be greater than for the average local person. Remember not to carry around airplane tickets, a lot of cash, your passport (unless it is absolutely necessary to carry the original, a photocopy is better), or anything else that you really can’t afford to lose. As a general safety precaution, you should refrain from visiting establishments where Americans are widely known to hang out, abstain from participating in any protest groups or political demonstrations, and avoid drawing unnecessary attention to yourself by dressing outrageously or conspicuously.



TRAVEL SAFETY

We hope that each and every one of you will have the opportunity for independent travel in your host country. We also want you to be safe.

- Keep people (**especially your program provider**) informed of your itinerary when you go somewhere even if just overnight
- Never put your passport in a backpack (keep a copy on you and your actual passport in your **locked** luggage)
- Never leave luggage unattended
- Avoid night travel
- Travel with a friend or trusted other
- When taking the train, choose compartments with people in them
- Note the location of emergency equipment of any sort of vehicle
- Don't fall asleep on short train or bus trips. You could wind up inadvertently taking a longer ride than anticipated
- Don't stand on the edge of a train or metro platform
- Keep your wallet in a side pocket
- Keep your purse closed
- When in large crowds, carry your backpack in front of you. If you put it down, even for a moment, put your foot through the strap.
- If someone is bothering you, seek assistance.
- Make use of lockers or safes in hostels/hotels. Bring a lock with a combination to use on your suitcase when leaving it in a hostel room. Usually the presence of the lock itself will be enough of a deterrent to thieves.

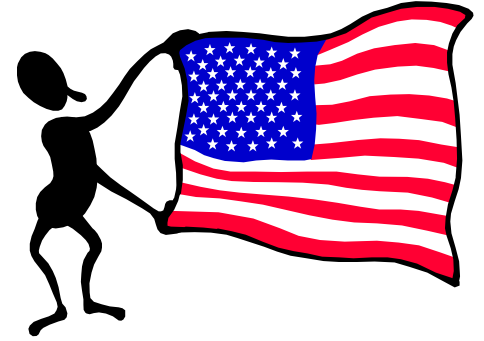
DRIVING



Statistics show that the most dangerous activity for Americans overseas is riding in or driving motor vehicles. For your safety, do not rent, lease, buy, or drive a car during your study abroad experience. Public transportation is highly recommended. Should you choose to operate a vehicle, be aware of the risks involved. Know the laws related to driving in your host country as they may be very different from home. Also, be sure to check with your program provider as some prohibit students from operating motor vehicles or require that you sign a release of liability form beforehand.

AMERICAN EMBASSY ASSISTANCE ABROAD

The [American Embassy](#) in your host country is a valuable resource but it is important to understand there are limitations to how much the Embassy can assist you.



The U.S. Embassy/Consulate **CAN...**

- Contact you in the event of a national or personal emergency. It is strongly recommended that you register yourself if your program provider doesn't for you. It's quick and easy-go to <http://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui>. By registering with the U.S. Department of State, the in-country consulate staff will know how to contact you if a national or personal emergency occurs.
- Re-issue passports to replace lost or stolen ones (don't forget to bring a copy of your old passport plus three passport size photos!)
- If you are not where you are supposed to be and a relative has reason to believe you should have been there, a call to the [Citizens Emergency Center](#) in Washington, D.C. can be made. It provides a 24-hour line at (202) 647-5225 by which you or your relative can get in touch with the U.S. Embassy in the appropriate country. They also maintain information in times of crisis which regularly updated reports from each embassy/consulate.
- In the event of an arrest, a consulate officer will be able to operate within the framework of the law of the host country, visit U.S. citizens in jail, provide a list of local attorneys, notify family and friends and rely requests for money and other aid, intercede with local authorities to make sure rights under **local** law are fully observed, the U.S. citizen is being treated humanely according to internationally accepted standards and protest mistreatments or abuse to appropriate authorities.
- The [Citizens Emergency Center](#) can get in touch with relatives of Americans who become ill or injured while overseas. They may pursue various courses of action to ensure the traveler's safety. First, the traveler's own funds will be used for his/her return and/or treatment. If the traveler does not have the funds, the Citizens Emergency Center may approach the traveler's family for funds. In emergencies, the Center can provide small government loans for returning American travelers who are in distress until private funds arrive. The Center can also send telegrams in the event of a death overseas, notifying the family and informing them they need to send money for the repatriation of the body.

The U.S. Embassy **CANNOT...**

- Demand immediate release or get anyone out of jail
- Represent U.S. citizens at trial or give legal counsel
- Pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. government funds

ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS

ALCOHOL

The use of alcohol is encouraged in some societies and prohibited in others. In most cultures there are methods for controlling drinking, but these vary and may not be obvious to a person unfamiliar with a particular culture.

Nevertheless, excessive alcohol consumption impairs your judgment and can lead to disruptive behavior and risk of harm to yourself and to others, in addition to poor academic performance. If you choose to drink, be responsible and know your limit. You should never feel pressured to drink if you do not want to or feel embarrassed to order non-alcoholic beverages.

To resist social and cultural pressures to drink, some personal strategies which may help include

- Understanding why you are choosing to use alcohol
- Making rules for oneself to guide drinking
- Setting personal limit for drinking, sticking to it, or drinking less
- Drinking only with meals
- Making oneself aware of the impact one's drinking has on oneself and others

ILLEGAL DRUGS

In one word: **DON'T!** While you may find that illegal drugs are easier to obtain overseas, drug dealers are often paid by police to turn in buyers. Be aware that most foreign countries have extremely harsh penalties, including **execution**, for anyone caught in possession of illegal drugs. In some cases, if you are caught with drugs, relatives and lawyers may not be permitted access to you.

Puget Sound policy states that any student found using or possessing illegal drugs in any form will be subject **to immediate expulsion from the program** and to further disciplinary action on the part of the University of Puget Sound.

SEXUAL HEALTH ABROAD

Navigating the dating scene in your own culture is difficult enough, but that increases ten-fold while abroad due to different norms, expectations, gender roles and health risks.

You should understand

- [STDs](#) are communicable and preventable; from becoming infected and from infecting others is a matter of personal responsibility.
- Although recognition of symptoms and seeking medical attention when they are present are essential, it is most important to remember that STDs are frequently present with no symptoms.
- The incidence of [HIV/AIDS](#) is much higher in some parts of the world, even endemic, than it is in the U.S.
- In some cultures, those who engage in pre-marital sex, especially women, are judged harshly.
- Know the words for “condom”, “pregnancy test”, and “STD screening” in your host country’s language if you plan on being sexually active while abroad.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

In the context of study abroad, sexual harassment can be defined as any unwanted sexual advances from anyone with power over any aspect of your stay overseas, including your living arrangements and your educational or work environment. Sometimes it is difficult to evaluate whether or not you’re being sexually harassed. American sometimes react with discomfort to the normal conversational distance between people in a culture when very close contact is the norm. Be aware of your feelings within the context.

However, no one, male or female, studying abroad should have to suffer from unwelcome sexual pressure. Should you be the object of such advances, say no firmly. Should it persist, inform the appropriate officials or who you feel comfortable with whether that is your program host coordinator, us, your parents, etc. as soon as possible.

[SAFETI: Sexual Harassment & Prevention in College Students Studying Abroad](#)

*material in this section has been adapted from Pitzer College Pre-Departure Orientation Handbook, Seattle University Education Abroad Student Handbook, Ohio State Study Abroad Handbook, and SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources modules

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT



ADJUSTING TO A NEW CULTURE

Stepping off the plane can bring a flood of emotions, ranging from fear to excitement, to a sense of 'coming home' to powerful homesickness. It is normal to experience ups and downs during the period of transition to your new surroundings. Take some time to assess how and what you are feeling during this time of adjustment. Give yourself the opportunity to explore the scope of emotions that accompanies such a time of transition. Write about these feelings in a journal. While you go through this transition, try to remember what your initial experiences at Puget Sound were like. Give yourself at least two weeks to get used to your new surroundings. Even if you hate it at first, you may have serious regrets if you jump on the next plane back home. Remember the months of planning you have put into making your study abroad experience a reality. Don't give up after only 2 hours, as tempting as it may seem.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

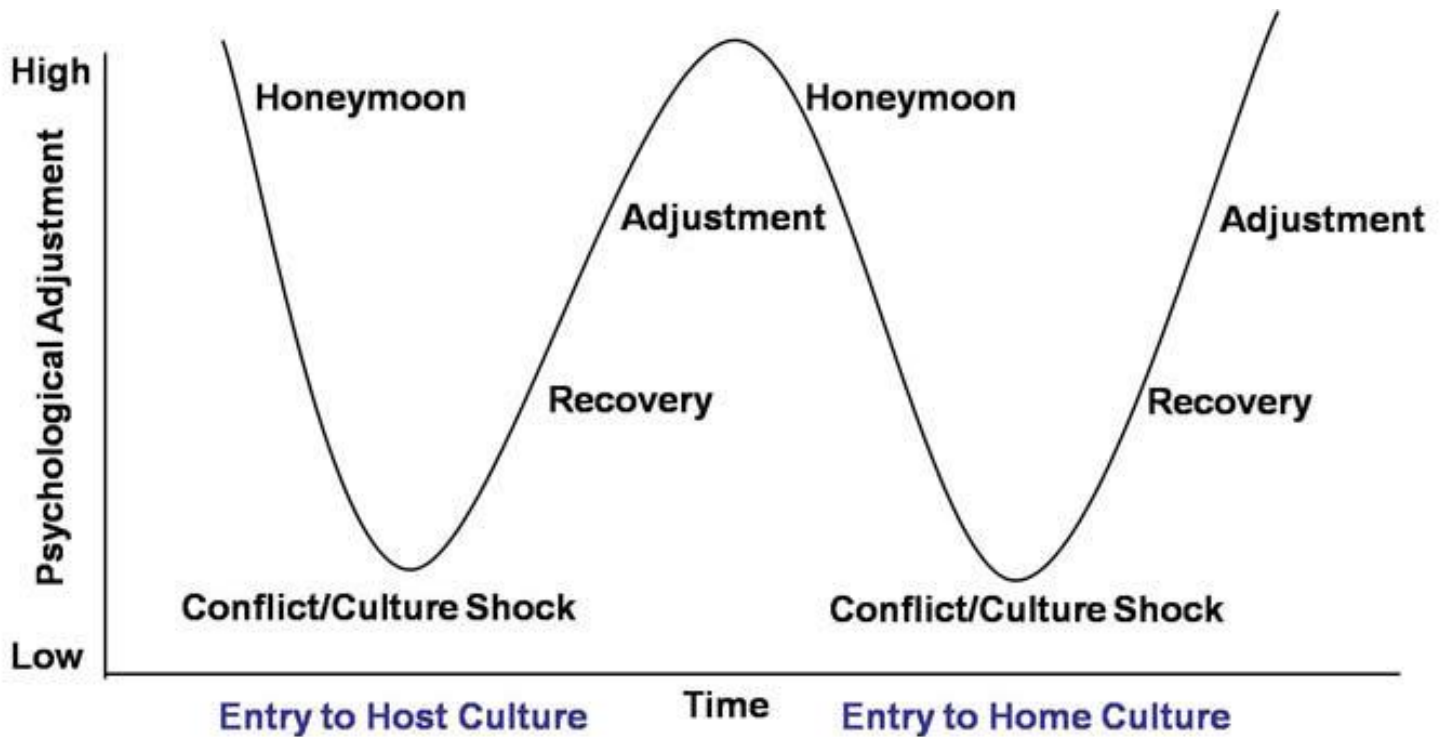
Remember why you are going on a study abroad program. You have embarked on a wonderful journey to experience a culture quite different from your own. However, **you** must go out and make things happen. *Not every experience will be positive*, not everyone you meet will like Americans. Try to understand the local viewpoints, and avoid comparisons with home. While it may seem difficult at first to make friends with local people, make an effort to get involved with activities outside classes. Many students who have joined local sports, theater, or hiking clubs for instance have found them to be excellent ways to immerse themselves in the local culture, and have made many lasting friendships.



OVERSEAS ON-SITE COORDINATOR

Once you have settled into your new home, you will meet the on-site coordinator. This person's job is to be a resource and advocate for you. He/she will give the orientation, campus, program and town tours and may provide advice on everything from where to find a good café to what types of students clubs you may expect to find in the area. If you have questions, problems, or concerns of any sort, go to your on-site coordinator before contacting International Programs at Puget Sound. He/she will possess knowledge of local resources and will have contacts that the Puget Sound staff could not possibly have. If you feel that the on-site coordinator is not fully attending to your needs, then contact Puget Sound International Programs.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROCESS



Based on Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963)

Application: I've arrived!

Honeymoon: I love it here and everything is GREAT!

Initial Stress: I'm annoyed. Where is the stupid grocery store?

Culture Shock: Ugh, this is not like home. Why doesn't anyone speak English?

Adjustment: Things are okay now. I finally found the grocery store.

Integration: I wish this pace of life was the same back home

Competency: I dreamed in Spanish! I was able to give directions to someone.

Depart: I am excited to go back home to see my friends and family but I will miss everyone here too.

Home: I'm back! I'm so happy to see everyone!

Re-entry adjustment: No one wants to hear my stories. I feel so different yet everyone else seems the same.

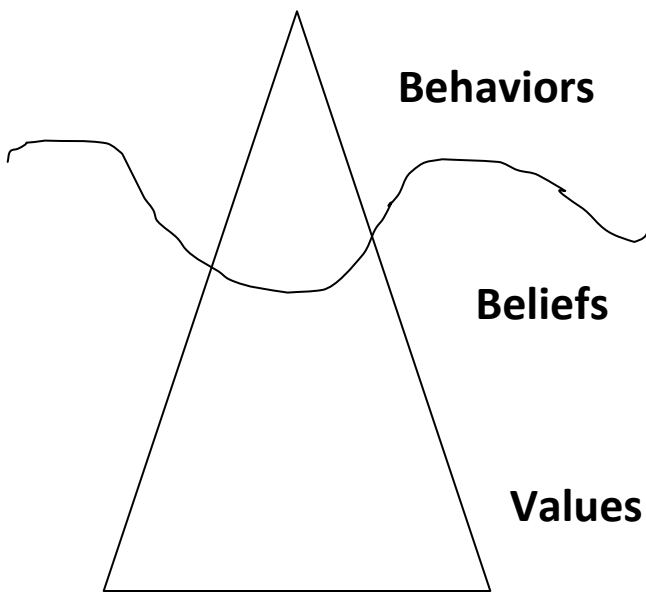
HOW TO HANDLE CULTURE SHOCK

TEN RULES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY ABROAD

1. You shall not expect to find things as you have them at home... for you have left your home to find things different
2. You shall not take anything too seriously... for an open mind is the beginning of a fine study abroad experience.
3. You shall not let others get on your nerves... for you have come a long way to be a good ambassador for your country, to learn as much as you can and to enjoy the experience
4. You shall read carefully the information in the orientation materials and checklists... for those who have gone before you have good advice to share.
5. You shall remember your passport so you know where it is at all times... for a person without a passport is a person without a country.
6. You shall remember that if we were expected to stay in one place, we would have been created with roots.
7. You shall not worry... for one who worries does not receive pleasure from the experience.
8. You shall not judge the people of a country by the one person with whom you have had trouble... for this is unfair to the people as a whole.
9. You shall not make yourself too obviously the foreigner... when in another country, do somewhat as the people there do.
10. You shall remember that you are a guest in every land... for one who treats a host with respect will be treated as an honored guest.



CULTURE AS AN ICEBERG



Small part of the culture is visible

- Actions, behaviors, reactions

Large part is below the surface. The visible aspects are influenced by the deeper elements of the culture such as values and beliefs.

Remember that only a small portion of culture is visible... the behaviors. It takes more time to learn about the qualities below the surface, the deeper beliefs and values of your host culture.

You will have cultural misunderstandings. Be aware of your own culture and world perspective. Differences between cultures do not imply that one is better or worse than another.

A HIGHER LEVEL OF CULTURAL SENSATIVITY

The best way to prepare for upcoming cross-cultural encounters is to imagine the type of person you will attempt to be during the program. Consider the following three characteristics:

The tourist level: represented by the sentiment: "I am oblivious to the effects my actions have on locals, and never stop long enough to even question my behavior."

The sojourner level: represented by the attitude: "How can I continue to live my life, interact, and behave the way I always have without offending my hosts?"

A higher level: represented by the question: "What must I change in order to show I respect the host culture's values, facilitate meaningful relationships, and have a deeper more meaningful learning experience?"

*material in this section has been adapted from Seattle University Education Abroad Handbook, Pacific Lutheran University Off-Campus Learning Handbook, and Pitzer College Exchanges Pre-Departure Handbook.

INDEPENDENT PREPARATION



KNOW YOUR HOST COUNTRY AND CULTURE

The questions below are intended to enable you to take control and responsibility of your study abroad experience. These questions should get you thinking about your host country and culture. Spending time finding the answers to these questions will prepare you for the challenges you will face abroad and help you get the most out of your experience.

Answers to these questions can be found from a range of resources—written materials, Web sites, former participants, questionnaires in the IP office and current international students at Puget Sound.

This list is not the end all be all of country and culture knowledge... what else do YOU want to know?

History

- Who are important people in your host country?
- Who are the country's heroes and heroines?
- When was the country founded and by whom?
- What dates are significant in the history of your host country?
- Recent conflicts and the role of the U.S. in those conflicts

Politics

- What is the political structure of the country?
- How long has the structure been in place?
- If there are elections, when was the last one held?
- Is military training required and for whom?
- What is the history of the relationship between this country and the U.S.?
- What is your political position as a foreigner in this country? As an American?
- What role does the U.S. play in the economy?



Religion

- What is the predominant religion of the country?
- What are its sacred writings?
- How are religious holidays observed and celebrated? Will you want to participate?
- How will people perceive your religion? Is your religion legal in your host country?
- What is the attitude of people in your host country towards other religions?

- How will people perceive your religion? Is your religion legal in your host country?

Language

- Are there other languages spoken besides the dominant language?

Family

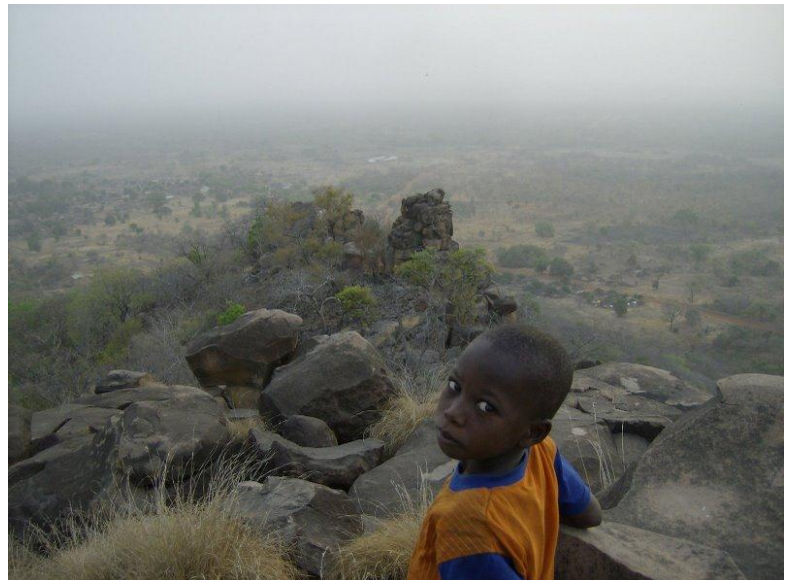
- How is marriage ceremonies performed?
- What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Pre-marital relations?
- What age do most people get married?
- How many children do people have?
- How are children disciplined?
- Who lives in the home? Grandparents? Aunts? Uncles?

Dress

- What is the usual dress for [women](#)? For men?
- What is appropriate dress for you, as a foreigner?
- What is the climate like in your host country? Do you have clothing that will keep you comfortable?

Social Etiquette

- What is polite? Impolite?
- How closely should you stand to someone?
- What are the privileges of age? Of gender?
- How do people greet and signal departure from one another?
- What are the social norms surrounding dating? Mixed gender friendships?
- What is the attitude in this country towards alcohol?



Leisure

- What are the favorite recreational activities of adults? Students?
- What sports are popular?
- What kind of television programs are show? What social purposes do they serve?
- How are important holidays observed?

Transportation/Travel

- How will you travel to your country? To your host university?
- What types of public transportation are available? Where are they located?
- Who has the right of way? Vehicles? People? Animals?

Health

- Do you have health insurance?

- Are you prepared to cover the cost of your health services upfront and wait to be reimbursed?
- What health/beauty items should you take with you?
- What kinds of health services are available? Where are they located?
- Where can medicines be purchased?
- What precautions should you take to remain healthy?

Living Arrangements

- What options are available for foreigners?
- What costs should you anticipate?
- Where will you go upon arrival?
- Am I prepared for restrictions and house rules that come with family living?
- Am I prepared for the family's expectations regarding the use of hot water, heating, and power consumption? Use of telephone, kitchen facilities?
- Am I ready to adapt my eating habits to fit my family?

Academic Considerations

- Is education free in the host country?
- What are common teaching/learning methods?
- Which universities are important? Who goes to university?
- What types of assignments/exam should you expect?

On being foreign

- How do people perceive Americans?
- How will your financial position/living conditions compare with those of the majority of people living in the country?
- How do you retain your own [identity](#) while adapting to the new culture?
- What are the visa requirements? What if you plan on traveling to neighboring countries?



WAY WE DIFFER

- How we define “proper” behavior
- How and when we greet each other
- What’s considered common courtesy
- What’s considered polite or impolite
- How closely we stand to each other
- The holidays we celebrate and how we celebrate them
- How we show respect and disrespect
- How and when we use money
- The range in which we negotiate
- What is modest or risqué
- What is embarrassing or shameful
- What makes us feel good, and what depresses us
- What makes us proud, and what shames us
- What, when, and how we eat and drink
- What we wear and when and where we wear it
- How we see and behave towards sickness and health
- How and when we seek and use health services
- What we find funny or sad
- How and when we use means of transportation
- What we buy and sell, and when, how and with whom we do it
- When, where, and how we sit and stand
- If, how, and when we touch each other
- What we believe
- What we value
- What makes “common sense”
- What are worthwhile goals in life
- What is beautiful and ugly
- The nature of God and other religious beliefs
- What we believe we need and don’t need
- Whether privacy is desirable or undesirable
- Who makes what decisions and in what circumstances
- Whether a person is in control of his or her own life or whether fate determines it
- What should be communicated



directly and indirectly

- What or who is clean and dirty
- What language, dialect, and tone of voice we use
- To whom we speak and to whom we do not speak
- The role of the individual
- The roles of men and women and how each should behave
- The role of parents and children and how each should behave
- The importance of harmony in a group
- The importance of competition between individuals
- Social class
- Education levels
- Hierarchy in business relationships
- How time is understood and used
- Whether schedules are important or unimportant
- The importance of tradition and rituals
- How often we smile, whom we smile at, and what it means when we smile
- How strangers interact
- How we interact with a person in authority
- How we interact with a person serving us (e.g. in a restaurant)
- Relationships and obligations between friends
- Relationships and obligations towards extended family members and relatives
- Facial expressions and other nonverbal behavior and gestures and when they are used
- Crowd or audience behavior
- The importance of preparing for the future
- How we see old age and how we value elders
- Whether conversations should be formal or informal
- What should be said; what should be left unsaid
- Whether, when, and how and with whom we make "small talk"
- How we perceive what is friendly or unfriendly
- How open or guarded we are with information
- What behavior is ethical and what behavior is not ethical
- how, whom, and how much we entertain
- how or whether we take turns, stand in line, etc.
- how often we change jobs or "move house" and where and why



There are many other ways we differ. We challenge you to seek out and appreciate other differences while abroad.

KNOW THYSELF

How do you define who you are? What cultural baggage do you carry, perhaps without even realizing it? As difficult as it is to handle criticism directed towards you or your country, knowing who you are culturally will help you deal with it in a more friendly and informed manner. According to Dr. L. Kohls, there are 13 commonly-held values Americans possess. Do you see yourself in any of these?

1. There is no such thing as “fate”, everyone has control over what happens in this life.
2. Change is indisputably good, leading to development, improvement, and progress.
3. Time is of the utmost importance and needs to be used productively.
4. All people are “created equal” and everyone has the right to succeed.
5. Americans see themselves as highly individualistic in their thoughts and actions.
6. Americans feel they can take credit only for what they accomplish as individuals. “Self-help” is an important attribute.
7. Competition brings out the best in any individual in any system.
8. The future is very important, as are the improvements it will surely bring.
9. “Keeping busy”, even in times of recreation, is highly valued in American society.
10. Americans are informal in all areas of their life, from language to dress.
11. The direct approach is the best, most open and most honest approach.
12. Americans are realistic, practical, and efficient, avoiding being overly sentimental in decision-making.
13. American value newness and innovations, thus creating a constant need to upgrade to the next best thing and fostering materialism.



HOW FOREIGNERS SEE AMERICANS

Most foreigners only see Americans through the eyes of movies and television. Listed below are some of the stereotypical beliefs you may run into abroad.

Americans are....

- Outgoing, friendly
- Hard working
- Confident
- Generous
- Always in a hurry
- Informal
- Racially prejudiced
- Ignorant of other cultures
- Loud, rude, boastful, immature
- Extravagant, wasteful
- Disrespectful of authorities
- They have all the answers

Please remember that these are stereotypes that could easily be applied to people of other countries. However, some traits that are viewed positively in the U.S. are viewed negatively in other countries. In many countries, individual achievements are considered less important than contributions to group success. What Americans perceive to be friendliness (calling everyone by their first name) others consider disrespectful. The best way to handle these beliefs is to keep an open mind and try to understand the reasoning behind such beliefs (i.e. the Iceberg theory).

Here are some tips for handling anti-American criticism:

- Try to understand the critic's motive(s).
- Draw upon personal experiences and observations.
- Avoid becoming defensive in their presence.
- Become more familiar with common U.S. facts and policies.

SUGGESTED READING

PUBLICATIONS

[American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective](#), Edward Stewart & Richard Porter

[Becoming World Wise: A Guide to Global Learning](#), Richard Slimbach

[Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural Differences](#), Craig Storti

[Culture, Communication and Conflict](#), Gary Weaver

[Culture Shock Series](#)

[Do's and Taboos of Preparing Your Trip Abroad](#), Roger E. Axtell & John P. Healy

[Europe through the back door](#), Rick Steves

[Intercultural Interactions](#), Richard Brislin and Kenneth Cushner

[On Being Foreign](#), Lewis & Jugman

[Practical Traveler Handbook](#), Betsy Wade

[Staying Healthy in Asia, Africa, and Latin America](#), Dirk G. Schroeder

[Study Abroad: How to get the most out of your experience](#), Michele-Marie Dowell

[Survival Kit for Overseas Living](#), Robert Kohls

[The Art of Crossing Cultures](#), Craig Storti

[Travel as a Political Act](#), Rick Steves

[Travel Wise- How to Be Safe, Savvy and Secure Abroad](#), Ray Leki

[Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior](#), Richard Brislin

WEB PAGES

[Puget Sound International Programs](http://www.pugetsound.edu/studyabroad) (www.pugetsound.edu/studyabroad)

[Center for Disease Control Travel's Health](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/lists.htm)
(wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/lists.htm)

[American Embassy Assistance Abroad](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html) (http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html)

[Onada Currency Converter](http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/) (<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>)

*material in this section has been adapted from Seattle University Education Abroad Handbook and Survival Kit for Overseas Living

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****24 HOUR PUGET SOUND EMERGENCY NUMBER****

(253) 879-3311

In the event of an emergency, contact your program provider with the emergency numbers given to you. He or she is best able to assist you. Calling home to speak with a family member first, though it may be instinctive or comforting, is not going to get you the immediate local help you need.