



Office of International Education

Study Abroad Pre-Departure Guide

Congratulations on your exciting decision to study away!

The Office of International Education is pleased to welcome you to Lyon College's Study Abroad program.

Whether you are planning to study abroad on a short-term course or to join a longer exchange program overseas, you will receive program-specific orientation information from your trip leader or onsite from your chosen exchange program. This handbook is designed to supplement, rather than supersede, that information.

You can contact your Faculty Trip Leader or The Director of International Education (Ext. 7229) to discuss any study abroad questions/concerns you may have.

Personal Goals

The most beneficial study abroad experience is likely to be one that is focused and purposeful. Before you apply to study abroad, give some serious thought to your own particular goals for study abroad and to what you hope to get out of the experience. Some possible goals include the following:

- Explore interests you may have in a particular culture or new region
- Immerse yourself in language study
- Learn more about a possible career path

Deciding your personal goals will help you to choose the best study abroad course for your personal needs and later it will help you to stay focused on the kinds of overseas activities that are consistent with your goals. It will also assist you in assessing after the trip how well you have done and what will take away from the experience.

Research Your Destination

Thoroughly research the country or countries where you are going. There is no single or universal answer to all questions associated with international travel. Each country (and city) is different with its own unique set of challenges. The best way to have a positive and beneficial learning abroad experience is to be prepared and well-informed. NAFSA has some great resources [here](#).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) websites have information on health risks and considerations for most countries and regions around the world, as well as packing lists for each country:

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

The CDC occasionally issues travel alerts for specific countries or regions. When the CDC issues a travel alert for a country or region where USC students study abroad, University officials meet to determine what steps to take to maximize student health.

Students with disabilities and special medical, physical, psychological or dietary needs may also face particular difficulties in the study abroad setting. Notify the International Education staff and the trip coordinator of any special needs you may have. Arrange before you leave the U.S. any necessary steps to ensure your health and safety.

To-do list

- Travel documents
 - ◆ Bring your passport.
 - [Apply for a passport.](#)
 - Also bring a color copy of your passport and visa or scan and email yourself the copies. (This will help expedite things if your passport is lost or stolen.)
 - Some countries will require you to carry your passport with you everywhere you go. Determine what will be the best way for you to carry your passport securely and discreetly at all times.
- [Rural vs. Urban](#)
- [Study Abroad Resources](#)
- Check with your personal bank or credit union about using your credit or debit cards overseas. They may need to authorize your cards for international use or increase your daily transaction or

spending limits. Each bank's cards are different. (They will also be able to give you information on currency conversion fees they may charge.)

- Change some U.S. cash for the foreign country's currency before you leave.
 - ◆ Plan to bring some U.S. dollars with you. Typically small denomination bills not larger than \$20.00 bills will be easiest to exchange for the local currency. You may also need them when you first arrive back in the U.S.
- Check with your cell phone provider for information on international service and rates for your phone and plan. Many American phones are not programmed for international use, etc. Some only support data such as text and applications but not phone service.
- Purchase an outlet converter.
 - ◆ Your small appliances, electric razors, hairdryers, laptops, phone chargers, etc. may not work overseas without the proper power adapters to convert them for foreign outlets.

Travel tips

- Make a checklist of all the things you will need to do to at least a week before you leave
- Make a checklist of the essentials you will need to bring before packing
- Less is definitely more when you travel overseas. Focus on bringing only the essentials you need to maintain your hygiene and fully engage in your program and excursions.
- Packing a few interchangeable outfits or clothes that can be easily washed in your dorm or hotel room are worth investing in.
- In addition to airline restrictions on the number of bags you can check or carry-on, you will likely have to carry your own luggage wherever you go.
- Bringing a collapsible bag or backpack that can be stowed in your suitcase and used later is also a good idea. You are likely to bring back more than you left with as you acquire program materials and souvenirs.
- Pack extra clothes in your carry-on luggage: You may want to pack a couple of outfits in your carry-on luggage. If your luggage is lost or delayed, you will have enough clean clothes to get through a few days.
- People in other countries are often different sizes than most Americans, which can make finding the right fitting clothes difficult (including shoes). You may also have a set schedule to maintain with minimal or limited time for shopping. So it's best to plan ahead.
- Also, pack toiletry items and things you need daily in your carry-on luggage. Check with your airlines for carry-on bag limits and other restrictions.
- Wear comfortable shoes: It is important to remember to pack a sturdy pair of comfortable shoes for your trip.
- People in other countries tend to walk more and you will too. You'll appreciate a worn sneaker more than a new one at the end of the day.
- Bring your medications
 - ◆ Bring any prescription medications you will need to take while abroad, and enough for the duration of your trip. These should be brought in the prescription bottles and/or packaging you received from the pharmacy, which clearly show your name and the physician who prescribed them.
 - ◆ Bring any over-the-counter medications you may need as these can be difficult or unavailable overseas. These should be brought in their original packaging. While most countries will carry common over-the-counter medications, the brands, products, formulas or dose allowances may be very different. You may have trouble translating the labels as well.
- Bring a First-Aid kit
 - ◆ A first-aid kit should never be forgotten while traveling. No matter where you are visiting, accidents can happen and a first-aid kit is a great help. Whether you're dealing with a small scrape to a larger laceration, small kits should include everything that you may need in the event of an injury. Having a few medical supplies handy is far easier than trying to locate the nearest pharmacy. (If your kit has scissors, pack them in your checked baggage to avoid security issues at the airport.)

- Cell Phone apps
 - ◆ There are a multitude of cell phone applications that are very useful. You should find out which ones will be most useful for you. There are currency converters, barcode readers, QR code readers, voice-activated translator apps, phone locators (to keep track of your friends or professor), and many more.
 - ◆ WhatsApp, zoom, fiber, google phone number
 - ◆ Need reception? find a McDonalds.
- Restroom facilities
 - ◆ Can be quite different abroad, especially in Asian countries. Many of the more modern and westernized cities in Asia should have the American variety but being prepared for the latter is a good idea. International restroom accommodations may not include tissue paper, hand soap or running water. It's a good idea to bring your own and invest in some hand sanitizer. Some restrooms are not as private as the standard facilities in the U.S. as privacy means different things in different countries.
- Safety Laws
 - ◆ Each country's laws can vary significantly from those in the U.S. (or your home country). While most fundamental laws dealing with morality and ethics prevail, it's a good idea to read up on the specific laws of the country or countries you'll be visiting.
 - ◆ Typically, if it's against the law in the U.S., it will be elsewhere, although violations may be handled much more severely abroad.
 - ◆ Trust your gut: If something doesn't feel right or look right, it's probably not. Although you are encouraged to pursue activities outside of your comfort zone, your new experiences should be safe ones. Look for warning signs that things are amiss. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Situational Awareness
 - ◆ You should always be aware of your surroundings and where your personal belongings are. Walk with purpose and be observant. Be mindful of how far you stray off the beaten path as there are good and bad areas in every city. Be mindful of how much you drink if you plan to consume alcohol as it makes you more vulnerable to criminals.
- Mingling with the locals
 - ◆ While you are encouraged to mingle and speak to the locals, there is a certain level of cultural sensitivity that should be maintained at all times. It is typically a good idea not to talk about controversial topics such as politics, or other hot-button issues when traveling abroad. (Remember the American (or your home country) viewpoint is not always the prevailing attitude abroad.)
- As a Lyon College student learning abroad, you are required to adhere to the college's code of conduct during all parts of your trip.
- Additional travel
 - ◆ It's best to travel in a group but if you do strike out on a solo endeavor, make sure someone knows where you plan to go and how you plan to get there.
 - ◆ Do not tell strangers or acquaintances you meet that you are traveling alone.
- Valuables
 - ◆ Do not bring anything of value you do not have to. Leave jewelry, expensive or designer clothes and shoes, camera equipment or unnecessary electronics at home. You probably won't need them anyway.
- Lost or stolen items
 - ◆ You may not have a lot of recourse abroad if things are lost or stolen. If you have anything of value you're bringing with you, buying insurance before you leave is the way to go. Some insurance carriers will ensure a single item, or you can buy travel insurance. Many insurance companies will offer some form of both.

Social/Cultural Matters

Do not assume that the rules of behavior in the place you are going will be the same as those in the United States, even if English is the language of the host country. Rather than make social mistakes that could

seriously affect how local people see you and interact with you, take the time to research the local customs and culture. There are several online resources for doing this, such as <https://www.commisceo-global.com/resources/country-guides>

Since local people you meet overseas will tend to see you as a source of information and insight on all things American, it might be worthwhile to brush up on American current events before you leave. Again, there are plenty of online resources and news sites online, as well as magazines such as Time and Newsweek.

Housing

Secure housing. If you are traveling on a short-term study abroad trip, this will be taken care of by your program, but if not, booking in advance is the best option. First, contact your host university's international student services office. They should be able to provide a list of student rooms, apartments, and residences, and to give you some suggestions on the best and most cost-effective ways to commute between your lodging and the university.

Culture Shock

It only sounds scary. In fact, your learning abroad experience should be shocking. Experiencing another culture and traveling abroad should take you outside of your comfort zone enough to make a lasting impact on your development as a global citizen. While culture shock can cause anxiety, boredom, excessive sleepiness, and severe depression, many who go abroad confuse culture shock with homesickness. There may be some things that you never completely get used to abroad, and that is completely normal.

Homesickness

Leaving the country is a great opportunity for growth, not only for you but your family and friends as well. They will want to be involved in your international experience, especially if you are the first to leave the country! 1-2 months prior to leaving on your trip is a great chance to set expectations for yourself and your support system. Use the below-talking points to guide your discussion. What are your worries about me going abroad? What can we do to address your concerns? How often will we communicate? Should we set a schedule? Remember this is a time to immerse yourself in another culture and gain more independence. You should consider limiting contact back home. Am I expected/willing to share my experience while abroad? If so, how? Facebook, Blogs, Instagram and Snapchat are great options. Like communication, try to limit social media usage to maximize your new cultural experience. If you have received emergency procedures from your program, such as how to contact you in case of emergency, share them with your support system.

It is very normal to feel some anxiety while you are away from home no matter where you go. The longer you are away from your usual surroundings, the more likely you will feel some anxiety about being far from home for an extended period. However, the longer you stay the more accustomed you will become to your new surroundings and the norms of a new country.

You can ease feelings of homesickness by:

1. Bringing pictures of your friends and family
2. Writing or calling home often
3. Keeping in touch with friends and family via social media (there are only a few countries where social media is restricted)
4. Keeping a journal, blog, or vlog of your personal experiences and feelings while abroad
5. Making as many new friends as you can

6. Participating in additional activities
7. Exercising regularly

Transportation

- Public transportation
 - ◆ Can be very helpful in getting around a new city. Plan your route and transfers beforehand, and how fares are to be paid.
- Taxis
 - ◆ You will probably have to take a taxi at some point during your trip. Most major cities will have many legitimate taxi service providers. These will be easy to spot and will have cars that are clearly marked. If you are approached by a questionable taxi remember you can always get the next one or solicit one directly from the provider.
 - ◆ You should always make sure you know the fare upfront. Not all taxis will have an electronic meter running but will have a set flat rate per mile, etc.
 - ◆ It's best to negotiate a price for your fare prior to your trip and then hold the driver to it.
- Driving
 - ◆ In some countries, it is illegal for foreigners to drive or rent cars. (In some countries it is illegal for women to drive.) If you are planning to drive in the country you are visiting, it will be a good idea to make sure they will honor your U.S. (or home country's) driver's licenses and that you can legally obtain a vehicle and the appropriate insurance.
- Bicycling
 - ◆ Bicycling might be a better option. In most modern cities abroad, you can easily and inexpensively rent bicycles.
- Renting a motorcycle or scooter might also be an option.
 - ◆ While some countries will require a driver's license and insurance to rent or operate a motorbike, just as they would for a car, many do not. (Don't forget to also rent a helmet!) Make sure you are well apprised of the street laws prior to venturing out on the busy city streets abroad.
- Traffic in other cities can be very different and more dangerous than in the U.S. (or your home country), and traffic signs and signals may operate differently or mean different things.

While many are universal, make sure you are apprised of the differences.

Emergencies

Try as you might, you may find yourself in a situation you cannot reasonably get out of without assistance. If you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it.

If you are staying with a host family, they will be able to assist you with most minor and major issues that could arise. (Do not be shy about reaching out to your host family in advance of your trip, they are expecting you.)

Your host institution or university will be able to provide assistance either through their international studies offices or student affairs offices.

Some countries (typically those with a high population of tourists or foreigners) will have city guards stationed around the major metro areas who are trained to assist people with minor problems or offer directions.

The police in most countries will be able to assist you or put you in contact with the U.S. Embassies abroad (or your home country's embassy).

It's a good idea to visit the U.S. Embassy in the country (or countries) you'll be visiting when you first arrive – especially if you will be there for more than 2 weeks. You can register with them making assisting you during an emergency much easier.

You can contact Lyon Campus Safety 24/7 870-307-7233.

Travel Warnings

The college may warn travelers and/or impose additional requirements or restrictions on students seeking to travel to destinations where health, safety, or security concerns pose risks that warrant such a decision.

The college reserves the right to prohibit or suspend travel by students for university-related purposes to any destination if health, safety, or security concerns pose risks that warrant such a decision.

The college will issue Travel Warnings based on destinations for which the U.S. Department of State has issued a Travel Warning, as well as other sources of information, including but not limited to travel advisories from other countries and information from the travel and insurance industries.

Travel to destinations for College-related purposes for which a College Travel Warning has been issued should conform to the following guidelines:

1. Students cannot be required to participate in any education abroad experience in destinations subject to a Travel Warning to satisfy a degree requirement.
2. Education abroad programs in destinations subject to a Travel Warning may be suspended. This applies, but is not limited, to exchange programs, faculty-led programs, third-party programs, internships, research, and service-learning programs.
3. Individual students (undergraduate, graduate, or professional) may submit a petition to the Education Abroad Office requesting authorization to travel for university-related purposes to destinations subject to a University Travel Warning. If approved, the individual student must (i) register in the Student International Travel Registry and comply with related requirements, (ii) obtain university-approved international emergency travel insurance, and (iii) submit a Destinations of Risk–Assumption of Risk and Waiver of Liability form. The university reserves the right to revoke such approval should the safety, security, and/or health situation in a destination deteriorate, either prior to the student’s departure or while the student is abroad.
4. Students already in an overseas location at the time the university issues a Travel Warning for that location will be advised of the change in the risk status of their location.
 - a. In some cases, students will be advised to evacuate that location. Students who choose to remain in an overseas location after being advised by the university to evacuate must submit a Destinations of Risk–Assumption of Risks and Waiver of Liability form.
5. In other cases, students will be required to evacuate that location. Students who choose to remain in an overseas location after being required by the university to evacuate will not be eligible for university funding or academic credit for the student’s current travel activity, may be held accountable for violating the student code of conduct, and may be subject to restrictions in other benefits or services.

Conclusion

This guide accessed a variety of online sources and the experience of the author in gathering information to help you prepare for your great adventure overseas. It does not claim to be an exhaustive source of all the details you will need for study abroad. Use it as one resource among many in researching what you need to know to make the best of your study abroad. Also access country guides books, online resources, trip leaders, study abroad staff, and any other available sources of information to help you in your preparation. As stated previously, extensive and careful preparation is essential for effective overseas travel and study.

As with most experiences in life, the benefits of studying abroad will be determined by both the mindset you bring to it and the effort you put into it. Approach the experience with openness and a willingness to learn, to try new things, and to reflect on differences and similarities you encounter overseas, and you will get the most out of studying abroad. Make the extra effort to engage with the people and the culture of the place you are visiting, to respect and understand other ways of thinking and doing things, and you will return home with a greater appreciation of the richness of the world you live in and a greater understanding of your own culture and how it compares with others.

Contact information

- Campus Safety
 - ◆ 870-307-7233
- Nicolas Patillo
 - ◆ +1 870 - 307 - 7350
 - ◆ + 870 257 - 1868 - Cell
- Cassidy Mitchell
 - ◆ +1 870-307-7201