



# **Preparing to Study Abroad Handbook**

Bennett College  
Center for Global Studies



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## DOCUMENTS ABROAD

### ***Passport***

To leave the country, you need to take your U.S. Passport and carry it in your carry-on luggage. You should also make photocopies of your passport. Leave one photocopy with your parents or guardians at home and take at least two photocopies with you. This way, if you lose your passport, the photocopies will make it easier to obtain a new one. Also, bring extra passport photos.

### ***Visa***

Depending on where you are studying abroad, you may or may not need a Visa. Check the customs and immigration for the host country. If you do need a Visa, you will apply through the host country's Embassy. Also, bring photocopies of your Visa with you.

### ***Credit Cards***

For any credit cards that you take, have photocopies of them with you and know the contact information for the credit card companies if they are stolen or lost.

### ***Acceptance Letter***

Taking a copy of your acceptance letter and any other documents about your study abroad program can prove to be helpful if you have any issues at immigration when you first arrive in the country.

### ***Health Insurance***

Your U.S. health insurance will often not cover any incidents abroad, which means you must purchase international health insurance. Bring proof of your international health insurance when you go abroad. While abroad, you should also maintain your current health insurance in U.S.

### ***International Student Card***

International Student Cards provide discounts for many locations abroad. If you are interested in this, you can purchase the card through ISIC online.

## **BENNETT MATTERS**

### ***Forms***

Before you leave Bennett to study abroad, you must complete the following forms:

- **Transfer of Credit**  
The transfer of credit form requires signatures from your academic advisor and department chair approving your study abroad courses. Once completed, you will return the form to us at the Center for Global Studies. We will then give the form to the Registrar's office. The completion of transfer of credit will occur when Bennett receives your transcripts from study abroad. You must receive a C or better to earn credit.
- **Health Form**  
The health form is for us to be aware of any health concerns while you are abroad. The form will be stored in your file. This information will be used primarily to guide us in making appropriate arrangements for you.
- **Parent/Guardian Communication Form**  
This form allows you to list the contact information of who you would want us to contact in case of an emergency. By signing this form, you give us permission to contact them.
- **Study Abroad Conduct Pledge**  
Signing this form means that you have agreed to Bennett College's Code of Conduct. If you violate the pledge, you may be sent home from your program and face other consequences.
- **Statement of Participant Responsibilities and Terms and Conditions**  
Through these forms, you acknowledge what your responsibilities are for studying abroad including finances.
- **Non-Employee Waiver and Release for Study Abroad Programs**  
This waiver signifies that you have acknowledged that you are responsible for understanding the risks associated with studying abroad.

***Housing Deposit***

You will want to pay your housing deposit ahead of the semester you return to Bennett. Then, you will be guaranteed housing upon return if you plan to live on campus.

***While Abroad***

You need to keep in touch with your advisor and with our office while you study abroad. If your courses change, you must inform us as soon as possible about the course changes. Also, you will need to work with your advisor to register for classes while you are abroad. Finally, make sure that your transcripts will be sent to our office at Bennett College before returning home.

**FINANCES*****Budget***

Before leaving to study abroad, it is important to make a budget. You should work with the Center for Global Studies and the Financial Aid Office.

***Currency Exchange***

Learn the currency exchange rate for dollars and the foreign currency. You can exchange money at the airport, ATMs, or banks using your debit card or using U.S. dollars. Research ahead of time what will be the best way to exchange money. Do not carry large amounts of cash on you. Also, wear a money belt to keep money close to your body to make it harder for pickpockets.

***Credit Cards***

While abroad, have at least one credit card with you for emergencies and large purchases. Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted credit cards worldwide. Let your bank and credit card companies know when and where you will be abroad for the safety of your finances. Also, you should discuss with your bank and credit card companies what fees you will be charged overseas. This way, you are prepared to pay them.

***Traveler's Checks***

Traveler's Checks are the safest form of payments abroad. However, not all places abroad accept them. You can cash them at banks.

## HOUSING

### ***Choices***

Some programs give you choices for housing and you must decide what will work best for you. There are advantages and disadvantages of each option.

### ***Homestays***

For homestays, bring gifts from the U.S. to give to your host family. Also, be respectful of the family. If you are out at night, be quiet when you come in late. If you are going on a trip, let the family know when you will be going and when you will be back. Do not have guests over unless you ask the family first and do not use telephone without permission. Homestays are great as you have full immersion, but remember to be respectful of the family!

### ***Student Residence Halls***

For residence halls, be respectful of other students studying in the halls. Learn where students congregate to talk and where students congregate to study. Before using phones or internet, check to make sure you will not be charged extra fees. Get involved with the activities the campus and residence halls offer so you can immerse with the local culture!

### ***Apartments***

Apartments provide more independent living and are often off-campus. You may share an apartment with other students on your program or may consider it for yourself. You will have more freedom to live the way you like to live. However, you will be limited in cultural immersion, so you will need to seek opportunities to immerse with the local culture.

### ***Address***

Let us know your address and let your family or guardians know your address where you will be staying. It is important that we have all of your contact information in case of any emergencies.

## COMMUNICATION

### ***Cell Phones***

Some cell phone providers have international plans. Be warned that roaming rates can be very expensive! Be sure to unlock your phone if your phone does work abroad. Another option is to buy a cell phone there and buy a SIM card. You can then buy Pre-Paid calling cards to use with the phone.

### ***Calling Cards***

Calling cards would be the best way to call home and to avoid roaming fees. Prepaid calling cards work with cell phones and payphones. Be aware that using phones in hotels and/or student residences can cost more than payphones.

### ***Internet***

You will need to check on internet access. You should have access at the university and may have access at your residence. Also, there should be internet cafes that you can pay a small fee to use the internet.

### ***Skype***

One of the best forms of communication is Skype as it is free calling from computer to computer. Also, you can purchase Skype credit to call phones for a reasonable price.

### ***Yahoo Messenger and Google Chat***

Yahoo Messenger and other messengers are also other great ways to communicate online.

### ***Emails***

Emailing is also free. **Always check your Bennett email.** Do not let the inbox get full! Any information from Bennett will be emailed to your Bennett email address.

### ***Facebook***

Facebook may be the best way to keep in touch with your friends. However, do not spend hours on it each day and miss out on opportunities abroad! Your friends will be there when you get back.

## HEALTH

### ***Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)***

CDC is the best site to learn about health issues in the host country. It provides information on diseases, water, and food safety. Also it tells you recommended shots that you may need while abroad.

### ***Physical***

Make an appointment with your doctor before leaving. If there are certain shots you must have before going abroad, it is best to consult with your doctor before receiving them as your doctor will know your medical history.

### ***Prescriptions***

Bring a full supply of prescriptions including contacts and glasses. You do not want to ship prescriptions as it is expensive. You will not want to buy your prescriptions overseas as they may not be to U.S. standards. Be sure to have a written note by the doctor of the prescriptions you are taking in case any of the prescriptions are illegal in the country you are studying in.

### ***Toiletries***

Take toiletries that you like with you including feminine products. You may find some of them overseas, but they can be more expensive at times or not exactly what you are used to. You can take them and then discard them before returning home if you need more space in your luggage.

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

You should create a first aid kit of band aids, Neosporin, aspirin, cold medicine, diarrhea medicine, and anything else that you may need. The most common illness abroad is traveler's diarrhea as your body has to get adjusted to the food and water. Be sure to take medicine with you and drink fluids if it does happen!

## SAFETY

### ***General Tips***

Use common sense. Use the same precautions that you would use in the U.S. If you would not do something here, then do not do it there!

Always be aware of your surroundings. Learn about the areas that are unsafe in your host country and always avoid them. If you do feel uncomfortable, then get out of the situation.

Travel with someone else especially at night. Traveling in pairs or groups can be much safer than traveling on your own. Make sure someone always knows your itinerary and where to find you.

Do not carry large amounts of money as you do not want to be a target for pickpockets. Carry your money close to your body. When you need more cash, you should be able to go to an ATM or a bank.

Obey local laws. Research local laws in country where you are going before leaving. This way, you follow the laws and do not end up in jail!

Lock rooms and valuables. Like here in the U.S., always lock your room and lock any valuables that you bring with you. You may want to bring a small lock with you to use. Do not bring anything valuable from the U.S. that you do not want to lose abroad!

Do not hold others' baggage and watch your own! There are people out there with illegal substances.

Do not take drinks from others and always keep an eye on your drinks when you have one. Though you may trust that person, it is better to be safe than sorry.

***U.S. Embassy***

By registering with the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in your host country, you will give the U.S. Embassy your contact information in case of an emergency. Also, know where the Embassy/Consulate is located.

***Alcohol***

Do not drink alcohol excessively overseas as it is often disrespectful to the host culture, it makes you vulnerable to crimes, and you may be sent home for behaving unruly. Remember that you are representing Bennett College overseas and that you have signed a conduct pledge. You are abroad to study and learn about another culture, not to drink the whole time!

***Drugs***

The best advice is to stay away from drugs and stay away from anyone that has them. You do not want to go to jail overseas, and the U.S. Consulate cannot help you with drug charges. Punishments for drug crimes overseas can be much harsher than the U.S. as you can receive the death penalty. Remember to not hold anyone's luggage for them even if they seem trustworthy.

***Emergency Contacts***

Keep a card of emergency contacts for your host country and U.S. emergency contacts. Always have the list of emergency numbers on hand and determine the "911" number for your host country. Contact your family and Bennett for any emergencies! Also, give your family and Bennett College your contact information. Do not be afraid to ask your resident director or local authorities for help!

Bennett Study Abroad Emergency Contact:  
Number: 336-517-1997  
Email: [studyabroad@bennett.edu](mailto:studyabroad@bennett.edu)  
Skype: BennettCollege StudyAbroad

## WHAT TO PACK

### ***Carry-On***

In your carry-on, pack an extra set of clothes and travel toiletries in case your luggage is lost on the way. Also, pack your Passport and Visa and other important documents in your carry-on and photocopies in check-in. You should also pack your prescriptions in your carry-on. This way, you have the necessities in case your check-in luggage arrives late.

### ***Check-In***

Remember most airlines limit luggage to 50 lbs. You are normally allowed the maximum of two check-in baggage. You may or may not be charged for both bags on an international flight. You will need to be able to carry your luggage up and down stairs, onto buses, trains, etc. One tip is to pack everything you want to take and then take half of it out. This way, it is not as heavy, and you will have room for the souvenirs that you buy overseas.

### ***Necessary Items***

- All Documents
- Clothes
- Prescriptions, Aspirin, etc.
- Adaptors and Chargers
- Journal
- Camera
- Battery-Powered Alarm
- Small Gifts from U.S.
- Travel Guide
- A Few Pictures

## TRAVEL TIPS

### ***Planning***

Plan ahead with where you want to travel before leaving. You will still have last minute trips, but it would be wise to determine where you want to go early and to determine a budget for traveling.

### ***Travel Guides***

Consider getting a travel guide to help give you recommendations for places to stay, eat, see, etc. Travel Guides like *Lonely Planet* are great resources.

### ***Transportation***

When it comes to traveling, you have options of flights, trains, buses, and boats. Be sure to research what will be the safest way to travel, which is where a travel guide is helpful. For flights, look into STA Travel and Student Universe for student discounts. Be careful with cheap travel as you may not always end up at the right destination.

### ***Lodging***

There are many options for lodging including hotels and hostels. Know the difference between hostels and hotels. Hostels will be cheaper, but you may share a room and share a bathroom with strangers. Research before picking a place to stay.

### ***Advice***

It is great to travel, but it is also great to immerse in the local host culture!

## CLASSES

### ***Coursework***

Keep all coursework and bring it back with you to Bennett. This will help with credit transfer if anything is questioned.

### ***Course Changes***

If the courses you take abroad are different from what you completed on the Transfer of Credit form, you will need to inform your advisor and us as soon as you can. This way, you avoid any credit transfer issues.

### ***Academic Standards***

Academic standards may be different from Bennett. Always seek help when needed. **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.** Cite everything you use from other sources to avoid plagiarism. You do not want to face the consequences of copying others' works. If you are not sure to cite, the best thing to do is to cite it and be safe.

### ***Classroom Settings***

Classroom settings could be different from Bennett as classes may not be as small, may not be as intimate or personal, and may go for three hours straight. It will not be the same environment, but you should have an open mind and try to enjoy the different experience.

## **DIVERSITY ABROAD**

### ***Race***

Racism varies by country. You should research on racism in the host country before leaving. You may experience more racism as an American than by your race. Many learn about American culture through movies and television. If people stare at you, do not be offended as they may just be curious about you. Also, some may decide you are from other countries than the United States, but do not take this as an insult. Have an open mind!

### ***Gender***

Gender roles will vary by country. Research the role of women in the host country. Understand the different customs for women and observe how women dress. Blending in with the local women will help you avoid unwanted attention. Do not to walk by yourself at night and be aware of your surroundings as a woman.

### ***Sexual Orientation***

For those of you who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT), you should research on your host country to understand how the host culture views the GLBT community. It will vary from culture to culture. You should learn about the laws, norms, and general attitudes. Also, learning about GLBT support resources in the host country will be beneficial for your time abroad. By being knowledgeable, you will have a successful experience studying abroad.

### ***Disability***

Inform the Center for Global Studies and your study abroad program about any disabilities that you may have. This way, the proper arrangements can be made for you. The support abroad for disabilities may be different from the support you have here in the U.S. Be sure to research on your host culture and talk to any alumni from the program.

## AMERICAN CULTURE

### **Values**

Before studying abroad, it is important to understand your own culture and where you come from. By understanding your own culture, you will be able to understand the differences in the host culture that you will be immersing in. Below is a list of values from Robert Kohls that are considered part of American culture.

- Individualism & Privacy
- Future Orientation
- Informality
- Self-help
- Directness, Openness, Honesty
- Action/Work Orientation
- Practicality & Efficiency
- Time & Its Control is important
- Materialism & Acquisitiveness
- Competition & Free Enterprise
- Equality & Egalitarianism
- Change is good
- Personal Control over the Environment

### **Stereotypes: *The Ugly American***

When traveling abroad, Americans have not always been viewed in the most positive light. As an American, you may encounter the following stereotypes being attached to you when abroad. However, there are steps to overcome these stereotypes and have a positive image abroad.

- Loud and Obnoxious
- Boastful and Arrogant
- Ignorant of other countries and cultures
- Insensitive
- Lazy
- Rude
- Rich and Wealthy
- Uninformed about Politics
- Impatient
- Informal
- Promiscuous
- Drunkenness

### ***Overcoming the Ugly American***

The phrase “when in Rome, do as the Romans do” means when you are abroad in your host country, you should try and act the same way the local culture acts. You do not want to be an ignorant tourist that fits the stereotypes of an ugly American, but you want to understand and respect the culture and the way of life in the country.

Also, as Americans are often seen as uninformed and ignorant of the world around them, begin reading the world news. Pay close attention to what is going on in your host country. When abroad, people may also know more about U.S. politics than you may know yourself. You should keep up with U.S. politics, but avoid political conversations with strangers in case conflict arises.

Finally, as a woman, be careful of what you wear abroad. Wearing short shorts or low-cut tops may give others the image that you are promiscuous when you are not. Try to follow the styles of the local culture so you will be respected. Remember to not drink excessively overseas as unruly behavior will occur and you will be considered an ugly American.

Overall, be open-minded, be respectful, and be tolerant to a new culture and new ideas.

### ***Research Host Culture***

Before going abroad, it is important to research on the culture that you will be immersing in. This way, knowing what you might expect when you arrive in your host country will help you adjust easier and allow you to truly enjoy your experience abroad.

When researching on the culture, you should look into greetings, family life, daily life, marriage and dating, festivals and holidays, eating habits, language, hand gestures, and more. Not only will you be more prepared for your experience, but you will also avoid cultural clashes.

## CULTURE SHOCK

### ***What is Culture Shock?***

Culture shock is the process of adjusting to a new country and a new culture. You may feel irritability, sense of loss, rejection, and helplessness.

### ***Culture Shock: Beginning Challenges***

The beginning challenge when you first arrive in a new country is to overcome jet lag, which means your body must adjust to new time zone. First, continue normal eating and sleeping patterns in the new time zone. You should not take mid-day naps, but exercise and walk instead in the sun. Allow yourself a few days to adjust.

### ***“Honeymoon Stage”***

The first few weeks in your new home will be very exciting. Everything will be new and interesting. You will likely be so busy getting settled and starting classes that you may hardly notice that you miss home.

### ***Disenchantment or Hostility Stage***

This is when you face culture shock as you begin to realize that you are not on vacation and that this is where you will live for the next few months. You might experience anger and hostility.

### ***Ways to Cope***

As you may feel anger and hostility, one way to cope is to write about your study abroad experience and thoughts in a journal or blog. This will help you remember your experience as well as cope through these feelings.

While you are there, meet others from the local culture and form new friendships. Get involved with activities on campus or sports that are of interest to you to meet others. Learning the local language will be helpful as it will allow you to communicate. Exploring the area will also make you feel more comfortable and at ease.

Also, share your feelings with other study abroad participants and advisors. There are people there that can relate to you and help you. You should keep in touch with those from home in order to cope with homesickness. However, do not spend all of your time focusing on home as you will miss opportunities abroad.

Through following these steps, you will truly be able to enjoy your experience abroad.

***Adjustment Phase***

By being flexible with the changes, you will reach this stage. You will come to better understand your environment, will adjust your behavior, and accept your host culture's ways. You may feel less isolated and more at ease.

***Adaptation or Acceptance Stage***

Finally, you will feel that you consider your university and your new town your second home. You will have made friends and will feel that your community accepts you just as you have accepted it.

**REENTRY SHOCK**

***What is Reentry Shock?***

Reentry shock is similar to culture shock. When you return home to the U.S., you may have emotional difficulties in readjusting. You may feel home is not what you expected and feel that some may not understand your changes. Your family and friends may get tired of hearing about your experiences abroad and you may feel relationships have changed. You may begin to miss your home abroad.

***Ways to Cope***

Some ways to cope with reentry shock include talking with people who understand what you are going through including those of us at the Center for Global Studies, those you studied abroad with, and those in the Counseling Services.

Also, having the opportunity to share your study abroad experiences with others will allow you to reflect on what you learned and allow you to not “shoebox” your experience. Talk to us at the Center for Global Studies for opportunities to talk with prospective study abroad students.

Be sure to maintain a healthy diet and exercise when you return. Do not overeat on food that you missed while abroad as it will make you feel unhealthy and negative. Exercise will also help keep you positive and upbeat as you adjust to being home.

Finally, though you have returned home, you can still maintain your international connections. Keep in touch with those you met overseas. Get involved with international activities on campus and outside of campus including volunteering, interning, or working with international organizations. There are always opportunities to go abroad again as well!

***Overall Advice for Success***

- Have an open-mind!
- Be flexible!
- Get involved in the host culture!
- Keep in contact with those from home!
- Make friends abroad!
- Be aware of what you may feel!
- Maintain your sense of humor!
- Have fun!

## RESOURCES

### ***Documents***

U.S. Passports

<http://travel.state.gov/passport/>

International Student Card

<http://www.isic.org/home.aspx>

### ***Finances***

Currency Converter

<http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

### ***Health and Safety***

Center for Disease and Control and Prevention- Travelers' Health

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

U.S. State Department Students' Abroad

<http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/>

U.S. State Department International Travel

<http://travel.state.gov/travel/>

Overseas Security Advisory Council Global Security News and Reports

<http://www.osac.gov/>

The Association for Safe International Road Travel

<http://www.asirt.org/>

### ***Travel***

Lonely Planet Travel Guide

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/us>

Let's Go Guide

<http://www.letsgo.com/>

STA Travel

<http://www.statravel.com/>

Student Universe Travel  
<http://www.studentuniverse.com/>

Hostelling International/American Youth Hostels National Office  
[www.hiayh.org](http://www.hiayh.org)

**Diversity Abroad**  
Diversity Abroad  
<http://www.diversityabroad.com>

Mobility International  
<http://www.miusa.org/>

LGBT Students  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/student.htm>

**Understanding Culture**  
What's Up with Culture?  
[http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/CULTURE\\_ISSUES\\_2.htm](http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/CULTURE_ISSUES_2.htm)

Culture Matters Workbook  
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/educators/enrichment/culturematters/index.html>

**Other Helpful Sites**  
The Center for Global Understanding Resource Center  
<http://www.globaled.us/>

All Abroad  
<http://allabroad.us/>

Transitions Abroad  
<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/>

Study Abroad Student Guide  
<http://www.studyabroad.com/guides/handbook/handbook6.html>





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