

General Study Abroad Information

There are a variety of study abroad programs to choose from. Once you have started researching programs, keep in mind there are several important questions to consider when comparing study abroad program options. Here are a few:

Questions to ask when choosing a study abroad program

1. Does the program provide housing? What housing options are available (homestays with families, residence halls, find your own apartment, etc.)
2. Does the program include meals? How many per week? Do they have special accommodations for your dietary needs? Do you mind preparing your own meals?
3. Does the program provide medical and life insurance? Is it included in the program fee or do you have to pay extra?
4. Does the program fee include excursions or cultural events? How many and to where? Would you rather plan your own trips?
5. Does the program provide pick up at the airport when you arrive? Drop off at the end? Provide monthly bus/train/tram passes?
6. Does the program provide onsite support and medical staff? Do they include orientation packets before you leave for your program? Do they provide on-site orientation and tour? Tutoring?
7. Is there computer access at the University abroad? How many computer labs? What are the hours of availability? Will you be able to do your work without waiting in line? Should you bring your laptop?
8. Does the program provide cell phones? E-mail access? Calling cards?
9. Are the transcripts with your credits from abroad issued through an accredited American university?
10. Does the program provide scholarships? How many and what types?
11. Can you do an internship while you are abroad? Will they help arrange one or help you find one?
12. Is the airfare included in the program cost?
13. What languages are the classes taught in?

14. Is there an optional/introductory language and cultural immersion class offered?

Applying for Your Passport

The first thing you will need in order to study abroad is a valid passport. This will be your most important source of identification abroad, so it must be handled with care. If you are thinking of studying abroad and you don't have a valid passport or your current passport will be expiring within 6 months of the end of your trip, you will need to apply for a passport.

If you do not already have a passport, you must apply for a passport in person. If you are renewing your passport you may apply by mail. You can apply for a passport at many U.S. post offices or through a passport agency, which can be found in all major cities in the U.S.

For detailed information on applying for your passport and a passport application form, please visit http://travel.state.gov/passport_easy.html

If you already have a U.S. passport be sure that it will remain valid six months after the end of your study abroad program.

Applying for Your Visa

Some countries also require U.S. citizens to obtain visas before entering. Most countries require visitors who are planning to study or work abroad to obtain visas before entering. To determine if the country to which you are traveling requires a visa, please review the Consular Information Sheets available through the State Department's website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Learn Before You Go

Before departing, take the time to do some research about the people, customs, social norms, history and culture of the country you plan to visit. The State Department's Consular Information Sheets (<http://travel.state.gov>) provide up-to-date travel information on any country in the world that you plan to visit. They cover topics such as entry regulations, the crime and security situation, drug penalties, road conditions, and the location of the U.S. embassy, consulates, and consular agencies. To have the best experience it is also helpful to be aware of the customs and social norms within the country you will be visiting. This will help you gain a better understanding of the culture as well as being more respectful and not fitting the profile of an "ugly American". Hopefully the program in which you will be participating will provide a cultural orientation which will teach you about these customs. If not or if you want to learn more, you may also learn about the culture and history of various countries by visiting <http://www.culturgrams.org> or you can reach out to an international student at Seton Hall who might come from this country and can share valuable insights. Most importantly be prepared to be open-minded and realize that things do not always work the way they do at home. Certainly you will make a mistake now and then, that is part of the learning, but be open and respectful to your new culture and you'll find a more rewarding and enriching experience.

The U.S. State Department's Top Ten Travel Tips for Students

Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport!

Read the Consular Information Sheets (and Public Announcements or Travel Warnings, if applicable) for the countries you plan to visit.

Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends at home, so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Keep your host program informed of your whereabouts.

Make sure you have insurance that will cover your emergency medical needs (including medical evacuation) while you are overseas.

Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws!

Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas and never accept packages from strangers.

While abroad, avoid using illicit drugs or drinking excessive amounts of alcoholic beverages, and associating with people who do.

Do not become a target for thieves by wearing conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of cash or unnecessary credit cards.

Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money to avoid violating local laws.

When overseas, avoid demonstrations and other situations that may become unruly or where anti-American sentiments may be expressed.

Insurance

Since all full-time students at Seton Hall University are required to have medical insurance to be enrolled at The Hall, you should currently have medical insurance. This medical insurance should continue to be valid throughout your study abroad program. However, it is important that you verify this with your insurance company and ensure that they will cover your expenses should you need medical attention while you are abroad. Additionally, you may want to take out travel and accident insurance, especially if your medical coverage is limited. Often the program sponsoring your study abroad program will provide an option for this additional coverage. The Office of International Programs recommends travel insurance through HTH or ISIC.

HTH Travel Insurance

The HTH Worldwide offers flexible international health insurance plans and trip protection products designed with your safety in mind. HTH plans provide the coverage you need with the freedom to choose qualified doctors, hospitals and health services anywhere in the world.

To find out more about HTH Travel Insurance coverage, visit <http://www.hthtravelinsurance.com>

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The International Student Identity Cards are endorsed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and are recognized worldwide as proof of student status. ISIC cards provide discount student rates and benefits in over 100 countries such as:

Access to low airfares on major airlines

Discounted tickets through STA Travel

International savings on accommodations, museums & culture, transportation, attractions, tours, etc.

Emergency Help Line that can be used from anywhere in the world

Full communications system called ISICConnect (for staying in touch with family and friends)

In many countries commission will not be charged for those that show ISIC cards when converting money.

Insurance benefits include:

\$250,000 Emergency Evacuation

\$25,000 Repatriation of Remains

\$5,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment

\$ 5,000 Accident Medical Expense
\$1,000 (excluding air) Accidental Death & Dismemberment
\$250 Passport replacement
\$100 per day sickness & hospital
\$50 Domestic Travel Delay
\$50 Baggage Delay

You can apply for an ISIC on-line or pick up a form from the Office of International Programs, Fahy Hall 128 and bring approximately \$22 to process your card. You will also need to bring a passport-sized photo.

To find out more about the benefits and discounts of the ISIC card visit www.myisic.com

Calling Cards

Buy a couple calling cards to use with your cell phone abroad if possible. In some countries, a special calling card that has to be inserted will be needed if using a pay phone or landline. Always carry a card in case of emergencies. There are many calling cards that offer low rates and lots of minutes. Research calling cards that will give you the most minutes for less before you travel. Some of these will be rip offs that will give you less minutes than actually said.

Mobile Computing

If you are studying abroad for the semester or academic year, you need to consider what you want to do with your laptop. You are welcome to hold on to your laptop while you are on your study abroad program, however in this case, you will continue to be assessed the Mobile Computing fee. If you are studying abroad through another institution, you need to notify the Office of International Programs so we can inform the Mobile Computing office so they do not think that you have left the University.

If you do not want to hold on to your laptop and pay the associated fees while your are studying abroad, please return your laptop to the Mobile Computing office for the period in which you are planning to be abroad. In this case you will not be assessed a Mobile Computing fee. When you return from your study abroad program you will be reissued another laptop.

If you choose to return your laptop, you must do so according to the following timeline:

Spring study abroad - within 24 hrs of your last final exam in the fall semester before you go abroad.

Summer study abroad - within 24 hrs of your last final exam the spring semester before you study abroad.

Fall study abroad - 1 week prior to the start of the fall semester.

Stolen Laptop: Please also note if your laptop is stolen while you are abroad, you must file a police report with the local authorities as we will need this documentation upon your return to the United States.

Repairs: There are no charges for warranty repairs completed through an IBM warranty. However, the warranty is not honored internationally. Students will not be compensated for charges accumulated due to a warranty or non-warranty repair completed while studying outside of the United States. You have the option of shipping your laptop to SHU for repairs (since they are under warranty) but shipping costs are your responsibility.

Check-in: Check-in will be waived for students studying abroad if you have notified the OIP. Once you return, you must notify the Mobile Computing office that you have returned from your studies abroad.

Academics

Know the dates to register for your semester classes at Seton Hall. Make arrangements with your advisor ahead of time to email your pin number or have him/her register you for classes if internet access is limited abroad or there are time conflicts.

Save all class syllabuses, papers, and work done from the University abroad. These might be needed to be reviewed before credits can be given accordingly on your return. Keep the name and email addresses of professors at your study abroad university for your records as well as the bursar's information for any questions related to the transcript issued abroad. Arrange to have any final papers sent to your home address in the US to be submitted to deans or chairs at Seton Hall if necessary.

The University requires that all transcripts be original. Transcripts in languages other than English must be accompanied by a certified English translation. No documents submitted as part of the application process will be returned nor will any requests to duplicate documents be honored. Seton Hall requires international applicants to have all transcripts from institutions not accredited in the United States or Canada evaluated by a credential evaluator that is a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES.org). Alternatively, transcripts may be evaluated by AACRAO. All evaluations must be course-by-course evaluations, with confirmation of course level and degree equivalency. Applications submitted without credential evaluations will not be considered for admissions or transfer credit evaluation. On a case-by-case basis, the Office of Admissions may waive the requirement for a credential evaluation. Students are responsible for all costs associated with credential evaluations.

Housing

If you are currently in university housing, you need to be aware that if you study abroad for a semester or a year, you are giving up your place in housing and there is no guarantee that you will receive housing upon your return, although the Office of Housing and Residence Life will make every effort to place you in housing. If you would like to apply for housing, you must

complete a housing application form while you are abroad and return it to the Housing Office before the deadline. If you do this, you will have the same odds of being placed in housing as someone applying within the United States. You can print the housing application form from the the housing website or you may want to stop by the Housing Office before you leave for your program and pick up a housing application form to complete while you are abroad.

Banking Tips Abroad

Exchange some money into travelers checks and copy traveler's checks ID number in case they get stolen or lost and have a copy with you and at home. A useful link to convert currencies is www.xe.com.

Bring an ATM card and 2 credit cards with you. Copy down the card information and numbers to call in case they get stolen so that the charges with the card may be stopped. Also have the name, number, and email of your bank's personal that handles stolen cards. Have pre-signed letters authorizing parents or siblings to go to the bank and pin the card if a new one needs to be issued. Otherwise, your bank will make you fax a signed letter from abroad authorizing family to pin your card and then put in the order for a new one, which will be a longer process. Always check your bank's policy before you go.

Some ATMs will take your card either because you have pinned the number wrong accidentally or it is a foreign card. In this case, be warned that the card will be shredded automatically. If this happens, a cash advance is available on your credit card and will be honored at most banks as long as you have your passport and various forms of id. Check rates for your credit card or consider applying for a credit card issued through your bank which carries lower commission/interest rates.

It might be to your advantage to open an account with a U.S. bank that does not charge an ATM fee or one that has many branches abroad. For example, HSBC has many branches in various countries. There will be a fee charged abroad from the foreign country's bank and the US bank's fee. Do not underestimate these fees because it will add up. There are banks abroad that do not charge ATM fees so it is possible that you can have no fee charged at all if you hold an account with a US bank that does not charge. Research these as well before you travel.

Many banks abroad keep a directory and will be able to tell you the address and where their branches are located abroad if you know the country or countries you are traveling to. Also,

currency may be ordered and picked up for a lower commission fee or no charge at all for students with student id cards if it is ordered ahead of time. This will be useful to have on hand in case you are flying in at night, banks can not be located, or the local currency is hard to get.

Traveling While You're Abroad

Once you are already abroad, you want to take advantage of this opportunity to explore your surroundings. The best way to do this is to first make a tentative itinerary, check the cost of point-to-point tickets and compare it with the cost of a rail pass. Rail passes will only be cost effective if you travel very often on long distances. On the whole, point-to-point tickets bought from European railway companies directly will be a lot cheaper. Some rail passes such as the Japan rail passes are good for the buses, railways, and ferries.

The best place to check train tickets is on various country web sites- for example, <http://www.bahn.de> will give you multi-country itineraries and prices for many places. Another useful website is <http://www.railsaver.com/railsaver.asp>. Click the Only If Railpasses Save Me Money option to check the price of a tentative itinerary. Another web link that might be useful is <http://www.raileurope.com/>.

Remember it might seem like a good idea to buy tickets ahead of time but if you are traveling to countries that have their own currency that is cheaper in comparison to the dollar, it will probably be cheaper to buy train tickets or package train tickets from that country.

Safety

We recommend that all students consult the U.S. Department of State web site before and during your period abroad (www.travel.state.gov). The State Department issues Public Announcements and Travel Warnings.

Public announcements provide information about relatively short-term and/or transnational conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are issued when there is a perceived threat, even if it does not involve Americans as a particular target group.

Travel warning are the most serious announcement the State Department issues. In some dangerous situations, the U.S. State Department issues a travel warning, recommending that Americans defer travel to a country. The OIP strongly discourages students from participating in any study abroad programs held in a location with a travel warning.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is a normal and expected part of a prolonged experience abroad. It is the result of a profound experience abroad and the beginning of learning to integrate and adjust to another culture. There are many books written about culture shock which you might want to read to understand this process. Most writings about culture shock will tell you that culture shock comes in four stages: Initial euphoria, homesickness and frustration, adjustment and adaptation.

After the initial euphoria of just being where you have wanted to be for so long, you may find yourself increasingly irritated by many aspects of the host culture. An adjustment should follow, and finally - if you are lucky - an adaptation to both your native and your adopted culture. Probably the best defense against culture shock is realizing that it occurs to virtually everyone in some form or another.

Therefore you should keep in mind that it is normal to feel some home-sickness, discomfort, sadness, and irritation after the initial excitement and euphoria have worn off as it is part of what is called culture shock. Everyone will suffer from this to some degree. One of the first signs will be increasing irritation and frustration with the difficulty attached to performing the simplest tasks (such as mailing a package, buying shampoo, making a phone call). Many of the things we take for granted are suddenly not there for us, and many of our normal reactions are inappropriate or ineffective. This feeling can lead to homesickness, depression, loneliness, and intolerance of everything that is different about the foreign country.

The best thing to do is be aware that this will happen and when it does happen recognize it and know that it will pass. You can help it pass more quickly by staying busy, especially doing something you typically enjoy, for example running or swimming, photography, shopping, etc. It is also important not to isolate yourself and withdraw. Make an effort to go out with people, join in on activities, talk to people on your program, attend special events, and eat out with other groups of students. Do these things even if you don't feel like it as it will help you get passed this stage of culture shock and move towards adjustment.

Through these steps you will gradually regain your self-confidence and before you know it, you will begin to feel comfortable in your new environment. Students who spend the whole year abroad generally adjust better than students away for a semester or a short-term program as they have more time to go through all the stages of culture shock.

US Embassy or Consulate Abroad

When you go abroad, it is always a good idea to find out the location of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate and register with the Consular Section when you arrive. (U.S. embassy and consulate locations can be found in the country's Consular Information Sheet <http://travel.state.gov>.) If your family needs to reach you because of an emergency, they can pass a message to you through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 202-647-5225. This office will contact the embassy or consulate in the country where you are traveling and pass a message from your family to you. Remember consular officers cannot cash checks, lend money or serve as your attorney. They can, however, if the need arises, assist you in obtaining emergency funds from your family, help you find an attorney, help you find medical assistance, and replace your lost or stolen passport.