

Welcome to a World of Opportunities!

("Orientation Handbook For Study Abroad and Other International Experiences". Edited and reprinted with permission from the Office of International Programs, 105 Laurel Hall, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523. Telephone: (970) 491-5917).

Congratulations on adding an international experience to your life. A successful international experience requires much planning and preparation.

One of the most significant benefits of an international exchange is the confidence and independence young adults gain during the experience. You begin to build these skills now as you prepare for international experience. Ultimately you are the architect of your own experience and responsible for all parts of the process.

This handbook is intended to provide general information to help you prepare for your time abroad. **Read it and please share it with your family.** This manual will answer many of your questions. The organization sponsoring your program will also provide you with information and many offer some type of orientation that is specific to their program.

To further complement the information provided during orientation and in this handbook, it is important that you make an effort to read and educate yourself about the country you will call "home." If you know someone who has studied or lived in the country seek them out, or check with your program office for a list possible contacts. Those who have experience in the country can be a valuable source of information. Also, your program sponsor should be able to help you get in touch with former participants. In addition, we recommend checking-out books (fiction and nonfiction) and other information available at your university and/or your local library. You might also check your local video store for travel videos or movies, contact the country embassy in the U.S. for information, explore the unlimited resources available through the internet, and read newspapers, which focus on international current events such as The Christian Science Monitor.

DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT

If you do not have a U.S. passport you must apply for one immediately, it may take a month or more to get your passport. The passport is your official identification as a citizen of the United States. It will be checked upon leaving and leaving the U.S. or any other nation, as well as any occasion that requires official identification.

Passport applications can be obtained at any authorized U.S. post office or can be printed off the internet. Net site: <http://travel.state.gov>. The completed application must be accompanied by proof of citizenship (a certified official copy of your birth certificate), proof of identity such as a driver's license, previous U.S. passport, certificate of naturalization, or recent government identification card. You will also be required to submit two identical photographs* (2" X 2") taken within six months of the date of application. The current passport fee is \$55 for the passport and a \$10 processing fee for first time applicants. Call in advance; some locations do not accept personal checks and may require exact change. Also, check on the current price. Upon receipt of the passport make two photocopies of the page with your picture and passport number on it. Leave one at home with your designated representative and carry the other copy with you separate from your passport. If you lose your passport your copy will make it easier to get a replacement from the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. You should get the replacement and contact the local police immediately.

Loss or theft of a valid U.S. passport should be reported in writing immediately to:

Passport Service
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20524

VISA (Official foreign government document, entry requirement in some countries)

A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by that country. Some countries require a student or long-term stay visa, some countries do not. To learn about the requirements for your host country visit <http://www.embassyworld.com/embassy/directory.htm>. It is your responsibility to comply with the visa

requirements for your host country. In many cases you will not be allowed to board the plane if you do not have the appropriate visa. (In the past, airlines have been fined for allowing passengers without appropriate visas to board the plane and are not willing to accept this risk for you.)

To apply for a visa you will send your passport and student visa application and any other required documentation* via certified mail along with a return, self-addressed certified envelope, to the appropriate address in the U.S. They will stamp your passport with the visa and return it to you. This process could take as long as one to three months so begin early.

If you plan to travel outside of your host country you must meet the visa requirements of the country you plan to visit. Again, you can find this information at <http://www.embassyworld.com/embassy/directory.htm>.

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE HOST COUNTRY

Upon arrival at your study abroad destination, it is wise to register with the U.S. Consulate closest to your program site. They will then have a record of your presence in the country. You should keep a copy of the Consulate's address and phone number with you.

Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Overseas Citizens Services

Telephone: 202-647-5225 (Daytime and evening)

Contact this office regarding:

- Death of an American citizen abroad
- Arrest/detention of an American citizen abroad
- Robbery of an American citizen abroad
- American citizens missing abroad
- Crisis abroad involving American citizens

While abroad, you are responsible for knowing and abiding by the laws of the host country. Remember that you are the visitor and subject to all rules and regulations of the country, whether studying abroad or visiting. The U.S. Consulate has no authority when its citizens have violated the laws of the country. They should be contacted if you find yourself in a legal problem and they can assist you in finding appropriate consul.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

It is best to have a complete physical examination by your physician prior to departure. At that time you may want to schedule any immunizations you might need for the country(ies) you plan to visit. You might also want to discuss travel health care issues with your physician, ask for recommendations for dealing with common problems, and possible prescriptions you can take with you to alleviate any discomfort. Ask your physician for a copy of your health exam report. In some countries you might have to provide this information upon entry into the country. Also, some countries now require proof of a recent AIDS test; be sure you know the requirements. (See below for sources of information.)

If you become ill within 12 months after you return from abroad, be sure to let your physician know that you have been traveling and where you have traveled. This information could be important to diagnosis and treatment.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta periodically provides information about current immunization requirements for those traveling abroad.

Net address: <http://www.cdc.gov/>

Phone: 1-800-311-3435

Public Inquiries: 1-404-639-3534

Under the above Net address the following information is available:

- Vaccination Requirements
- Food and Water Precautions
- The Blue Sheet - lists countries infected with cholera, yellow fever, plague, etc.
- Geographic Health Recommendations
- Disease Outbreaks

IMMUNIZATIONS

Check with the University Health Service or your county health department for information on current immunization requirements for your host country and any other country you plan to visit. Also discuss immunizations with your physician who will have your record and will know if all of your shots, including tetanus, are current. (See the earlier information about the CDC.)

PRESCRIPTIONS

If you are currently under the care of a physician or require regular medication or injections (e.g. insulin, allergy shots, birth control pills), be sure to check with your personal physician for any advice or recommendations concerning your welfare while abroad. Take an adequate supply of prescriptions with you and take copies of prescription information. Prescription medicines should be accompanied by a letter from your physician describing the problem and the dosage of prescribed medication. This information will assist medical authorities during an emergency.

- If you receive **allergy injections** you must tell your program sponsor as regulations regarding the vaccine vary by country.
- If you have diabetes, are allergic to penicillin, or have any physical condition that may require emergency care, carry some kind of identification (a tag, bracelet, or card) at all times. In the event of an emergency and you are not able to communicate, this information must clearly specify the nature of the complication and what must or must not be done.
- Travelers required to take a medicine containing habit-forming or narcotic drugs should carry a doctor's certificate attesting to that fact. Due to differences in laws, it is best to consult the embassies of the countries you will visit prior to departing from the U.S.
- Be sure to take an adequate supply of any over-the-counter medications you use. You may not be able to purchase the same brand abroad.
- Keep all medications in their original and labeled containers and carry them and any accompanying documentation from your physician in your carry on luggage. If your checked luggage is misplaced you will have your medication.
- If you wear glasses or contacts, take along your lens prescription and an extra pair.
- It is also recommended that you take a small first-aid kit.

Health Information for International Travel is available for a charge from: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 or International Association for Medical Assistance, 736 Centre St., Lewiston, NY 14092. Phone: 716-754-4483.

PHYSICIANS ABROAD

If you find yourself in a situation where you require a physician, and you are not fluent in the language of the country, contact one of the following for a list of doctors/dentists who speak English: the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, a large travel agency such as Thomas Cook or American Express, or go to the front desk of a large hotel. When it comes to your health you do not want a communication breakdown so be sure to seek an English-speaking doctor/dentist.

SAFE SEX AND AIDS

The risk of getting AIDS depends on you. Here are some general precautions against AIDS you can follow regardless of where you are in the world:

- ⊗ Avoid exchange of semen, blood, or vaginal fluids with anyone. Either abstain from sexual activity or practice safe sex.
- ⊗ Use a condom. Both men and women should carry their own condoms. You may have trouble finding reliable brands of condoms abroad; some countries may not even sell condoms.

- ⊗ Use water-based lubricants/jellies containing a spermicide in addition to a condom during vaginal and anal intercourse.
- ⊗ Do not use illicit drugs. Do not use needles and syringes that may have been used previously.

Remember: one acquires the AIDS virus rather than “catches” it. With proper precautions, you can virtually safeguard yourself from the virus.

Excerpt from the brochure **Travel Safe: Aids and International Travel** produced by CIEE.

Additional information is available on the net: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

INSURANCE

Before you travel be sure you know your insurance company’s procedures for securing health care and making a claim. The process varies by company and it is important to know the procedure before you need to use it. Write down the instructions along with your insurance agent’s name and phone number, take them with you and leave a copy at home with someone you can call should you need the information.

FOOD AND WATER

In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, you should be advised that only the following may be safe to drink:

- Beverages made with boiled water such as tea and coffee.
- Canned or bottled carbonated beverages, including carbonated bottled water and soft drinks.
- Bottled water
- Beer and wine.

Where water may be contaminated, ice and containers for drinking should also be considered contaminated. It is generally safer to drink directly from the can or bottle of a beverage than from a questionable container. Food should be selected with care to avoid illness. In areas of the world where hygiene and sanitation are poor, you are advised to avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese and cream, and to eat only raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled. (Always peel fruits and vegetables before eating.)

MONEY

INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL EXPENSES

When traveling it is said that you should take half as many clothes and twice as much money as you think you will need. You may not be able to take twice as much money but do not underestimate how much you will need. A low estimate for the exchange is about \$30 per day for days that you will be *away* from your “home.” Of course this estimate varies by country. It is a good idea to talk with someone who recently visited the country or check student-directed travel books (*Let’s Go*, *Berkeley Guides* or *Lonely Planet*) for information on travel costs such as hostel/hotel accommodations, food, transportation, sightseeing, etc.

INCIDENTAL EXPENSES

You will be responsible for personal expenses including personal care products, stamps, and travel during free time. These expenses will vary depending on your individual lifestyle. During orientation you will be able to discuss these costs with former participants.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

United States dollars and traveler’s checks can be exchanged for foreign currency at international airports, railroad stations, and banks. Money can be exchanged at stores, hotels, restaurants, or retail shops, but it is not wise to do so as the exchange rate will not be in your favor. Banks usually post the current exchange rates and are the safest place to exchange money. Remember, every time you exchange money you pay a commission, so budget wisely.

Prior to leaving it might be useful to know the current exchange rate for the country you plan to visit. Information on exchange rates can be found at net site: <http://www.xe.net/currency/>. You may want to have a little local currency with you upon arrival. You can purchase local currency at international banks or you can work with a local bank that has international bank connections. Getting foreign currency can sometimes take a week or more so plan ahead. You can also purchase local currency at most international airports either before leaving the United States or upon arrival in your host country. The exchange rate may not be as favorable so plan to exchange only enough for a few days expenses.

ALTERNATIVES TO CASH

Whenever you travel it is never wise to carry large sums of money on your person. Below are some alternatives.

DEBIT OR ATM CARDS

ATM cards can be used in most countries but it wise to talk to someone who has recently been in the country you plan to visit to be sure machines are available, if they experienced any problems, and to find out the charge associated with using ATMs.

CREDIT CARDS

If you are going to take a credit card (which is a good idea), take VISA, Master Card, or American Express. VISA is probably the most commonly accepted card and offers cash advances (a bank commission is charged). You can cash your own personal checks at most American Express offices if you have an American Express card. Contact American Express to find the location of the office nearest your program location and to learn about the stipulations about check cashing. (See Money Transfer, below, for phone number.) Remember, someone has to pay your charges on your credit card while you are gone. Be sure to make arrangements with someone at the address the bill goes to.

TIP: It is best to limit the number of credit cards you carry and to keep a list of your card number(s) and the company(s) phone number. Leave a copy at home in the U.S. If you lose the card(s) you or your designated representative can call the company to report the loss.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Another option is to carry traveler's checks which can be converted to local currency at banks within the country. There is a bank commission for cashing the traveler's checks which is usually the same regardless of the amount of the check. If the traveler's checks are lost or stolen, they can be replaced when you provide the serial numbers. Some students have elected to purchase traveler's checks in the currency of the host country (pounds, francs, yen).

TIP: Make several lists of your traveler's check numbers and keep them along with the company's phone number in different locations. Record when and where you cash them. If they are lost or stolen you will have a record of which checks need to be replaced.

MONEY TRANSFER

You may receive money from home by using an international postal money order. This service is available at most post offices but check with the post office before you leave to ensure that the country you are going to will accept these. In some countries you can have money transferred to you by Western Union. Contact Western Union at 1-800-325-6000 or <http://www.westernunion.com> to verify if this service is offered in your program location. Again, there are charges associated with money transfers.

American Express also can transfer money to you if you have an American Express card. Contact American Express Card Member Services at 1-800-528-4800 or <http://www.americanexpress.com>. Also, check with your home bank prior to departure to find out if they have an association with a bank in your host country.

TIP: It is not recommended that cash or personal checks be sent via the mail service. Money can be stolen, mail may be delivered more slowly than anticipated, and U.S. checks are difficult, if not impossible, to cash unless you have an American Express card.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Contact your preferred phone company for instructions for calling home from another country. Many phone companies have special numbers for English-speaking operators, be sure to ask about this. Another phone option available in many countries is the phone card.

POSTAL ADDRESS

If you want to get mail during your first week or two but do not know your address, you can have mail sent to you in care of the country office. Before you leave confirm with your program that the office will accept mail addressed to you. Check with your program director for individual country details.

Your name
C/O Program Name
Address
Country, Post Code

TRAVEL FROM THE U.S. TO YOUR DESTINATION ABROAD

Make a copy of your ticket, leave a copy with your family or friends, and carry a copy with you separate from the ticket.

Travelers develop self-sufficiency including the ability to be flexible and to deal with situations as they arise. Be prepared for glitches, as they are inevitable. Always carry ample reading material for those unexpected delays and remember that the journey is as important as the destination.

LUGGAGE

Most airlines operating international flights will permit you to check through two pieces of luggage. Check your ticket envelope, with your travel agent, or the web for specific luggage dimensions and weight. This may not seem like much space to pack all that you will need to survive for the time you will be away but when you are maneuvering through airports and on public transportation you will find that it is more than enough to handle.

PACKING LIST

Pack one week before you leave then carry your packed luggage around the block. If you have trouble carrying the load, you have packed too much. Lighten your load and lessen your hassles. (Many student travelers highly recommend a backpack to facilitate ease of carrying.) This is only a general list of items and quantities. Add or delete items to meet your personal requirements and the specific country, but remember if you pack it you have to carry it.

Clothing

- 1 pair of walking shoes (broken in)
- 5-7 pairs of socks
- 5-7 pairs of underwear
- 1-2 pairs of shorts
- 1-2 pairs of slacks or skirt
- 2 shirts/blouses
- 1 sweater/sweatshirt
- 1 poncho/rain jacket
- 1 jacket (the weight depends on the climate, be sure you know which season you will be there, remember the seasons are opposite below the equator)
- 1 bathing suit
- 1 dressy outfit, including shoes, for going out

TIP: The best items of clothing to take are lightweight, washable, interchangeable and can be layered. Limit your clothing and be creative! Think in terms of being able to combine clothing in such a way as to dress up or down as the occasion warrants.

Medicine (pack in your carry-on luggage)

- prescription medicine (Keep it in the original bottle and carry a copy of the prescription.)
- eyeglasses and prescription (an extra pair of glasses)
- contact lenses and prescription (an extra pair of contacts)
- lens cleaning solution
- contraceptives/condoms
- aspirin
- any other over-the-counter medications you use (Be sure to keep them in their original containers and pack them in your carry-on luggage.)

Other: _____

Toiletries

Take small amounts of personal care items unless you have a favorite you can't live without. Personal care items ARE sold in other countries. In some cases the brands will be different and may cost more, but the alternative is carrying these items in great quantity.

- toothbrush and toothpaste
- soap and shampoo
- sunscreen, moisturizer, cosmetics
- deodorant
- first-aid kit
- tissue (theirs may be a little rougher than you are used to)
- tampons
- razor blades
- sunglasses
- comb and brush
- washcloth

Documents

Money belt or neck wallet filled with the following:

- passport
- tickets and rail passes
- student ID card
- cash, traveler's checks, credit card

Miscellaneous

- camera and film
- Swiss army knife
- flashlight
- books, guides, and maps
- small amount of laundry soap and line
- sewing kit
- stuff bag/plastic storage bag for wet clothes
- change purse
- umbrella
- luggage locks and tags (on your luggage both inside and out)
- battery-operated alarm clock
- any batteries you may need (they are more expensive abroad, may be different than what you need, and may not last as long)
- moist towelettes
- pictures of your family and other people significant to you. (Your new friends will want to see the people you are talking about.)

NOTE: Adapter and voltage converter are best purchased abroad.

TIPS FOR SECURING VALUABLES DURING TRAVEL

- Don't carry everything in one place. Example, do not carry your traveler's checks with your list of traveler's check numbers, your ticket with the photocopy of your ticket.

- Always put medications and anything else you must have in your carry-on luggage. This might also include toothbrush and toothpaste, a clean shirt/blouse and several pair of underwear. If your luggage goes some where without you, you will have at least a few essentials with you to make you comfortable while you wait for it to return.
- Never carry large amounts of cash. Carry a small amounts of cash in your pocket to buy snacks, a newspaper, etc. and the remainder of your cash in your money belt or neck wallet. The less often you have to go into your money belt or neck wallet the less you will be displaying your documents, money, traveler's checks, credit card, etc. Some travelers recommend going into the restroom or some other private place when accessing your money belt or neck wallet.
- Always check your luggage tags to ensure you have the correct luggage. Put a copy of your itinerary and the address of your destination in each piece of luggage. Be sure your luggage is tagged with your name and address. Mark your luggage so it is easily distinguished as it goes through the conveyor belt (a piece of colored tape on the side, a ribbon on the handle, a sticker from another trip). Check the tags as you pick up your luggage and always count your bags as you move through the various transfer points. Many people have similar if not identical luggage and it is very easy to pick up the wrong piece; always check the tags each time you move.

REGISTERING VALUABLES

Take items such as cameras, watches or tape recorders to the nearest customs office and obtain a form signed by a U.S. customs agent stating that you have these items in your possession. Registration will prevent these items from being taxed upon your return to the United States. You may also register these items at the airport before you leave the U.S.

GIFTS

It is an excellent gesture on your part to bring gifts for your roommate, friends, and/or host family. Some suggestions are T-shirts with an American saying or with university logos, postcards or pamphlets of your campus and hometown, or anything 'typical' of your region of the United States. You will have an opportunity during orientation to discuss appropriate gifts with students who have participated in previous programs.

TRAVEL WHILE ABROAD

RAIL PASSES

Combining convenience with inexpensive rates, perhaps the most widely used form of transportation abroad is the railroad. Information and application for rail passes (Britrail, Eurarail, Japan Rail, etc.) can be obtained from a travel agent, through a student travel organization or on the web. These passes can only be purchased in the U.S. and are the equivalent of cash and therefore cannot be replaced if lost or stolen. You must purchase the pass before leaving the U.S. or have someone purchase one for you and send it to you in your host country via registered mail.

BUS PASSES

Another option for traveling is the bus. Check the internet for information on purchasing a bus pass.

BICYCLING

Bicycle touring in some countries is a very enjoyable experience. While cycling, it is much easier to see small towns and the beautiful countryside. Biking is popular in many countries so many countries are ready to accommodate the biker. For informal day biking, bicycles are available for rent all over Europe and parts of Asia. Train stations in big cities and many smaller towns have bicycles for rent which you can pick up and drop off along your route. Check a travel guide or the internet to learn more about biking in your host country. You may take your bike but it will count as a piece of luggage and may quickly "disappear."

SAFETY

Travel to another country is not inherently dangerous; the fact of the matter is that the U.S. citizen will encounter few countries that are as dangerous as is home, if one looks simply at the crime rate and particularly the rate of violent crime. However, no matter where you go, you inevitably stand out as a stranger, a “tourist,” and therefore as a mark to the local criminal. And you cannot rely on your seemingly instinctual knowledge of danger, of what is permissible, of what is and isn’t asking for trouble, as you do at home.

When traveling

- Carry your own luggage; don’t let a stranger carry it or it may get carried off. Never put your luggage in the trunk of a car, you may need to get out of the car quickly.
- Important documents such as passport, travel documents, traveler’s checks, money, credit cards should be kept in a money belt or neck wallet under your clothing to keep them out of the reach of a pickpocket. If your money belt is difficult for you to access, it will also be difficult for a thief to get. Keep small amounts of money in a more accessible place so you don’t have to go into your money belt or neck wallet for cash for a cool beverage. You do not want to display your cash or valuable papers any more than necessary.
- Know the people you are traveling with and always leave your itinerary and your approximate time of return with a friend or your host family. In any big city, women should not walk alone at night.
- If a situation feels uncomfortable stay calm and think of ways you can get out and away from the area. This might be by hailing a taxi or getting into a more public area.
- Insurance which covers theft may be available through your homeowners insurance. Check with your insurance provider.

Upon arrival

- We recommend that you register with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate when you arrive in the country. Should you need their assistance at any time, they will be familiar with your name.

PERSONAL SAFETY

- Do not walk alone at night; always travel in pairs or larger groups. In large cities, this may also be true during the day.
- Wear clothing appropriate to the location. Example: In some cultures shorts are very inappropriate, as are bare arms. Know the culture of the country and conform to it. You are there to experience another culture, not to change it.
- Do not give money to beggars. They may not be satisfied with the amount you give them and may demand more by using force.
- Do not carry large amounts of visible cash and do not place anything valuable in your fanny pack or backpack. (See next item) Wear your fanny pack in front of you where you can see it and hook the straps through your belt loops.
- Important documents such as passport, travel documents, traveler’s checks, money, credit cards should be kept in a money belt or neck wallet under your clothing to keep them out of the reach of a pickpocket. If your money belt is difficult for you to access, it will also be difficult for a thief to get. Keep small amounts of money in a more accessible place so you don’t have to go into your money belt or neck wallet for cash for a cool beverage. You do not want to display your cash or valuable papers any more than necessary.
- We know you have heard it before, but DON’T hitchhike. You know the consequences and they can be deadly.
- Remember that one of the major crimes is robbery, which sometimes becomes assault. Think about things you might do to avoid being a victim and what you might do if you are robbed.

Remember, your life is worth far more than anything you have. If need be, throw your stuff away from you and run in the opposite direction. Scream, act out a seizure, act out of control, throw-up, cause a scene, do whatever you need to do to draw attention to the situation and to get to a safe place.

ALCOHOL

Drinking while socializing is the norm in most parts of the world. We won't tell you not to drink; that is your decision as an adult in the eyes of the law abroad, but becoming drunk can have hazards. If you cannot find your way home you may become a victim of less than scrupulous people who might rob or assault you. If you are drunk in public you may be arrested and put in the "drunk tank" for the night. These are not the kind of intercultural experience that you want. U.S. young adults already have a reputation abroad as "drinking to get drunk." Help dispel that stereotype and avoid problems through responsible behavior.

DRUGS

Drugs which are illegal in the U.S. are also illegal almost everywhere else in the world and the penalties in some countries can be very stiff, even life threatening.

If you are arrested on a drug charge, the U.S. Consular Officer cannot:

- demand your immediate release or get you out of jail or the country
- represent you at a trial or give legal counsel
- pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. Government funds

ROAD TRAVEL VIA MOTORIZED VEHICLES

- Roads in the rest of the world are often narrow, have many curves, are poorly maintained, used by bicycles, motorbikes, motorcycles, animals, carts, etc. Vehicles may travel at speeds that exceed what is safe. Buses and rental cars may not be maintained at the level of those in the U.S. Be aware of the road conditions in the country(ies) you are visiting. Ask others who have traveled in the country, read the various guides: Lonely Planet, Berkeley Guides, Let's Go, Fodors, Rick Steve's, etc. or visit the U.S. State Department page: <http://www.travel.state.gov>. Each resource will have a motor travel section addressing potential problems in the country you are visiting. Again, be aware and use good judgment when making travel decisions.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

- In many countries they drive on the left side of the road and it is very easy to step off the curb and into a lane of oncoming traffic. Look both ways before stepping off the curb.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

- If you are in a politically unstable country, avoid crowds. You could find yourself in the middle of a protest or other action which could become dangerous.

RELATIONSHIP ADVICE

- You may not know enough about appropriate behavior in male-female relationships in the new culture.
- Unfortunately, fair or not, the stereotype of "the easy and liberated American woman" is prevalent in many cultures.
- Males may find that standard behavior in the U.S. is seen as aggressive in other cultures.
- There may be language barriers that further complicate communication.

Given these circumstances you may unwittingly set yourself up for trouble. Add to this a little or too much alcohol to cloud your judgment and you have a complicated, potentially dangerous situation. Discuss appropriate behavior with people you know and trust who are natives of the host country.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Cultural differences in interactions on romantic or sexual levels can be a problem area: some behaviors might be very inappropriate in the U.S., but considered perfectly acceptable in the culture in which you are living, and vice-versa. Some of the new behaviors will be relatively easy to adjust to, but others pose more of a problem. Sexual harassment is a particularly difficult area because of the extreme variance in acceptable behavior between cultures. Combined with the different social and legal responses to such behavior, sexual

harassment when abroad can be a difficult scenario to deal with; fortunately there are ways to prevent or lessen the negative consequences.

Harassment normally falls into one of two categories; the first being when a person *in a position of power or influence* requests sexual favors, or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It often includes a trade relationship such as "you do this for me, and I'll do this for you." This type of harassment is quite serious, and even one incident should be reported immediately.

The second category consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature directed toward a person because of her or his gender. This type of harassment usually takes place repeatedly over a period of time and creates an intimidating, hostile and offensive environment, plus may unreasonably interfere with a person's academic performance.

The most important thing to remember is to stay safe. If you do not feel safe in a particular situation remove yourself or distance yourself from that situation immediately. Go to the in-country program director, or go stay with a friend you can trust. If the director cannot or will not help you, call your program office for assistance. Do not wait to contact someone in the hope that the situation will improve. Maybe you can work things out but do it with the assistance of the program director.

Until you know a place and a culture you may be in danger of misjudging the situation. Listen to your instincts and think and act on the safe side, even if that may not be the most "exciting" side to be on. And most importantly, do not abuse alcohol while in a foreign culture; losing full use of your faculties can cause errors in judgment and other situations that may lead to unwanted sexual harassment or assaults, or otherwise endanger your well-being.

U.S. CUSTOMS INFORMATION

Before you go be aware of the customs regulations for reentering the U.S. To learn more about these regulations visit their website at <http://www.customs.ustreas.gov/>

JET LAG

As you know, each of us has peak periods during the day and times when we are a little less than peak. This cycle is called the circadian (Latin: about 24 hours) rhythm and the disruption of this rhythm results in jet lag.

Some of the changes experienced from jet lag are that you feel energetic at 4 p.m. rather than at 8 a.m., you need to use the bathroom more in the middle of the night and you are hungry at times other than the usual breakfast, lunch and dinner hours. Of course, not everyone has the same experience with jet lag and length of recovery differs from one to several days.

There are many different suggestions for dealing with jet lag but here are a few things to remember.

- Be patient with yourself. After traveling for long periods of time it is not uncommon to feel exhausted, easily confused, frustrated, etc.
- Prior to leaving, try to have an idea where you will spend the first night and how to get there. Write this information down. Knowing that you have a place to rest and how to get there will lessen the stress.

There are many different recommendations for eating before and during your flight. Do a little research and decide which is best for you. (None are a magic pill; you will still have some adjusting to do.) There are a few things all plans agree on:

- Avoid alcohol, sleeping pills and tranquilizers before and during the flight as they only increases fatigue without making you sleep better.
- Avoid smoking; the combination of carbon monoxide in your blood and altitude also increase feelings of fatigue.
- Drink lots of water.

UPON ARRIVAL:

- Begin to operate on local time. If you arrive in the morning, go to your accommodation, then do a little exploring. You might want to take a nap mid-afternoon. Make sure you wake up after an hour or two or you will probably sleep quite a while before waking up at midnight ready to begin a new day.
- Exercise helps the body adjust and relieves some the stress of travel and adaptation to a new place. A good way to exercise is to get out and walk around the area where you will be staying. You become familiar with the area and provide your body with a non-stressful workout.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

For most people there are four phases to the study abroad experience consisting of highs and lows. Again, if you are aware of these they will be easier to identify and hopefully you will find it easier to cope.

1) Initial Euphoria: After the stress of deciding to go on study abroad, deciding where to go, and completing what feels like a ton of paperwork, you prepare to leave. There is the anticipation of spending time in a new country mixed with the sadness of leaving family and friends. You find yourself stepping off the plane and into a new place. Everything seems different, new, and exciting. The language is different, the food is interesting, the buildings are charming, and everything is wonderful, the "perfect" place. This is the first phase of many new experiences, excitement and adoration. This is a wonderful phase that makes you feel great and is the perfect way to start your time abroad.

2) Irritability and Hostility: After about three to six weeks the things you may have found exciting and wonderful begin to appear as more of a problem. The language is a challenge and sometimes translation can be tiring, you long for U.S. food (this is much easier to find now than it was several years ago) and you decide that the charming building doesn't have all the conveniences you are accustomed to at home. You have developed culture shock that is the reaction people feel when they move for an extended period into a culture that is different from their own. It has two features: 1) It results from the experience of encountering ways of doing, organizing, perceiving or valuing things which threaten your basic, unconscious belief that your ways are "right." 2) It is cumulative, building slowly from a series of small events that are difficult to identify.

3) The third phase is Culture shock that comes from the following circumstances:

- Being cut off from the cultural cues and known patterns with which you are familiar.
- Living or studying over an extended period of time in a situation that is ambiguous.
- Having your own values brought into question.
- Being expected to work at full speed in a situation where the rules have not been adequately explained.

If you decide to write home during this phase you may want to write the email and file it before hitting the send key. Re-read the letter in a few days and see if you still feel the same. Often the problem has disappeared and your feelings have changed. Then you wouldn't have upset your family without reason.

4) Adaptation or bi-culturalism: The final stage comes when the differences are narrowed down to a few of the most troubling. You have adjusted to these differences and may not want to go home. You have made friends and may feel that your language skills are really just beginning to develop as you had hoped. You are not sure you want to trade the excitement of living abroad for the routine of home. You know you have changed, but wonder if your friends at home have changed. On the other hand you look forward to seeing family and friends and catching up on events.

WAYS TO SURVIVE CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

- Don't judge
- Be objective
- Recognize the ways **you** may screen out or misperceive certain things that contradict your own style of living or behavior.
- Work through it, don't avoid anything, and be aware of what is happening.
- Don't withdraw from the situation, rather - explore it.
- Take time to get to know the people.

Remember that you are the visitor; you are there to learn about a new culture, not to change it. Prior to leaving the U.S. spend some time finding out about the country you will visit. Think about the:

- political structure and situation
- geography
- history
- religion
- social structure
- the country's relationship with the U.S.

While there, be an observer of:

- how people communicate (including non-verbal)
- the educational system
- the roles of men and women
- business and social customs
- food
- health
- their attitude toward Americans and their attitude toward you
- where and how people live

You will also need to know about your country as you will be asked your opinions about the U.S. political situation, foreign policy toward their country and other countries, and about any of the same items listed above. In many other cultures discussions about politics and an awareness of world issues is the norm. While aboard, like it or not, you represent the U.S. to others.

CULTURAL DO'S AND DON'TS

CULTURAL STEREOTYPES

Attempts to categorize cultural characteristics often end up in cultural stereotypes that are unfair and misleading. In adjusting to your study abroad environment, you will have to deal not only with real cultural differences but also with perceived cultural differences. You need to keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as adept at stereotyping Americans as we are at stereotyping them -- often with disastrous results. While a stereotype might possess some grain of truth, when we consider individual differences, not everyone fits neatly into the description.

It is impossible to provide advice on what is applicable etiquette in every culture. One suggestion is be a careful observer and be dignified, courteous, and friendly. You are a guest in someone's country and should behave as such.

DOs

- If you don't understand something ASK the people you are with. They will explain what is going on, what it means, etc., the same thing you would do for someone from another culture.
- Stop by our office and look through the Culturegrams and Dining Tips books for information about etiquette in other cultures.
- Talk to students from that country currently studying at Colorado State. (See our office for a list of students.)
- Talk to students who have studied in that country or faculty/staff who have had extended stays in the country. (See our office for list of students/faculty and staff.)

DON'Ts

- Do not be the demanding tourist who expects everyone to cater to you in English.
- Do not be the arrogant patriot, lecturing to your host on how great America is or how they should do things our way.
- Do not criticize their form of government, instead ask questions and learn about their government and why it operates as it does.

Such unacceptable behavior will foster or reinforce misconceived stereotypes. Until you develop a feel for the social customs of the area it is wise to be somewhat formal in your social contacts. Also, don't expect people to welcome you upon arrival. You must work to build trust, and then you will be welcomed to socialize.

Social customs differ from country to country and one cannot make generalizations that apply to every situation. If you are in doubt, make a polite inquiry as to local customs. Expect things to be different abroad that is one of the reasons for traveling abroad to study. Try to develop an appreciation and sensitivity for the people and their way of life. You must be flexible dealing with these differences and by doing so your stay abroad will be rewarding and you will grow as a person. Listed below are some of the survival skills that will be important if you are to enjoy your experience:

- sense of humor
- ability to fail and learn from the experience
- ability to set realistic expectations
- do-it-yourself reliance
- tolerance for differences
- strong sense of self
- open-mindedness
- empathy

RE-ENTRY

Re-entry is the most challenging culture shock you will face. Students often report returning home was more difficult than leaving. Prior to returning it is easy to assume that life at home will be essentially the same as it was before you left and that getting back into the old lifestyle will be complicated only by having lost a little time with old friends. It is not always as simple as that.

Re-entry shock is a state of disequilibria. You have had wonderful experience that has taught you many things but somehow the new things that you have learned may not fit into your everyday world. You want to tell people about what you experienced but many friends would rather tell you what happened while you were away. People may see you as being more critical of things in your own culture and country and feel betrayed when you say you might want to go back there someday. You prefer the company of those who shared your experience, and in some cases your international experience takes on ideal qualities that can't be matched at home. Coping with re-entry shock requires that you and those who care about you recognize its symptoms and origins. You are a different person after being abroad and instead of undoing all of the changes that have occurred in you:

- Take time to evaluate the two cultures and think about how you can incorporate parts of both into your lifestyle.
- Talk to family members and friends about how you think you have changed and listen to their ideas.
- Listen to the stories of what happened at home while you were away, and then share some of your own experiences.
- Seek out others who have been abroad for extended periods.
- Volunteer for intercultural activities, activities with international students at Colorado State, or for activities through OIP, which will give you a chance to discuss your experiences with people who really want to hear about them.
- Try to keep perspective recognizing that some of the opinions you return with will change in the next several months as you readapt to your own culture.

We hope that you have found this information to be useful and will share it with your family. We have left some space to write notes to yourself or the person(s) you plan to leave this with, address, phone number, emergency phone numbers, etc.

We wish you the best of luck in your abroad experience; we look forward to hearing about it when you return.