

University of Missouri – Kansas City

# The Adventure Begins: UMKC Study Abroad Handbook

2021-22

**Study Abroad and Global Engagement**

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**AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY WHILE ABROAD**

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## The Adventure Begins!

Congratulations on being selected to participate in a study abroad program! We at UMKC's Study Abroad and Global Engagement (SAGE) are pleased that you have chosen to take part in what will surely be one of the most memorable and formative experiences of your life. It is our hope that this time abroad will be educationally enriching and personally rewarding, and that you will gain new insights and a better understanding of the world that we all share.

The information contained in this handbook is intended to help you make preparations for your studies abroad. While we have tried to make it comprehensive, we have undoubtedly left out some details. Therefore, you should seek other references to prepare for your adventure, such as your program specific orientation materials, travel guidebooks, historical and fictional works about your host country, etc. In addition to reading materials, you should search for people who are knowledgeable about your program and host country; your study abroad advisor, former program participants, faculty, UMKC staff and friends and family who may be familiar with what you are going to experience. These people will be great sources of information and advice. In the end though, it won't be possible to prepare yourself completely. There will be situations you will not have anticipated and flexibility will go a long way towards making each aspect of your time abroad a positive one.

We wish you a safe journey, and when you return, we look forward to hearing all about your adventure abroad!

### **Introduction**

Students overseas are met with a myriad of cultural and behavioral differences from the day they get off the plane. This constant exposure to foreign experiences makes study abroad a period of academic learning, a period of personal discovery, and an exercise in cultural immersion and adaptation. Learning to deal with, adapt to, and accept the differences between home culture and host culture is one of the primary purposes of going overseas to study, and one of the main goals students should try to achieve while abroad.

Study abroad is not a vacation and it should not be viewed as such. Too many students go overseas without thinking about the experience as a whole. Study abroad is fun. It is exciting and exhilarating and it can also be romantic. But study abroad is also unpredictable, difficult at times, and above all, challenging. Students who only consider the "fun" aspects of study abroad often find the more difficult parts disconcerting and often insurmountable.

### **Preparing for Your Trip Abroad**

As the time to leave for your study abroad experience draws closer and the enormity of what you are about to do finally hits you, you may find yourself beginning to panic. You may ask yourself if you are ready to live in a foreign culture, away from the life you know and your friends and family. A thousand questions may start to plague you. What do I do if I get sick? Or arrested? How will I get along with people and make friends? Perhaps you will question your decision and doubt your preparedness. The following section is geared specifically to help you get prepared for your study abroad program.

By carefully reading this portion of the handbook and by following the suggestions and tips, you will be well on your way to an increased understanding of what you are about to experience. You will start to become acquainted with your host country and will overcome some of the doubts you may have about leaving the familiar, safe surroundings of your home culture.

***Complete the "Program Budget and Course Approval Form" (if you haven't already!)***

This form will assist you with both transferring credit and applying for financial aid. First, you will provide a list of courses you would like to take (or those predetermined by the program) while abroad. With your UMKC Academic Advisor, you will then predetermine how the courses you selected will apply to your UMKC degree program. The courses you take could satisfy specific major or minor requirements, general education requirements, or simply count as elective credit, depending on the decision of your department and/or college. This course list will be tentative at best, because you may not know what courses are actually available until you arrive at your host university. Why go through all of that effort then? Well, there are a number of reasons:

- This is an opportunity for you to take a good look at the kinds of courses available at your host university and think about what kind of academic work you want to pursue while abroad. This will help you once you actually choose your courses because you will already be familiar with the catalogues and what may or may not be available.
- It requires you to speak with your UMKC Academic Advisor, therefore making her/him aware of your study abroad plans (your Advisor's signature is required on the form).

The second step to completing this form is to discuss your study abroad plans with various members of the university community whose signatures are required on the form. Usually this includes your advisor, a staff member from SAGE, and someone from the Financial Aid Office (should you be applying for financial aid).

The final step is to visit with a Financial Aid Advisor. Studying Abroad can be more expensive than studying at UMKC and that higher cost of attendance may make you eligible for additional grants or loans. A Financial Aid Advisor must sign your pink form if you intend on applying financial aid to the cost of your overseas experience. In general, financial aid is only available to students receiving 6 or more credits abroad so be sure to check that you are eligible.

If you are studying abroad for a fall and/or winter semester, **Study Abroad and Global Engagement, in conjunction with the Registrar and Cashier's Offices, will register you in study abroad placeholder hours for the appropriate semester(s).** You will register for specific courses after you arrive at the host university. A bill and a schedule will be sent to your local or permanent address. If you are going for a summer program, you may enroll in your courses yourself or the Program Director may enroll you on your behalf.

Other forms which you are required to submit through your online portal prior to departure are the Emergency Contact Information Form, the Health Information Form, the Assumption of Risk and Release Form as well as **proof of the mandatory study abroad insurance and a copy of your passport/visa.**

### ***Practical Preparation***

Even before you begin to think about packing or buying your plane ticket, there are a number of things you need to take care of here to maintain your student status, apply financial aid to the costs of your study abroad program, legally leave the country and generally experience the joy of bureaucratic run-around.

**A. Apply for a passport** If you haven't applied for a passport, you should do so immediately. The passport is your official identification as a citizen of the United States. Passport applications can take anywhere from 2-8 weeks to process. Go to <http://www.usps.com/passport/> for information. Passports are valid for five years for individuals under 18 years of age and are valid for ten years from the date of issue for individuals 18 years of age and older, unless specifically limited to a shorter period of time by the Secretary of State. A new passport will be required for travel after expiration of the five- or ten-year period.

Before applying for a student visa (which is required for most fall/winter study abroad programs and rarely for summer) you will need to know your passport number. Both of these procedures take time, so don't wait until the last minute to apply. Do it today!

Passport applications are available at the U.S. Post Office, 108 W. 63rd, (816) 361-5675 in Brookside. A Passport Clerk is available Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Due to COVID, an appointment is needed to begin your application. You must present the following with your passport application:

- Proof of U.S. Citizenship (previous passport, certified copy of birth certificate)
- Two Passport Photographs (taken within past 6 months, 2x2 in, color or black & white)
- Proof of identity (previous passport, certificate of naturalization, valid Driver's license, government or military ID)
- Passport fee. Cash, check or money orders are accepted (the fee is divided – bring 2 checks). To have your passport expedited to reduce processing time to approximately 3 weeks, add an additional fee.

Don't forget to provide your Social Security number - If you do not provide your Social Security Number, the Internal Revenue Service may impose a \$500 penalty!

When you receive your passport, sign it in ink and fill in the address and notification data at the front of the passport in pencil. Do not alter the passport in any way. Guard it as you would any other valuable. Keep a copy of the official pages (the page with your photo and the page opposite) in a separate but safe place and leave another photocopy with a friend or family member at home and with SAGE. This will speed up the process of replacing a lost passport.

Loss or theft of a valid passport should be reported immediately to Passport Services, Department of State, Washington D.C. 20524, or the nearest passport agency. If the loss occurs while abroad, you should notify the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Theft of a passport also should be reported to the local police.

Ask your parents or designated emergency contact to obtain a passport, just in case they need to go abroad to help you in an emergency.

**B. International Student Identity Card** International student ID cards can be purchased online at <http://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/>. The card entitles you to a number of discounts on travel, accommodations, museums etc. - especially in Europe.

**C. Student Visa** (For programs that require a student visa, mostly fall/winter and occasionally summer). A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by the government of that country. The format varies considerably; it can be a simple stamp imprinted upon one of the pages in your passport at the time you enter the country or an official document with your photograph attached. Some countries require advance processing of visas while other countries require no advance processing whatsoever for brief visits, usually up to three months. Some countries, which do not require a visa for a short-term visit, might require a student visa for foreign students. An American who plans to go abroad should check the visa requirements for the countries s/he plans to visit by contacting the nearest consulate for that country. "Visa Requirements of Foreign Governments" lists the entry requirements for U.S. Citizens traveling to most foreign countries; it is available through the Department of State website: [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Some visas are free and some are not. The process may take several weeks for each visa, so start early.

**D. Registration For Your Study Abroad Program** You will need to be formally registered for your study abroad program just as you would for any course at UMKC. If you are on a UMKC Study Abroad Program, you will need to make sure that a Study Abroad Approval Form (pink form) is completed by the deadline set by the UMKC Study Abroad Program Coordinator. Students on non-UMKC programs should check with their program sponsor or institution for registration requirements and procedures. They will also have to complete many of the forms listed below.

**E. Registration For The Semester You Return To UMKC** You are responsible for pre-registering yourself for the semester that you will return to UMKC. Either designate someone you trust to register you or register yourself online using Pathway. Both ways will require your PIN and some way to get your password. The Schedule of Courses will be available on the UMKC Web page, if you have access to the Internet. The address is: <http://www.umkc.edu/registrar/>

**F. Paying Your Bill** Once you are registered, a bill for the coming semester will automatically be generated. It is your responsibility to make the necessary arrangements to pay your bill on time, just as you normally would at UMKC.

**For year-long programs: Remember that you may be charged educational fees for the second semester when we register you during the early registration period for winter semester (usually sometime in November).** Be sure that registration (and SAGE) has an up to date billing address for you to ensure that the statement will be sent to the correct address. Also, warn your parents, or whoever will be receiving the bill, that it will be coming and will need to be paid.

You are only being charged through the UMKC Cashier's Office for the UMKC program fees associated with the program. Unless otherwise arranged by your specific study abroad program, all other costs, including airfare, housing, and other personal expenses will be your responsibility. You will be paying those directly to the relevant agency.

**G. Financial Aid** If you plan to apply financial aid to the costs of your study abroad program, you must make an appointment with your Financial Aid advisor in the Financial Aid office (101 Administrative Center, (816) 235-1154) after submitting your Program Budget and Course Approval Form. This will assist them in determining your eligibility for additional loans or grants.

**H. Health Insurance** It is very important that you maintain health insurance coverage while you are abroad. UMKC students are **required** to carry GeoBlue Health Insurance while they are abroad. Information on how to sign up can be found at the pre-departure section of <https://info.umkc.edu/international/study-abroad/> or you can contact GeoBlue by phone or email (see their website <https://ogse.geobluestudents.com/?ac=BJA-2348>) It is your responsibility to make sure your policy will cover you while abroad. Keep in mind that should medical attention be required abroad, it may be necessary for you to have sufficient cash on hand to make payment at the time of treatment, since the foreign physician and/or hospital may not be able to process medical bills through an American insurance company. In such cases, be sure to obtain a receipt to submit with your insurance claim for reimbursement upon return to the U.S. Get a copy of your medical record from the physician or hospital before returning to the U.S. Blank claim forms are available on the website for GeoBlue, should they be needed while you are abroad. **Be sure to contact GeoBlue whenever you have a medical issue, so that they can start a claim for you. This is necessary for reimbursement.**

Commented [GB(1)]: Shouldn't this be GeoBlue info?

### Healthy Preparation for Travel Abroad

Before a travel abroad experience, students should have a general physical done by their primary care provider. This is especially important for those who have a chronic health condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or asthma. Students are also encouraged to locate English-speaking doctors (available on the GeoBlue website) and to find out the host country equivalent of 911 before leaving.

Students should make sure that all of their routine immunizations are up to date. Students should attempt to locate their childhood and adult immunization records focusing on the dates of the following:

- ✓ Td (Tetanus/Diphtheria)-within the past 5-10 years
- ✓ MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)-2 doses within a person's lifetime
- ✓ Polio-completion of primary series as a child (may need a booster depending on travel destination)
- ✓ Hepatitis B-every college student should consider getting this vaccination
- ✓ Hepatitis A-every college student traveling outside of the U.S. should consider getting this vaccination
- ✓ Meningococcal Meningitis-especially for those living in a dormitory setting
- ✓ Chickenpox-know your level of immunity protection either by disease, blood test or vaccine
- ✓ Pneumococcal-for those with certain chronic health conditions
- ✓ Influenza-every year for those traveling during flu season
- ✓ Tuberculosis (TB) skin test-before departure and have it repeated 10-12 weeks upon return

Below is a list of travel-specific vaccinations that may be recommended based upon the destination:

- Japanese Encephalitis

- Rabies
- Typhoid
- Yellow Fever
- Malaria (anti-malarial tablets)

Some ideas on how to locate immunization records:

- Parents
- High school or previous college attended
- Family physician or pediatrician
- Health Department or clinic where vaccinated

#### ***Health and safety websites***

- UMKC Student Health Center: (<http://www.umkc.edu/studenthealth/> )
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/>)
- U.S. Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov/>)
- Travel Health Online (<http://www.tripprep.com> )
- International Association For Medical Assistance To Travellers (IAMAT) (<http://www.iamat.org/> )

#### ***Hints on Eating Abroad***

Consider items you will need to facilitate eating inexpensively before you depart. Some items you might want to take along include: a pocketknife (if legal), a can opener, a water bottle or thermos and a mess kit. It is also wise to bring any special dietary supplements or food items you are accustomed to: black pepper, vitamin C, peanut butter, etc. Keep in mind that it is illegal to carry perishables or plants across country boundaries. Customs officials will ask what food you have with you. Be sure to eat your oranges and apples on the train before you reach the next country's border.

When abroad, consider changing your normal eating patterns. It may be less costly to eat your most substantial meal at noon and have "lunch" in the evening. For example, in Europe you can usually save money by buying bread, cheese, yogurt, beverages, and other assorted picnic items at the local grocery store. If you eat these in the evening and save leftovers for breakfast the next morning, you will be ready to travel without the hassle of carrying food. Most countries will have open-air markets. This is a terrific opportunity to buy fresh food products. Note, however, the food and water safety precautions listed in the "Health" section of this document.

Don't panic if the change in diet affects your health adversely when you first arrive in a new country. In countries where tap water is safe to drink, the slight difference in mineral content in the water might be enough to upset your system. Be patient. Students studying in the "developing" world may need to review food and water safety guidelines. In countries where the tap water is not safe to drink, the answer to your problem may be as simple as remembering to use boiled water to brush your teeth.

Most European restaurants overseas have an advantage over their American counterparts: namely, they post their menus outside the door. This allows you to "window-shop" for a restaurant that suits your palate and pocketbook before entering the restaurant. Many restaurants will have a "house menu" which is a "package meal" set and may include soup, salad, main dish, and dessert. Look the menu over carefully



to determine if you want to order from the house menu or "a la carte." Beverages generally are not included in the price listed.

Water may be provided upon request. However, you might have to buy mineral water. There are two varieties: sparkling and non-sparkling. The sparkling water is more expensive, but it is acclaimed as an excellent digestive aid.

Be brave! Take the time to explore local taverns and restaurants. You can learn a lot about countries by their cuisine and the clientele they serve. But at the same time, be aware of food and water safety precautions. Also, watch out for "extras." In some places you may pay extra for a napkin! Food is available on most trains but is more expensive. Plan ahead and take sandwiches with you. Train stations in villages often have good restaurants. In larger cities these restaurants, as well as those surrounding the train station, are generally more expensive.

### ***Safety – Everyone***

Most of you will be studying in cities and, during weekends or breaks, traveling to other destinations and through picturesque countrysides. For your general well-being, it is advantageous to become familiar with your "home base" as quickly as possible. You should also familiarize yourself with cities that you will be visiting before you begin to wander around and explore. This is easily done through maps and travel guides. If you have a good map of a city, you can learn its transportation system. You may want to purchase Let's Go or Lonely Planet travel guides before leaving the U.S., since these guides may be more expensive or unavailable in your host country.

Cities in other countries, just like Kansas City or New York City, have their safe and unsafe neighborhoods. You can find out what areas to avoid by asking at an information booth in a train station when you arrive. Use your common sense and do not take risks.

1. ***Safety Guidelines for Study Abroad Participants*** - While studying abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own safety through the decisions they make before and during the program and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors. Here are a few safety precautions addressed specifically to American students:

- ✓ Students should keep a low profile and try not to make themselves conspicuous by dress, speech, or behavior in ways that might identify them as a potential targets.
- ✓ Students should avoid crowds, protest groups, or other potentially volatile situations, as well as restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate.
- ✓ Students should be wary of receiving unexpected packages and stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, or other areas of uncontrolled public access.
- ✓ Students should report to the responsible authority any suspicious persons loitering around residence or instructional facilities. Students should report any suspicious persons following them. They should keep their residence area locked and use common sense in divulging information to strangers about their study program and their fellow students.
- ✓ Students should make arrangements through their overseas program director or host university officials to register upon arrival at the U.S. consulate or embassy

having jurisdiction over the location of their foreign study. They should make sure the resident director, host family, or foreign university official who is assigned the responsibility for their welfare always knows where and how to contact them in an emergency and knows their schedule and itinerary if traveling, even if only overnight.

- ✓ Students should develop a plan with their families for regular telephone contact so they can communicate directly with their families about their safety and well-being in the unlikely event of an emergency. Also, please keep SAGE updated regularly about your progress in your program, any changes to your contact info, etc.
- ✓ Students should remain in contact with on-site personnel at their location and should inform them of all travel plans and check travel advisories for any country they visit.

**2. Help Study Abroad and Global Engagement Facilitate Communications** - As a regular part of safety preparedness, please carry at all times the phone numbers and e-mail addresses (if applicable) for the following contacts:

- the Program Resident Director, as applicable
- UMKC's Study Abroad and Global Engagement office
- UMKC Campus police (for after-hours emergencies)
- the International Programs Office of the host institution
- emergency phone numbers for the host institution
- the US Embassy and/or local Consulate in any country you are studying or traveling
- family at home and work
- GeoBlue health insurance

**3. Stay Informed** - Keep informed of current political situations by listening daily to the television or radio news. In the case of an emergency, advisories may be made to the general public through the media. You will still find yourself with many surprises, such as strikes, that may cause you to change your plans. Stay out of the political affairs of your host country. You can be deported or worse -- end up arrested or hurt. Unsuspecting tourists sometimes find themselves in downtown areas during protests. If this occurs, you should leave the area immediately. Please note that if you are arrested, the U.S. Embassy abroad can be contacted for a list of lawyers in the area. In all cases, the laws of the host country prevail over U.S. law, and the Embassy cannot pay for your lawyer or get you out of jail.

**4. Street Smarts** - Be cautious when meeting new people. Don't give out your address and phone number to strangers or divulge too much personal information about yourself. If you are going to withdraw money from an ATM machine or receive wired money through an American Express, Citibank or Western Union location, please go with a friend who will help you stay alert to your surroundings. Pick your ATM location for safety and not just convenience.

Do not attract attention to yourself by speaking English loudly in public spaces or wearing expensive looking jewelry.

Taxis are not safe everywhere, especially late at night. Inquire about this. In some places, even local women do not ride taxis by themselves, because it is not safe to ride in a taxi with an unknown man. Men and women are often robbed and assaulted by taxi drivers. Please make sure that the taxicab is identified as being from the company you

called, so that if the call has been intercepted and several taxis show up you can pick out the right one. It is hard to resist the temptation of flagging down a taxi but the wait is worth it.

In general, do not hang around famous American hangouts (restaurants, bars, clubs and associations, consulates and embassies, etc.) especially if there is a terrorist threat or if the U.S. has just participated in some military action. During times of international crisis, many U.S. embassies and consulates are picketed and threatened.

- Do not let anyone push you into taking risks. If you feel unsafe, you probably are. Listen to your instincts.
- Do not be afraid to be assertive when confronted with unwanted situations.
- When using public telephones, stand facing out so you can see your surroundings.
- If someone stops you to ask for the time or for directions, step away to a distance that is safer. Why would they consider asking an obviously foreign person for directions?
- Do not hitchhike no matter how many people tell you that it is perfectly safe. It is not!
- Your life will always be more important than any of your possessions. Let them go and run away if necessary.

5. **Risk Factors** - Some factors that increase the likelihood you will be in an unsafe situation are:

- ✓ being intoxicated
- ✓ being alone at night, especially after midnight
- ✓ being alone in an isolated area
- ✓ being alone in a high crime area
- ✓ being asleep in an unlocked place
- ✓ being out after a local curfew
- ✓ being new to the country
- ✓ being unable to speak the local language
- ✓ being in a new place and making new friends

6. **Alcohol** - It may be very tempting to overindulge with alcohol in a foreign country where the beer may be stronger and cheaper and there are no barriers to drinking before the age of 21. However, there are some serious dangers. Drugging is not at all uncommon. Always try to buy your own drinks and monitor them closely. Keep control of yourself. Never go home with a stranger. Always go out with at least one friend (especially if you are a woman) and return with that friend. Please note that abuse of alcohol can be grounds for dismissal from the program.

7. **Stress** - Read through the information in this workbook about culture shock. Be familiar with the symptoms of depression, so that you can identify problem signs and can seek help if needed. Speaking another language all the time and getting used to cultural differences is tiring. You will need to pamper yourself from time to time. Take care of yourself. Be patient and flexible with others and yourself.

8. **Swimming** - Many drownings on beaches abroad are because foreign swimmers are unaware of what the local population knows about undertows or particular dangers on the local beach. A very large percentage of drownings are foreign swimmers (for example in Costa Rica and Mexico). Do not count on lifeguards. For most of the places you will be visiting, there will be none. Swimming under the influence of alcohol or other

drugs increases your risk.

9. **Sex** - Although sex is not necessarily planned, safe sex should be. You should always be prepared for any eventuality. Therefore, even if you are not expecting to experience intimacy with anyone while overseas, bring a supply of condoms with you anyway. Keep in mind that American-made condoms are in general safer and more reliable than many of the ones you may purchase abroad.

If you are a woman, do not be afraid of being perceived as promiscuous if you carry condoms, and do not expect male partners to have their own. Most importantly, understand that this is not a joking matter: even one apparently insignificant episode could ruin or shorten the rest of your life. If you are a woman who is taking birth control pills, please check with your physician before you leave. Make sure you have enough pills for the duration of your stay, as your brand may not be available, or in certain countries, birth control pills (or other methods of birth control) may not be available at all. If you are using a method of birth control that may not be available overseas, take enough with you. Also, talk with your doctor about when you should take your pill when traveling. Time changes can be confusing, and the regularity with which you take your pill can affect its efficacy.

#### ***To Women***

At the risk of sounding alarmist or of perpetuating unfair stereotypes, we urge you to be more careful about where you go, when you go, and with whom you go than you are accustomed to at home. This is not to say that you shouldn't go out with men and establish relationships of various kinds with them. We wish to warn you about casual encounters, possible misreading of non-verbal cues, potential real misunderstandings owing to language difficulties, and inaccurate notions about American women in the minds of many men throughout the world.

One common assumption is that American women are "easy." Some men will harass American women though the same men would not dream of treating "their own" women in similar ways. For the most part, such harassment is relatively harmless although it can be extremely annoying. Due to the unique social and cultural milieu in the U.S., most Americans tend to be less reserved, less inhibited and less restrained to communicate friendliness and sociability. But in some areas abroad this outgoing manner, especially on the part of young women, can be grossly misinterpreted. A friendly smile and a warm "hello" on the streets of Rome could be easily interpreted by an Italian man as something more than mere friendliness. Therefore, it is wise to be more formal and restrained in your social contacts.

Uncomfortable situations can often be avoided by taking the following precautions. Dress conservatively. Although short skirts, shorts and tank tops may be comfortable, they may also encourage unwanted attention.

In many countries if you are out alone-- even during the day visiting a museum, for example--your solitude may be construed as an invitation for company. Take cues from the local women on behavior. Talk to people about what to do in certain situations before they arise. Asking older women for their help is often recommended as an effective tactic. Avoid walking alone at night or in questionable neighborhoods. You should also be wary of going to unfamiliar places, like beaches and parks, with men whom you do not know well. Invitations will not be lacking, and rape, especially "date

rape," is as much a reality abroad as it is in the U.S. You should be particularly aware of the prevalence of date rape drugs abroad and never leave drinks unattended in a public place or accept a drink that you did not see poured.

Do not carry mace with you unless you are absolutely certain that it is necessary. Also, please be sure to find out if carrying mace is not in violation of the laws of the country in which you are traveling: For example, mace and pepper sprays are illegal in Britain. Check with customs upon entering the country to see if your self-defense item is legal.

### ***American Embassies and Consulates***

Should you encounter serious social, political, health, or economic problems, the American embassies and/or consulates can offer some limited assistance. They can, for example, provide you with a list of local attorneys and physicians; they can contact next of kin in the event of an emergency or serious illness; they can contact friends or relatives on your behalf to request funds or guidance; they can provide assistance during civil unrest or natural disaster; they can replace a lost or stolen passport. Please understand that they are the contact for information on where to get advice, but they do not give advice nor can they get you out of jail.

Register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate upon arrival. They will require a copy of your passport. This will be handy if you later lose your passport because they will already have the basic information needed in order to replace your passport. In addition, the U.S. Embassy will know where to contact you if they need to alert you to potential problems. You can check the addresses of the closest U.S. consulate or embassy at: <https://www.usembassy.gov/>, and UMKC's SAGE office has included the contact information for the consulate in the country in which you are studying as a part of the Pre-Departure Orientation materials.

### ***Office of Overseas Citizens Service***

Should your family need to contact you while you are traveling (e.g. after the program is over), emergency assistance is available through the Citizens' Emergency Center of the Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS), operated by the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. The office can be reached at 202-501-4444 (from overseas) or 1-888-407-4747 (from the US). After hours emergency assistance is available by calling this number for more information. Website info: [link](#)

This office can forward emergency messages from your family, provide protection in the event of arrest or detention while abroad, transmit emergency funds to destitute nationals when commercial banking facilities are not available, etc. It would be wise for you to provide your family with at least a tentative itinerary so that in an emergency, they can give the State Department some idea where to begin looking for you.

To contact Study Abroad & Global Engagement, please call:  
**(code to dial out of the country you're in, then) 1 (816) 235-5759**

Contact the University of Missouri-Kansas City Police Department in case of an emergency if necessary (they have relevant SAGE home/cell numbers):  
**(code to dial out of the country you're in, then) 1 (816) 235-1515**

### **Culture and Culture Shock**

What do we mean when we say "culture?" Put simply, culture is the sum total of the institutions, beliefs, customs, behaviors, artifacts, language, and attitudes of a particular group of people. It is learned and transmitted from generation to generation. It is cumulative and ever changing. It is the way you think, act, speak, and walk as well as what you think about, why you act the way you do and what you say. It is the total way of life of a people. Your culture affects everything you do and it colors the way you view other cultures.

When two cultures come into contact, both are changed in some way. Some are affected negatively, some are affected positively, but none escapes influence. It is this mingling of cultures that forms the primary focus of study abroad. Adapting to a new culture and learning from it (in essence, coming into contact with a different culture and being changed by it) is what study abroad is all about.

However, this change can cause uneasiness. This happens especially when the contact of cultures involves extreme differences, or even contradictory views or customs. Dealing with this uneasiness is part of the process -and some of the more difficult things to come to grips with are explained in the pages that follow.

### ***Things to Consider Prior to Leaving***

Equally important to a successful study abroad experience depends on you being prepared mentally and psychologically. Things are not going to be the same as they are in the United States. This may sound like an obvious statement, but the truth is, many students go overseas expecting only superficial differences (clothing, language, cuisine) and fail to realize that their host country will most assuredly be different fundamentally as well. Do not be dismayed; there are many ways to ensure a successful transition from your home culture to your host culture.

One way which has proven successful in making people feel more secure about their preparedness is to research the country they will be living in. We have compiled a list of thirty basic questions you can ask about your host country and culture. They are designed to help you become more aware of facts and behaviors found in your host country and to lay the groundwork for comparative thinking between host and home cultures. This is not intended to be an inclusive list and you will probably think of more questions as you attempt to answer these. Nevertheless, when you have the answers to the following thirty, you can consider yourself well beyond the beginner stage.

We suggest that you go through the list and try to answer as many of the questions as you can. Next, try to find the answers to the rest by reading about the country, browsing the Internet, or by talking to someone here who is from your host country. There are dozens of international student organizations at UMKC whose members could be a great resource for finding out information about your new home. Take the questions you have remaining with you abroad and utilize the relationships you form with your host country's nationals to help you find the answers. People will most likely be flattered by your interest and will be eager to help you fill in the gaps.

- How many people who are prominent in the affairs (politics, athletics, religion, the arts, etc.) of your host country can you name?
- Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?

- Can you recognize the national anthem?
- Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language? What are the social and political implications of language usage? What is the language of instruction in the schools? At what level are foreign languages introduced?
- What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion? Have you read any of its sacred writings? How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religions?
- What is the attitude toward drinking? Smoking cigarettes? Gambling?
- Is the price for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain? How is bargaining conducted?
- How do people organize their daily activities? What is the normal meal schedule? Is there a daytime rest period? What is the customary time for visiting friends?
- What foods are most popular and how are they prepared?
- What is the usual dress for women? For men? Are slacks or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions? Do teenagers wear jeans?
- If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early? On time? Late? If late, how late? Does the same timing hold true in terms of arrival at school? At work?
- On what occasions will you present (or accept) gifts from people in the country? What kind of gifts would you exchange?
- How do people greet one another? Shake hands? Embrace or kiss? How do they leave one another? What does any variation from the usual greeting or leaving signify?
- What kinds of non-verbal behavior (i.e. touching) are acceptable between sexes? Same sex?
- What are U.S. relations like in the past and present with your host country and the surrounding regions? Be able to provide a valid opinion of the U.S.'s actions or positions.
- What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
- What sports are popular? Do they involve gambling? If so, which sports?
- How will your financial position and living conditions compare with those of the majority of people living in this country?
- What things are taboos in this society?
- Is military training compulsory?
- Are the largest circulation newspapers generally friendly in their attitude toward the United States? Give examples.
- Are there special privileges of age, sex, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status?
- How many people have emigrated from this country to the United States? Other countries? Are many doing so at present?
- What types of health services are available? Where are they located? How are health services funded?
- Where are the important universities of the country? If university education is sought abroad, to what countries and universities do students generally go? What percentage of university students have the opportunity to study abroad?
- What are a few of the country's major literary contributions? Authors?
- What are the differences/ similarities between your home and host culture as to public/private institutions such as banks, libraries, post offices, media, schools, day care, hospitals?
- What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities of adults or teenagers?

- Where can medicines be purchased? What are the common local remedies?
- What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it? Do many people have cars? Who has the right-of-way? Pedestrians? Animals?

Finding the answers to these questions will give you a good insight into the culture of your host society. With that in mind, now is a good time to discuss the meaning and relevant aspects of the term "culture."

### **Stereotypes**

Numerous studies have been done to identify specific characteristics that distinguish one culture from another. This anthropological approach to cultural differences and similarities of course can and should be studied. Most overseas visitors and those who receive them, however, often unfortunately are captured by misleading and often dangerous stereotyping. Misconceptions exist on both sides.

Frequently, the stereotype of the American is far from complimentary: the boorish tourist who expects everyone to speak English, the arrogant patriot who thinks every country in the world should pattern itself after the United States, the drunken reveler who sees the anonymity of traveling abroad as an opportunity to drop all civilized inhibitions - all have contributed to the development of this unfortunate stereotype that cannot be applied arbitrarily, at least to yourself - we hope!

Keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as adept at stereotyping the American as we are at stereotyping them. The following are a few examples of the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others frequently associate with the "typical" American:

- Outgoing and friendly
- Informal
- Loud, rude, boastful
- Immature
- Hard working
- Extravagant and wasteful
- Sure they have all the answers
- Lacking in class consciousness, disrespectful of authority
- Racially prejudiced
- Ignorant of other countries
- Wealthy
- Generous
- Promiscuous
- Always in a hurry

While a stereotype might possess some grain of truth, it is obvious when we consider individual differences that not every American fits the above description. The same is true about your hosts vis-à-vis your own preconceptions, for example, about the Germans, the English, the Japanese, the Italians, the Spaniards, the Russians, etc.

Studying overseas involves dealing with your host culture's stereotypes about you and it also involves coming to grips with your own stereotypes about your host culture. It is necessary to recognize that not everyone in your host country is going to behave like a



character out of a comic book. For example, all Australians do not dress like Crocodile Dundee and all Chinese don't know martial arts.

### ***Prejudice***

Some stereotypes are openly hostile and can lead to active prejudice against a group or nationality. Some students may encounter active hostility to Americans while they are overseas. This hostility can take many forms. Verbal insults are usually the most common and least dangerous. Students who find themselves in such situations need to simply walk away. Responding to insults usually leads to bar brawls and that is something you want to avoid, especially if you are not on your home turf.

Prejudice can be the most difficult part of a student's experience overseas. It doesn't occur to everyone and some students may never even know it is happening, but students should be aware of the possibility.

Unfortunately, many people overseas have negative impressions or stereotypes about Americans. It's very important that you don't fall into these stereotypes. Instead, try to defeat them by being patient, open-minded and gracious. Following are some unflattering questions and generalizations about the U.S.A. that you may hear in another country. If these or similar questions are posed to you while abroad try not to become overly defensive.

Remember that you are there to learn about another culture, not to promote and become entrenched in your own.

- We've heard much about how easy your schools are. How can such a great nation have such a poor system of education?
- Why do you put your old people in nursing homes? Don't you care about your elderly?
- How can such a rich country have so many poor people?
- Why are Americans so ignorant of the world?
- How can you talk so much about human rights when you have racial problems in the US?
- America is well known to us from TV and films. With all that sex and drugs going on, you must be immoral.
- Why are you always trying to force your form of government on everyone else?
- You Americans don't respect marriage. Divorce for you is as simple as going to the market.
- Do you own a gun?

### ***Standing out***

If you are considered a minority in the environment you find yourself living in, people will be very curious about you. Children may follow you on the street. People may yell out your most obvious physical characteristics to acknowledge you, or just stare and point at you. You may be surprised to hear people calling you "Foreigner, Blond One, Tall One, Black One, Crazy Tattooed Man, etc." Most of this attention is not negative or dangerous, but sometimes you may be categorized based on stereotypes (which may be very different from country to country).

Prior to leaving, ask your advisor or program contact about what to expect and

strategies for handling what you may encounter. You may also want to talk to other students about possible scenarios.

### ***Areas of Cultural Difference***

Remedies for stereotypes and prejudice depend wholly on individual behaviors. With this in mind, it is important to note specific areas where cultural misunderstandings can occur. If you are aware of the pitfalls, you can avoid them and many of the problems that prejudice can cause.

1. Personal Space - Every culture has a different concept of what is an appropriate amount of personal space. Personal space is the area around you, which you reserve for yourself and someone with whom you are on intimate terms. Unconsciously, every time you interact with people, you obey these rules of space. When two individuals are talking on the street, they will automatically range themselves outside this zone of personal space. Strangers will stand further apart from each other than friends, and boyfriends and girlfriends tend to stand closer to each other than friends. In the US, this zone of personal space is actually quite large when compared to other cultures.

Learn the etiquette of personal space in your host culture by observing other people. Do not be offended if someone invades "your" space merely by accident. Remember that in some cultures the American norm of wide personal space translates into aloofness and standoffish behavior. Your own personal habits could be telling other people something about you that isn't really true.

2. Food and Eating - If you are observant, you will notice that people in other countries eat differently from Americans. For example, in some countries you will be stared at when you put down your knife and fork and change hands after cutting a piece of food. In some countries, it is considered impolite to keep your hands under the table when you are not using them to hold utensils. And it is still considered peculiar, at least, to pour with the left hand. It is considered rude in some countries to use chopsticks like a knife and fork to cut food.

You may also encounter a few "food-surprises." You shouldn't assume that words that are used in the U.S. mean the same things abroad. For example, "spaghetti" in Italy is a first course. Salad is eaten right before dessert in France. Corn is fed to pigs. A martini in most European establishments is interpreted as vermouth. European popcorn is frequently sugared. French fries ("chips") might be served with mustard or mayonnaise or vinegar, rather than ketchup.

Menus may state whether the tip and/or taxes are included in the bill or not. Check the customs of the country which you are visiting: tipping customs vary, and while in some countries a gratuity of 12-15% is expected, in other countries tipping isn't done at all.

3. Polite Behavior - Every culture has an idea of what is considered "polite," what is considered "informal," and what is considered "rude." These fine shades of social behavior take years to learn, even for natives, so don't be discouraged if it takes you a while to adjust to these norms.

To help you out, here are some examples of things that Americans do in public that may

be considered rude in some other societies. (It may be a good idea to observe the way members of your host culture interact on these issues before trying them out yourself). Americans may tease each other, call people by their first names, ask personal questions and talk about themselves personally, smile at strangers, yawn without covering their mouths, introduce themselves to strangers, dress casually, shout out to people, point, think that it's all right to admit ignorance, think that manners and education are not important except in academic communities, believe that "one-upmanship" is a natural means of social interaction.

It is important to remember that when you are unsure of an aspect of social behavior, it is better to err on the side of politeness. If an off-color joke pops into your head at the dinner table, think carefully before blurting it out. If it isn't something you could freely talk about in front of your grandparents, don't take the chance. Of course, levels of familiarity are often established very quickly between young people regardless of their cultural backgrounds. So it really depends on what type of situation you are in.

No matter where you are or whom you are talking to, remember to say please, thank you and good morning/afternoon/evening, even if you are not used to doing this at home. It is simply good manners no matter where you are and it can go a long way to dispel the myth of the rude American tourist.

4. Humor - Senses of humor differ drastically from culture to culture. What may be funny to you is not always going to be funny to an Australian, for example. Conversely, what an Australian considers hilarious, you may find downright rude or offensive. Be careful about what you joke about overseas and observe the joking behaviors of your friends. Learn from other people's mistakes! If a joke about the Queen Mother gets a friend of yours a mouthful of fist in a London pub, remember not to make the same kind of jokes. Again, it is best to err on the side of caution when it comes to humor.

5. Appropriate Topics of Conversation - Many cultures have taboo subjects that may or may not make any sense to most Americans. Try to find out what can be safely spoken about in polite conversation and what might be considered off-color or rude. Political discussions, especially, can become very heated. If you are not sure where you stand on an issue or are not willing to discuss it, simply back out of the discussion. The last thing most people want to hear is an ill-informed American talking loudly about some issue in local politics about which s/he has absolutely no idea.

Choose your topics carefully. Try not to become engaged in any conversation which begins with, "Why are you Americans so...", or "Why does America feel it has the right to..." Arguing these points with someone, whether right or wrong, tends to reinforce stereotypes and inflame nationalist tempers. Remember, it is always perfectly justified to defend your country's actions and policies if you feel so inclined but avoid arguing from an emotional standpoint and never fall back on stereotypes when you are engaged in discussions like these. For instance, try to avoid beginning your sentences with, "In America we do this..." or "Things are so much better in the States..." These are the classic refrains of the "ugly American".

6. Alcohol and Drugs - Attitudes towards alcohol and drug use vary considerably from culture to culture. Social drinking can be acceptable whereas public drunkenness is not. However, very few countries are liberal regarding drugs. The penalty for marijuana may be the same as for heroin. Read about the laws of the country you are visiting. Drug use

may be very rare in your host country, and many people will be horrified to learn about drug use in the U.S.

Drugs account for 1/3 of Americans arrested overseas. If you get caught with them, you could be thrown into a jail unlike anything you could ever imagine. And the U.S. government cannot help you out of such a situation. You are subject to laws of that country. Some countries have death penalties for illegal drug possession (Turkey, Malaysia, etc.), with the average sentence being over seven years. The fact that you were carrying a small amount may not make a difference at all.

### ***Culture Shock***

Traveling abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. Or it can turn out to be a series of bewildering and frustrating incidents that leave you longing for home. Aside from the basic preparation of the "hows" and "wheres" of your trip, it is valuable to also take some time to investigate the "what am I likely to encounter" -- that is, the things that will happen to you as you mingle with people whose values, traits and characteristics are different from your own. By thinking and preparing for these encounters, you will certainly enrich your travel abroad experience.

We are surrounded by elements in our own culture, which influence who we are and how we relate to the world. Because we have grown up with this culture, we are comfortable in it. Our values and attitudes about who we are and how things should be have been shaped by our experiences in our native culture. What happens when we suddenly lose cues and symbols that orient us to situations of daily life? What happens when facial expressions, gestures and words are no longer familiar? The psychological discomfort that we feel in this foreign situation is commonly known as "culture shock."

What causes culture shock? The difference between your expectations and what you actually experience is where you begin to find problems in adjusting. This is not a vacation in a foreign country but an acculturation exercise, and you are expected to blend in and live like members of the student population.

In spite of the fact that you may already have visited your host country, you will find it different to actually live there. It is easy to become frustrated by the daily differences like operating a phone, finding convenient shopping hours and getting around. The easily accessible facilities taken for granted in the U.S. are not always available, and this can prove upsetting and stressful, especially if they come as a surprise. Culture is like a body of water that surrounds you completely. It is everywhere – in language, food, clothing, and daily interactions – and cannot simply be turned "on" or "off." This is why it can be so exhausting to live in a foreign country. Hopefully you can take the time to research some of the questions and areas of potential cultural difference listed earlier in this document so you will be better informed and prepared. This is an opportunity to discover why most students find study abroad so rewarding - it forces you to learn about your personal limits and strengths.

During any semester abroad, you can expect to experience a roller coaster of emotions. Although your time in another country is going to be exciting and fulfilling, you cannot expect to be happy and carefree 24 hours a day. Unlike a vacation, studying abroad is an academic exercise, which is both challenging and rewarding. By choosing to study in a foreign country, you have taken a step away from the comfort and familiarity of home.

You may find that you feel more sensitive and more vulnerable to the daily trials of college life while you are overseas. When problems arise, remember that an open mind and a positive attitude are the best ways to combat culture shock.

Culture shock is a logical reaction to differences we encounter in a foreign culture. Luckily, it is only one step in the process of getting into the culture of a foreign country.

The various phases, which you might find yourself going through in this process, include:

1. Being fascinated with all the new things you are experiencing.
2. Feeling uncomfortable because you don't belong.
3. Rejecting the foreign culture and people as being strange.
4. Learning to decipher foreign behavior and customs.
5. Accepting and enjoying the foreign culture.

It is also important to remember, however, that cultural adaptation is not a completely linear process. It is normal to experience plateaus and regressions as you attempt to integrate into a foreign culture.

Our emotional reactions to these various phases will influence how we relate to local citizens. Naturally, being excited and fascinated with foreign behavior and customs will help to pave the way for positive interaction. Conversely, acting hostile and aggressive toward those "strange and un-American" customs will do little more than perpetuate the "ugly American" image and cause foreigners to want to avoid us. Below is a collection of suggestions for you to follow that can do a lot to help you overcome the negative aspects of culture shock.

### ***Academics***

Research the academic culture and the system of higher education in your host country. Many other cultures have very different attitudes towards cheating and different expectations for university students. The American system requires close consultation with an academic advisor and weekly reading or writing assignments. This is not always the case in other countries, where students are often expected to assume a high level of personal responsibility and independence. Grading systems can also vary widely; what is considered a failing grade by an American student might be perfectly acceptable in his or her host country. It is always a good idea to familiarize yourself with these types of academic issues before you leave and even talk to other students who have studied in the same host country.

### ***Host Families***

Living with a host family is a wonderful way to experience your host culture and to enrich your study abroad experience. Some of the benefits include: gaining an inside view of the host culture; improved language skills; more complete cultural integration; contact with a diverse group of people of different ages; and more experience with the traditions, customs, holidays, celebrations, and food of your host country. However, when living abroad it can be an added challenge to adapt to a new family and its unique dynamic. This can be a challenging but extremely rewarding experience that requires hard work and mutual respect.

Keep in mind that no family is "typical." It may consist of a retired couple, a couple with children, or a single parent. Families also live in different locations (in small towns or big cities) and in different situations (in small apartments or in large houses). Adapting to life in a new family is like adjusting to a different culture. It is important to remain open and flexible and to communicate your needs honestly to your host family. You should remain as open as possible to new experiences and to the foods you might be served. Be sure to follow all family rules, help with chores, and get involved in family activities.

Some questions to consider before living in a host family:

- What are the family's eating habits? Do I have any dietary restrictions that might complicate things?
- What are the family's attitudes towards personal space and privacy?
- What are the family's expectations regarding cleanliness, daily chores, and curfew?
- What is the family's communication style and is it similar or different from my own?
- What are the family's religious and political views and how can I remain respectful of these?
- Does the family have children? If so, how are they disciplined?
- Does the family conform to traditional gender roles?

### ***Ways to Successfully Adapt to Your Host Culture***

Knowledgeable travelers advise handling "culture shock" with adaptability, a sense of humor, and a lot of common sense. Give yourself time to become accustomed to the cultural differences. You may even find that many of the differences are a pleasant change from the U.S. way of life. If you have an active interest in finding meaningful patterns for unfamiliar customs, it expands your horizons and adds the wealth of another culture to your own. The following suggestions should minimize the negative effects of "culture shock" and help you make the most out of your study abroad experience.

- ✓ Maintain a flexible attitude and be open-minded. Flexible personalities tend to cope and adjust more successfully in unfamiliar settings than rigid personalities. Nothing will be more crucial to your experience than the right attitude towards your host country and your host culture.
- ✓ Stay motivated. Motivated individuals tend to take the necessary steps to conquer cultural problems to a far greater extent than apathetic individuals.
- ✓ Be patient. You will be able to make substantial headway if you can keep your frustration level in check and approach your studies, yourself, and your hosts with tolerance and perseverance.
- ✓ Be tolerant of ambiguity while taking time to be familiar with your surroundings. At times, especially at first, you may not understand what is going on around you. Fortunately, by becoming familiar with the behaviors and customs, even if you don't understand them completely, you will find it easier to get along.
- ✓ Behave in a manner you would deem proper for a foreigner in your country. Well-mannered people in the U.S. will most likely be considered such elsewhere.

Likewise, ill-mannered people will probably be judged as such in whatever culture they reside.

- ✓ Do not cover mistakes with arrogance. Your hosts will enjoy introducing you to their culture. Maintain an open attitude.
- ✓ Remain open and sensitive. Learning how to operate in your host country requires analytical observation and placing some of your own cultural behaviors on the back burner.
- ✓ Assume that people act in a positive manner towards you. Polite behavior may be defined differently in different cultures; you might find that a behavior that appears negative is actually intended in a positive manner.
- ✓ Make your judgment about your host from their cultural environment, not from yours. A frequent mistake is to make a judgment about your host within your cultural context instead of his or her cultural context.
- ✓ Interact with your host in as human a fashion as possible. We tend to exaggerate the differences between people and the problems of living abroad. By seeing your host as an equal with the same potential for emotion as yourself, you will create a productive, positive relationship that will pave the road to a successful study abroad experience.
- ✓ Be sensitive to the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part. This applies very much to photography.
- ✓ Realize that often the people in the country you visit have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own. This does not necessarily make them rude, only different.
- ✓ Instead of looking for an extended vacation, discover the satisfaction of immersing yourself in a different way of life. You will find your experiences deeply rewarding and fulfilling and will cherish the memories for the rest of your life. And although an occasional vacation while abroad does add to your understanding, leaving your city to travel every weekend is the easiest way *not* to become part of the host culture. You'll be leaving town at the time when most of the locals your age are enjoying their social lives, an experience that can do a lot to further your intercultural education.
- ✓ Remember that you are only one of the thousands of tourists visiting this country and do not expect special privileges.
- ✓ Experiment with new things that you can't do or try at home. You can get hamburgers, baseball and MTV in the U.S. Take full advantage of the opportunity given to you!
- ✓ Be friendly and outgoing. People who are friendly have more fun. The best resource in a foreign place is the local population. Becoming friends with people who live in your host city can be the best way to get to know the culture and area. Locals have all the inside information about what their town has to offer and are usually willing to share it. Keep in mind that if you aren't enjoying a place, it's possible that you just haven't seen enough of it. Talk to the people who live there. Get suggestions from them about what to do and see and experience the things

that they consider important. You can learn a lot this way and enjoy yourself in the meantime.

- ✓ Be more than just a tourist. Tourists travel to shop and see. Students travel to learn and do. You are only going to be overseas for a limited period of time. Some of you may never have the chance to experience this again. Make the most of it. Don't wait for someone else to plan things for you. Be an explorer.
- ✓ Don't expect perfection. The students who arrive in their host country with the knowledge that not everything is going to be as they have envisioned it are better able to cope with the inevitable hurdles that all students must deal with when studying abroad.
- ✓ Respect the opinions and customs of the people you meet overseas. Nothing will earn you a quicker reputation as an "ugly American" than assuming a disrespectful and self-righteous attitude when dealing with others. Listen, observe and be sensitive.
- ✓ Try to engage in familiar physical activities, like swimming, walking, bicycling, etc., to keep from feeling overwhelmed by a completely foreign situation.
- ✓ Work on increasing your language proficiency. Many of the misunderstandings and confusion you experience abroad are a result of the language barrier. By improving your conversation and listening skills, you will be able to better understand what's going on around you.
- ✓ Use humor to deal with difficult situations. Taking things too seriously and brooding about them only intensifies negative feelings. Looking back at a stressful situation and finding something about it to laugh at is a great tension reliever and it will diffuse your sense of discomfort, ambiguity or adversity.
- ✓ Know your beliefs and values and prepare yourself for adjustment. When you are abroad, they are very likely to be challenged. In order to not fall into the trap of feeling marginal in both cultures, you should try to maintain a strong sense of self. The better you understand yourself and the cultural community you identify with, the easier it will be to feel comfortable in a new cultural environment. This is not to say that you should reject your host culture. Just make up your mind to neither resist the new culture nor surrender completely to it. Retain your own cultural identity but recognize the right for others to retain theirs. You may even find yourself incorporating various new cultural aspects into your own regimen.
- ✓ Don't try to find a "little America" wherever you go. By doing so, you'll miss so many of the beautiful experiences your host country has to offer. Discovering cultural differences and experiencing "culture shock" are both powerful learning tools. Through these, one gains a high degree of self-understanding and personal growth. Past travelers have claimed that by traveling abroad you get a great education in what it means to be an American and in how the rest of the world's population lives and thinks.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with your host country by watching the local news or reading the local newspaper. It is important for an understanding of the host culture to keep up with current events.
- ✓ Find yourself a conversation partner from your host culture by advertising at a local university if you wish to improve your language skills. Strange as it sounds,



watching television is also one of the best ways to improve language and learn more about another culture.

- ✓ Above all, know that any anxiety or disorientation you feel is normal and keep in mind that, given time, the effects you feel from culture shock will likely pass.

Remember that there may be difficult and even frustrating times for you overseas. But as past travelers have noticed, bad moments are quickly forgotten, and even the bad experiences are priceless. With the right attitude, the good times you have will stay with you longer and will easily overshadow the bad.

### ***Where to Go for Advice***

In the rare event that nothing helps and you are miserable, try talking to someone at your host school, such as the international students' office, or if you are on a UMKC program, talk to your Program Director. They may have suggestions or ideas that can help you. If you are enrolled at a foreign university, you may want to join the university's Student Union, various athletic and social clubs, and to meet students from your host culture and participate in activities that you normally enjoy at home. If you seem to be experiencing culture shock or loneliness for an extended time while you are overseas, we recommend you call or e-mail our office to talk it over. We are as interested as you are in making sure that the period of study abroad is successful, both personally and academically.

### ***Return Shock***

After devoting all of this time to adapting to your host culture, the time will come when you have to get ready to return to the United States. If you are like most travelers, you are already torn; you are anxious to get home to see family and friends, to get behind the wheel of an automobile, to eat the foods you couldn't get in your host country. Yet you will be leaving what has become "home" to you: good friends, countless places to go and things to do and see. As you arrive back in the States, you are likely to experience another sort of culture shock, called "return shock."

Just as your host country seemed difficult and unmanageable to you a little while ago, home may seem that way to you now. "Return shock" is a perfectly normal reaction suffered by many who have been abroad. It could range from annoyance at not finding the food and products to which you have become accustomed to difficulty reestablishing ties with family and friends. The degree of return shock will depend upon:

- the length of your absence
- how much contact with home you maintained
- if you had been separated from your family before
- your previous experience traveling
- how much you enjoyed your study abroad
- if you traveled with someone or alone
- how easily you adapted to your host culture (Ironically, the easier you adapted, the more difficult the return shock will be. Conversely, those who have experienced difficult culture shock upon arriving in their host country will not typically have a great adjustment problem returning home).

One of the primary reasons you were encouraged to study abroad was to give you a chance to develop new insights and perspectives, to learn about yourself and grow

emotionally and intellectually. If your study abroad experience was at all successful, you will not return home exactly the same person you were when you left.

Those whom you left at home may not realize the changes that have taken place in you. If you are returning to live with your parents after having been on your own, differences are bound to surface. Friends who have been absorbed in their own world while you were gone may not be particularly interested in hearing the details of your experience. You may feel hurt by their disinterest and turn defensive. Places which had been so familiar to you in the past (home, school, the mall) may suddenly seem very foreign. You may initially feel that you no longer fit in. The truth is, you have changed culturally.

Much research has been done concerning this topic, and it has been found that there are some individual characteristics that can be affected by living in other cultures. Some of these characteristics are:

- more awareness of international issues and needs
- less authoritarianism or rigidity in ways of thinking
- more independence
- a more realistic spectrum of success standards
- more tolerance in different points of view
- increased sensitivity to differences in people
- an increase in the acceptance of others
- more complex thinking that will help when making decisions
- an increase in creativity, combining different cultural ideas
- a deep appreciation of "cultural relativity"
- competence in another language

There are no easy answers to deal with "return shock." The same advice that was given to you to adjust to culture shock is probably best for return shock, too. Be aware that what you are feeling is quite normal. Remain flexible and get involved with activities and friends.

Try to reintegrate into your society rather than dwelling on what you have left. Where friends and family are involved, communication is the key. Talk to them; tell them how you are feeling, let them know about "return shock." They will be eager to help you and will wait for you to "get back to normal." This doesn't mean that you have to renounce your experience and give up everything you've gained.

Learn to strike a balance between the old and the new, just as you did when first adjusting to your host culture. As much time and effort as you devoted to dealing with culture shock, you must now devote to overcoming return shock.

Here are some suggestions to help ease your transition back to the States:

- Find a more receptive audience. Stay in touch with those with whom you shared your study abroad experience. They can provide support and understanding as you compare notes.
- Take advantage of opportunities to meet other returned study abroad students. They are generally more interested and more capable of understanding your experiences than people who stayed home and will themselves be looking for someone with whom to share their stories.

- Participate in study abroad recruitment, such as the Study Abroad Fair held each fall, or help with a Pre-Departure Orientation for students preparing to leave. From working as a volunteer or peer advisor to giving presentations to classes or student groups, there are numerous ways for you to share your experience with others.
- Become active internationally at UMKC. Get involved with international students on campus; the International Student Affairs Office (ISAO) offers programs that seek to bring international students into greater contact with Americans.
- Become active with one of the many international student organizations on campus. For contact information for the international student associations, call (816) 235-1113.
- Continue your foreign language studies. Enroll in courses which have an emphasis on global issues and don't be afraid to bring your new perspective into all your classes. There are also many international /intercultural events throughout the year, such as lectures, film series, and international festivals.

Again, remember that the return shock is temporary, and you will be able to readjust to your home culture. Be patient, flexible and understanding of the events and people around you and you will be reintegrated into the culture you have always known.

## Travel

### *International Flight Arrangements*

Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions to getting the cheapest and most convenient tickets. There are many options, each having its advantages and disadvantages. Often there are tradeoffs between flexibility, convenience, certainty of flight, and low cost. Those students with tight schedules will have different needs and priorities than those with the freedom and flexibility to take advantage of some of the best deals around.

Due to the global pandemic, it is recommended that students always purchase flights directly through the airline they will be traveling on. This is to make it easier for you in case of cancellations, delays, lost baggage, and rescheduling the flight if necessary. Travel providers such as Expedia, Travelocity, and others may offer cheaper flights, however, it will be more difficult to go reach them in case of travel cancellations or other emergencies.

#### Other Useful Airfare Tips:

- ✓ Reserve flights as early as possible to take advantages of advanced purchased fares.
- ✓ Watch for specifications, restrictions, and cancellation penalties.
- ✓ Consider trip cancellation insurance if you have any doubts as to your plans. This is strongly recommended.
- ✓ Try to travel during low season for the best fares. Keep high season cut-off dates in mind when making plans (approx. 15 June to 15 Aug)
- ✓ Consider "open-jaw" flights into one city and out of another. If you will be doing a lot of traveling once you arrive, it might save you considerable on-land travel time and expense to arrange a return flight from a different city.
- ✓ If you are considering buying an open-ended return flight, BE SURE to book a return date as soon as possible. You will have trouble getting a seat in the busy

travel season at the end of the term when so many others are flying. Also, some countries may not let you have an open-ended ticket for immigration purposes. They want to know that you will actually be leaving. Check on the immigration policies of your destination.

### ***Luggage***

Generally speaking, most airlines operating international flights will permit you to check-in two pieces of luggage whose total external dimensions do not exceed 106 inches (length + width + depth of both pieces added together) with the larger piece not exceeding 62 inches. Again, generally luggage whose external dimensions do not exceed a total of 45 inches are acceptable. There may be some exceptions to this general rule, and some airlines might still be quite particular about weight limitations; the airline or your travel agent should be able to inform you of the latest policies affecting luggage limitations. Please note, that flights to Europe often only permit one checked piece of luggage without an additional fee. Flights to Asia, Africa, or South America may permit you to bring two pieces of checked baggage for no additional fee.

Excess luggage can become very expensive!

Mark all luggage, inside and out, with your name and address. If you have an itinerary, put a copy inside each bag in case the bags are lost. Keep a list of what is in each bag and carry the list in your purse or carry on with your other documents. Mark your bags in some distinctive way (suggestion: brightly-colored luggage tag) so they are easily found. Count your pieces of luggage each time you move! Try to travel light, it's safer and easier!

### ***Tips for Securing Valuables During Travel***

- Don't carry everything in one place!
- Never pack essential documents, medicines (anything you could not do without) in your checked luggage. Put them in your carry-on bag or money belt/pouch.
- Never carry a large amount of cash. Try using a necklace pouch or a money belt (worn under clothing) to carry your cash.
- Take only the credit/debit cards you will use on the trip. Keep a separate list of cards, numbers and emergency replacement procedures and phone numbers. Note: "800" numbers cannot always be dialed from a foreign country. Find out from your credit card agencies before you go what their emergency number is.
- Since it may be necessary to contact your insurance agent or carrier while you are abroad, keep the names and telephone number, as well as your policy number, with you in a safe place.
- Take all the medicine you need for the trip. Take a copy of the prescription, with the generic name of the drug. Keep your medicines in their original pharmacy containers. Take extra glasses or contact lenses and the prescription for lenses, in case of loss.
- Carry with you, separate from your passport, two extra passport photos, passport number, date and place issued, a photocopy of your passport (and visa, if applicable), and a certified, non-photocopied copy of your birth certificate or an expired passport. If your passport is lost, report it to local police, get written confirmation of the report, and take the above documents to the nearest United States consulate and apply for a new passport. Leave a photocopy of your passport and visa at home and with SAGE just in case you may need to have

copies sent to you in order to expedite the processing of a new passport and visa.

- Be sure to make several of copies of your flight itinerary and online check-in information. It is a good idea to leave one at home and keep a couple with you.
- If you are carrying a laptop, do not call attention to it with a fancy case. Instead put it inside of your carry-on. Keep in mind that there might be customs regulations in the U.S. and abroad that apply to computers, expensive electronic and photographic equipment. It is a good idea to check with alumni of the program to find out if you really need to take your laptop. (It can be helpful to have access to a personal computer if you wish to contact friends and family by using Skype – a free international calling program available for download.) Consider purchasing special insurance for these types of electronic devices. Note that if your laptop needs repairs done, replacement parts might not be available overseas. It is a good idea to bring along your own laptop lock.

### ***Packing Tips***

Pack lightly. Remember that you need to take everything back you brought over plus all of the things that you will collect while you are there. If you're planning on buying some new clothes before you leave, wait! Take the money with you and buy them in your host country. Although our fashion styles may appear similar, your style will be distinctly American. This is not necessarily a negative thing; however, you may feel more comfortable if you are able to blend in a little.

When packing, remember that you will be responsible for carrying all your luggage. You may not be able to fly directly into your final destination, which means you will have to take trains, buses, metros, taxis, etc. This can be difficult enough without the added burden of several large suitcases. A large backpack is a great tool for keeping your hands free and carrying your belongings through airports and subway stations, for both your initial journey as well as for other travels you may pursue; you might want to consider investing in one. The backpack, along with a small carry-on bag, is a good combination.

Packing books is the quickest way to fill up your bag, they are heavy to carry, and expensive to ship. So aside from a good travel guide and language dictionary, choose carefully. One option is to take a book that you can leave abroad so you don't have to worry about it taking up luggage space when you want to bring those souvenirs home.

Prepare for the weather of the host country. Does it rain a lot? Will there be snow? Do you need a heavy coat? Is it a different season than Kansas City? Layering your clothes is the best tip for travelers. This gives you variety to your wardrobe and will keep you comfortable in all climates. Good shoes are also essential for most countries, since you will be walking more than you ever have.

Bring mementos from home. You might want to bring a few photos and some favorite recipes from home for those homesick moments and to share with your new friends. While you are studying abroad to learn about a new culture, there's nothing wrong with sharing your own. Some of it you might want to give away to your new friends at the end of your trip (i.e. posters, postcard, T-shirts).

When packing, consider alternative packing techniques to save space in your luggage. You can pack bulky clothing items in vacuum-sealed gallon bags or roll clothing together.

***Suggested Packing List:***

- sturdy clothes that can be layered
- jacket or coat
- comfortable walking shoes
- slippers
- language dictionary (if applicable)
- money pouch
- sunglasses
- contact lens solution
- swimsuit
- battery-operated alarm clock
- Swiss Army knife (if legal)
- extra memory cards for digital cameras
- flash drive for storage of documents or pictures
- wash and dry towelettes
- journal

***Jet Lag***

Try to relax and save energy on your long flights. You have probably heard of "jet lag" which is as much a physical as a psychological phenomenon. Your body, through long years of habit, has become acclimatized to functioning in accordance with its own physiological clock based on a particular daily cycle. When you arrive at your study abroad location, your clock is going to be automatically out of sync with the local cycle because of the time difference. If you are arriving in Luxembourg at noon, for example, your body, which still is functioning in accordance with the cycle to which it was accustomed to in the CST zone, will be telling you that it is just about time to wake up. The sun outside your aircraft window will be telling you that the day is half over. It will take your body a few days to adjust (some bodies take longer than others), during which time you can expect to feel quite tired and run down. This fatigue, in conjunction with the strange surroundings, customs, and language, may produce a temporary sense of depression and "homesickness." Be prepared for that during the first couple of days: it is a perfectly normal reaction.

***Departure/Arrival***

Schedule your initial flight to arrive in the morning or early afternoon. Remember that arrival procedures, including customs can take a bit of time. By arriving early, you will be giving yourself enough time to find food and accommodations or to get to your final destination before it gets dark and shops close down for the day. Do not agree to look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Do not leave your own bags unattended at any time.

***Stepping Off The Plane***

Get yourself some water or better yet -- always carry bottled water with you and get a bite to eat. This will help ease your mind and body of the culture shock some airports

induce. Remember this is the time to calm down and not get frazzled. Pay attention to the location of your passport and visa documents. Put them away in your neck pouch right away after going through customs and immigration.

Get the address of your destination before you leave the U.S., just in case your contact person doesn't meet you at the airport. This is also where local currency can be extremely helpful. A taxi may cost you more than it should, but this is to be expected in a foreign country where you haven't yet learned the "rules." Make sure you get a taxi or van service from the official airport fleet. Often there are booths that sell passes. If uncertain, check with an airport information desk attendant.

Airports, bus and train stations are notorious for pickpockets and scam artists. Be alert, be firm. Do not agree to carry things for others especially through border areas as it may be contraband. Be prepared to pay for visas and other fees. Look your best when going through customs and passport checkpoints. Make sure you are not carrying anything considered illegal in the countries you are visiting. Check the customs regulations for the country prior to departure by contacting the appropriate consulate or embassy. Many travel guides list this information as well. Likewise, read all posted signs at the border crossings. Some border crossings require proof of vaccinations, which may not be a requirement when traveling by plane.

### ***Rail Passes***

Combining convenience with inexpensive rates, perhaps the most widely used form of transportation abroad is the railroad. For those who are familiar with rail travel in the U.S., travel by rail overseas will probably be a pleasant surprise.

Information and application for rail passes can be obtained from your travel agent. Please note that these passes cannot be replaced in case of loss or theft and are therefore the equivalent of cash in your possession. It should be noted that these passes can only be purchased in the U.S., so you will have to obtain the one you want before departure or else have someone purchase it later on your behalf and forward it to you by registered mail. The passes are personal and non-transferable and will be forfeited if presented by anyone other than the person to whom they were issued. Presentation of your passport is compulsory when making use of the pass. Passes do not guarantee you a seat; some trains require seat reservations for a nominal fee.

Unless you plan to do a great deal of travel by rail, a rail pass might not be your best investment. You might find it more economical to purchase one-way or return (round-trip) student fares. Several rail passes may be cashed in if they are never used; but if they have been validated even once, however, they cannot be refunded.

Keep in mind that domestic flights or flights on budget airlines can be a cheap alternative to rail travel. Airlines such as Ryan Air (in Europe) or Easy Jet (in Europe) can have incredible sales. Research any budget airlines operating in your host country.

### ***Tours***

Although some commercial tours may prove to be rewarding experiences, generally speaking, you may want to avoid them. After a little experience getting around

overseas, most students find that they can fulfill their own travel objectives adequately without the assistance of professional tour services and at much lower costs.

### ***Driving Abroad***

If you are planning to travel by road (bus or car) please note that cheaper is not always better. Don't pinch pennies and put yourself in danger. It is important to ask the locals about the bus company's record and road conditions. It is particularly dangerous to be on the road at night.

Even in the U.S. night driving is several times more dangerous than day driving. Remember that if you are traveling through remote areas, the infrastructure, speed and availability of help may be extremely poor. **Renting cars and motorbikes can be grounds for dismissal from many programs.**

### ***Hostels***

For students planning to travel extensively abroad, the cost of hotel accommodations can be prohibitive. If you are willing to forego the comforts of a hotel and accept certain inconveniences of low-cost hostels, you can save a great deal of money. A youth hostel, for example, can be anything from a remodeled villa to a log cabin with extremely inexpensive overnight rates. Restrictions vary from one hostel to another: some of them, for example, impose curfews; some require that you provide your own bed sheets; some have strict check-in and check-out times, etc. To find out more information on hostel locations, facilities, and discount pricing, check out the following:

- <http://www.hihostels.com/>
- <http://www.hostels.com/>

### ***Biking***

Bicycle touring overseas is a very enjoyable experience. While cycling, it is much easier to see small towns and beautiful countryside. Biking is popular among Europeans, so most European countries are ready to accommodate the casual day-biker as well as the person planning to pedal for most of his/her trip abroad. Be sure to wear a helmet when biking.

For informal day biking, you will find bicycles available for rent all over Europe and parts of Asia. Train stations in big cities and many smaller towns have bicycles for rent that you can pick up and drop off along your route. Check with local tourist offices and train station information desks to find out where bicycle rental shops are located.

### ***Travel Smart***

Prior to leaving your program site for travel, develop an itinerary and leave it with your program office director and with your designated emergency contacts. You can do so virtually through your Globetrotter portal program application. Inform people of your plans. When making plans, keep in mind that it is best to save pleasure travel for after you have acclimated to being in the region and are more fluent in the language.

Always travel with a friend and share a room since hotel/hostel safety may be an issue in some places, especially if you are a woman (but also for men). Falling asleep in public spaces inside



buses or trains will also be safer if you have a buddy to take turns being vigilant over not just possessions but also your person. Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you.

### **Legalities**

Keep in mind that while you are visiting another country you are subject to the laws of that country. Legal protection and personal rights that we take for granted in the U.S. are left behind when you depart. American embassies and consulates are very limited in the assistance they can provide. They can, for example, provide you with the names of competent attorneys and doctors, but they cannot provide you with any financial assistance in paying for legal or medical services nor can they intervene on your behalf in the administration of justice as seen from the point of view of the host country. Keep in mind that bail provisions, as we know them in the U.S., are rare in other countries. Pre-trial detention without bail is quite common. Prison conditions are often deplorable in comparison with conditions in the U.S. The principle of "innocent until proven guilty" is not necessarily a tenet of legal systems abroad.

### ***Drugs/Illegal Substances***

We cannot warn you strongly enough to avoid any possible involvement with drugs abroad. As stated earlier in this manual, drug laws vary from country to country and in many cases are extremely severe, regardless of whether the drug in your possession is for personal use or for sale to others. Bail is not granted for drug-trafficking cases in most countries. Pretrial detention, often in solitary confinement, may last for months. Few of those countries provide a jury trial, and in many cases, you need not even be present at your trial. While it goes without saying that most prison and law enforcement officials abroad will probably not speak English, you cannot fully appreciate the significance of that fact until you are confined in what often can be conditions bordering on the primitive. The average jail sentence in drug cases worldwide is about seven years. In at least four countries (Iran, Algeria, Malaysia, and Turkey) the death penalty can be imposed for conviction on some drug charges.

### **U.S. Customs**

Before You Go: If you own imported articles such as cameras, watches, binoculars, etc., and will be taking them with you overseas, register them with U.S. Customs to avoid extra duty charge upon reentry. They must have a factory-engraved serial number.

On Returning: Keep purchases made abroad together and retain receipts for customs inspection. If you bring back foreign pharmaceutical products, it is wise to have the prescriptions available for inspection.

You are entitled to bring into the U.S. \$400 worth of articles duty free, then pay 10% duty on the next \$1000. When returning from the U.S. Territories of American Samoa, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands, the first \$800 is free, with a duty of 5% on the next \$1000. Although the increases will not immediately be reflected on the declaration forms, they are already in effect. You must declare, at the price paid, everything acquired abroad that you bring home including gifts given to you and articles worn or used. If you fail to declare or understate the value, penalties can be severe. Many travelers take advantage of the U.S. Customs regulation that permits you to send individual gifts costing no more than \$10 to the U.S. No customs declaration or duty is required for such gifts. You may send as many as you like (except for perfume, tobacco, and alcohol) but no more than one per day. Be sure to write, "Gift enclosed" clearly on the package wrapping. Articles purchased abroad and sent to the U.S. are dutiable

when received in this country - except for the \$10 gift packages just mentioned. Duty cannot be prepaid. Do not list such items on your declaration upon return.

If you exit or enter the U.S. with more than \$5,000 in currency, or its equivalent, you must report this to U.S. Customs.

Not more than 100 cigars and 200 cigarettes (one carton) may be included in your \$400 exemption. Keep in mind, however, that your cigarettes may be subject to a tax imposed by state and local authorities. One liter of alcoholic beverages may be included in the exemption if you are 21 years of age or older.

Some items cannot be brought into the U.S. at all. For instance, the following items are either banned or restricted: ceramic tableware, cultural antiquities and artifacts, fruits and vegetables, and diamonds from Sierra Leone. Be aware of these restrictions when you are shopping abroad. Prior to going abroad you may want to review the United States Customs Service's website about restricted items, <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/know-before-you-go/prohibited-and-restricted-items>.

Should you need assistance on matters relating to U.S. Customs while abroad, Customs representatives are available in the American Embassies.

NOTE: These regulations are subject to change. Please review carefully the customs forms you are given upon entry into the US.

## **Money**

### **1. How Much To Take**

It is increasingly difficult to travel cheaply. Inflation has hit hard everywhere. Inexpensive is characterized as \$20 per day. To spend as little as possible means that you will stay in hostels and eat in marketplaces. You spend more time to save money. A higher budget allows more freedom and choice in accommodations, restaurants and entertainment. Once you have determined your travel budget, plan to live within it and take along a \$100 emergency fund. You may not spend this money, but it will be there should you need it, and you will avoid the hassles that come with being stranded abroad. Cutting costs also depends on where you go. Switzerland, Scandinavia and Japan are the most expensive. Travel in some parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America can be much more economical than Western Europe. For detailed information on costs, consult student guidebooks.

### **2. Currency Exchange**

American currency can be exchanged for foreign currency at most international airports prior to your departure, at the international airport of your destination, and at most major banks and railroad stations abroad. It might be wise to exchange a small amount of money prior to your departure in order to have some cash-on-hand upon arrival at your study abroad location. Should you choose to do this, be sure to exchange your money at one of the various bank branches at the airport or through your local bank. Do not exchange currency at hotels, restaurants, or retail shops: the exchange rate generally will be outrageous. Banks and bank windows can often be found both in airports and railroad stations abroad. They will have the fairest exchange rate available. You can expect to pay commission (which varies from one country to another) every time you exchange currency. In some countries the commission is based on a percentage of the amount you exchange, while in others there is a flat fee

regardless of the amount of the transaction (in the latter, of course, it is to your advantage to exchange larger amounts to avoid repeated visits to the bank window, although this means that you will be carrying more cash than might be advisable; you will need to find a happy medium between the risks of carrying large amounts of cash and paying repeated bank commissions for exchange transactions).

The key to successful money exchange is advance planning. Try to anticipate how much you will need for a particular country. It is costly to convert all you have to a new currency because each time you convert, you pay a service charge. Remember to exchange only as much as you think you will need for a particular country. It is not possible to exchange coins once you move to another country. Remember to have your passport with you as identification each time you exchange money.

Fluctuation is the key word in currency exchange today so rely on information that is current. Once abroad, you can comparison shop at local banks for the best rates. Rates are generally posted in bank windows. Published currency guides are useful in order to learn the denominations of a foreign currency but such guides never can be completely up to date in their conversion tables, since they depend on the exchange rate which can fluctuate daily. You can check the exchange rate before your departure by visiting the following web site:  
<http://www.xe.com/>

### 3. *Automated Teller Machine Cards (ATM)*

As more and more countries offer automated teller machines, using your ATM card is becoming the most common, convenient and cheapest way to get money while abroad. Check with study abroad returnees from your host country to see if the ATM machines in the country where you will be studying will accept U.S. ATM cards.

When you use an international ATM, you will receive foreign currency from the machine, which as with credit card purchases, the exchange rate will be converted in your account according to the rate on the day you withdrew your money. You won't need any form of identification to use these machines, nor will you be charged a commission, but you will most likely be charged a service fee by the bank who owns the machine and by your own bank for using another bank's ATM. This service is not available with all ATM cards, so check with your bank to make sure that your card and personal identification number (PIN) will work in your host country and you can also inquire about any fees. Keep the 1-800 and international phone numbers from your card somewhere safe so you can cancel the card in case of theft.

Before you leave you should also ask your bank if it charges international ATM fees or has a limit on the amount of money you can withdraw per day. Ask if your bank has reciprocity (meaning it waives foreign ATM fees) with any banks abroad. This is often the case in large foreign cities or with bigger banks, such as Bank of America. Be sure to monitor your bank account online while you are abroad (but only on a secure server).

### 4. *Credit Cards*

Credit cards are also becoming more common in terms of use when traveling regarding purchases and expenses, since they provide one of the best exchange rates and offer protection and security while traveling. Possession of an American Express, Visa or MasterCard, with your name imprinted on it may be helpful in emergency situations. Keep in mind however, that not all merchants abroad may accept credit cards, so be sure to have a

way to access cash.

Most credit cards now can be used like an ATM card, with limitations on daily withdrawals. Make sure you have a PIN for your credit card and check what your daily limit is and your overall credit limit. Fees may apply.

With a Visa or MasterCard you usually can obtain a cash advance against your account from a foreign bank. Please inquire about any fees; there is usually a charge for this. The bank will take your passport number and your credit card number and phone them both into a central computer to prevent you from exceeding the established limit by repeating the transaction at other banks. Visa is the most recognized card worldwide.

With American Express you can go to one of their offices (commonly found worldwide as they also act as travel agents) and cash a personal check for up to \$1000. Only the first \$50 will be provided in cash, the balance will be in traveler's checks. If you have no personal checks with you, American Express can provide you with a blank check if you can provide some pertinent information such as your personal checking account number and your banking institution's name and address.

The ultimate amount of your bill will be based on the exchange rate on the day that your bank and credit card company process the transaction. In the case of all financial transactions abroad, be sure to have adequate identification with you (i.e., your passport).

***\*Prior to going abroad you should inform your credit card company and bank as to where and when you will be traveling. Because of heightened fraud protection your card may be declined if you have not informed your credit card company and bank that you will be traveling.***

##### 5. Transfer from Home

Should you run short of cash while abroad, money can be sent from home in a variety of ways:

- As discussed above, if you have enough credit or have not reached your daily limit, always consider using your credit card or ATM card. This will be the best rate of exchange and the most economical.
- If neither your ATM nor credit cards works, the quickest way, although the most expensive, is by cable transfer from your American bank to a bank abroad. You might want to visit your hometown bank before your departure to obtain a list of the overseas correspondent banks to which money can be transferred by cable and to let them know who is authorized to initiate cable transfers on your behalf. To pick the money up at the overseas bank, you will of course, need identification (i.e., your passport). Also, it may be necessary for your hometown bank to process cable transfer through a major, internationally recognized U.S. bank, which in turn, will probably have to deal with a comparable internationally-recognized bank overseas. The correspondent bank abroad can then complete the transfer to a local bank in your study abroad location. This will take some time.
- American Express money orders are relatively fast. Transactions must be initiated at an American Express office in the U.S. and completed at one of their branch offices abroad, either of which could prove inconvenient depending upon their location. American Express can cable money from some of their American offices to one of their overseas offices, where it can be picked up with appropriate identification. Since not all American Express offices prepare money orders or cable money, it would be wise to

call your local American Express office for the location of offices that can provide these services.

- It is also possible to obtain a foreign currency draft from an American bank, drawn against a recognized bank in the foreign country. This draft can then be sent to you (by registered or certified mail) for cashing abroad.
- Should you prefer receiving a bank draft in American currency, cashier's checks drawn against a major U.S. bank (e.g., Chase Manhattan) can possibly be obtained from your hometown bank and forwarded to you abroad (again by registered or certified mail). This, however, may prove to be a relatively slow way of obtaining the money you need; once the check has been received, you will have to wait for the foreign bank to confirm the check's validity before they will cash it.
- Personal checks drawn against your local hometown bank may be worthless in most instances.

## IMPORTANT UMKC REFERENCE NUMBERS

### University of Missouri-Kansas City Contact Information

When calling from a foreign country to the United States, you will first dial an international code to get out of the country, and then you will dial the code for the U.S. The code for the U.S. is 1, which is included in the phone numbers below. The code to get out of many European countries is "00", but you will want to verify for the country where you are studying.

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

For emergencies, call the UMKC Police Department (tell them you are a study abroad student) and they will contact an IAP staff member who can help you ASAP.

Study Abroad and Global Engagement	+1 (816) 235-5759
<b>UMKC Police Department</b> (they have SAGE's home/cell #'s)	+1 (816) 235-1515
Arts and Sciences	+1 (816) 235-1136
Conservatory of Music	+1 (816) 235-2731
Business	+1 (816) 235-2201
Education	+1 (816) 235-2236
Dentistry	+1 (816) 235-2010
Graduate Studies	+1 (816) 235-1301
Computing and Engineering	+1 (816) 235- 2399
Law	+1 (816) 235-1644
Nursing	+1 (816) 235-1700
Medicine	+1 (816) 235-1808
Pharmacy	+1 (816) 235-1607
Cashier's Office	+1 (816) 235-1365
Office of Financial Aid	+1 (816) 235-1154
Registrar's Office	+1 (816) 235-1213

### **Acknowledgements**

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The University of Missouri - Columbia  
Butler University  
Southwest Missouri State University  
University of Nebraska - Lincoln  
University of Michigan  
Studyabroad.com  
University of Texas, Austin

Arthur Gordon, Joan Wilson, Gordon Homann, Robert Booker, Judith Elliott, Jennifer Karlen,  
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### **World's Worst Cultural Mistakes from Travel and Leisure**

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-worst-cultural-mistakes>

*Don't let blowing your nose or taking off your shoes land you in hot water when you travel*

By Sallie Brady

**Touching Someone, Where It's Offensive:** Korea, Thailand, China, Europe, the Middle East.

**What's Offensive:** Personal space varies as you travel the globe. In Mediterranean countries, if you refrain from touching someone's arm when talking to them or if you don't greet them with kisses or a warm embrace, you'll be considered cold. But backslap someone who isn't a family member or a good friend in Korea, and you'll make them uncomfortable. In Thailand, the head is considered sacred — never even pat a child on the head.

**What You Should Do Instead:** Observe what locals are doing and follow suit. In Eastern countries remember that touching and public displays of affection are unacceptable. In places like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, men and women are forbidden from interacting, let alone touching.

**Knowing Your Right from Your Left, Where It's Offensive:** India, Morocco, Africa, the Middle East.

**What's Offensive:** Many cultures still prefer to eat using traditional methods — their hands. In these cases, food is often offered communally, which is why it's important to wash your hands before eating and observe the right-hand-is-for-eating and the left-hand-is-for-other-duties rule. If you eat with your left hand, expect your fellow diners to be mortified. And when partaking from a communal bowl, stick to a portion that's closest to you. Do not get greedy and plunge your hand into the center.

**What You Should Do Instead:** Left-handed? Attempt to be ambidextrous — even children who are left-handed in these cultures are taught to eat with their right hand — or at least explain yourself to your fellow diners before plunging in.

**Keeping Your Clothes On, Where It's Offensive:** Scandinavian countries, Turkey.

**What's Offensive:** Wearing bathing suits, shorts and T-shirts, underwear, or any other piece of clothing into a sauna, hammam, or other place of physical purification. In some cultures, a steam room or a sauna is considered a place of purity and reflection, where the outside world (i.e., your clothes) should be left outside. In some Scandinavian countries it's common for entire families to sauna together in the nude.

**What You Should Do Instead:** Sitting on a folded towel is considered acceptable. If you're too modest to appear naked, strip down, but wrap yourself in a towel.

**Looking Them in the Eye ... or Not**

**Where It's Offensive:** Korea, Japan, Germany.

**What's Offensive:** For Americans, not making direct eye contact can be considered rude, indifferent, or weak, but be careful how long you hold someone's gaze in other countries. In some Asian nations, prolonged eye contact will make a local uncomfortable, so don't be offended if you're negotiating a deal with someone who won't look you straight in the eye. If toasting with friends in a German beer hall, your eyes had better meet theirs — if they don't, a German superstition says you're both in for seven years of bad luck in the bedroom.

**What You Should Do Instead:** Avoid constant staring and follow the behavior of your host — and by all means, look those Germans straight on.



### **Drinking Alcohol the Wrong Way**

**Where It's Offensive:** Latin America, France, Korea, Russia.

**What's Offensive:** Every culture has different traditions when it comes to drinking etiquette. Fail to consume a vodka shot in one gulp in Russia, and your host will not be impressed. Refill your own wine glass in France without offering more to the rest of the table, and you've made a faux pas. In Korea, women can pour only men's drinks — not other women's — and if you want a refill, you need to drain your glass. And if you're in Latin America, never pour with your left hand — that's bad luck.

**What You Should Do Instead:** Until you're culturally fluent, leave it to your pals to pour.

### **Blowing Your Nose**

**Where It's Offensive:** Japan, China, Saudi Arabia, France.

**What's Offensive:** Some cultures find it disgusting to blow your nose in public — especially at the table. The Japanese and Chinese are also repelled by the idea of a handkerchief. As Mark McCrum points out in his book *Going Dutch* in Beijing, the Japanese word *hanakuso* unpleasantly means nose waste.

**What You Should Do Instead:** If traveling through Eastern and Asian countries, leave the hankies at home and opt for disposable tissues instead. In France as well as in Eastern countries, if you're dining and need to clear your nasal passages, excuse yourself and head to the restroom. Worst-case scenario: make an exaggerated effort to steer away from the table. Let's hope you don't have a cold.

**Removing Your Shoes...or Not, Where It's Offensive:** Hawaii, the South Pacific, Korea, China, Thailand.

**What's Offensive:** Take off your shoes when arriving at the door of a London dinner party and the hostess will find you uncivilized, but fail to remove your shoes before entering a home in Asia, Hawaii, or the Pacific Islands and you'll be considered disrespectful. Not only does shoe removal very practically keep sand and dirt out of the house, it's a sign of leaving the outside world behind.

**What You Should Do Instead:** If you see a row of shoes at the door, start undoing your laces. If not, keep the shoes on.

**Talking Over Dinner, Where It's Offensive:** Africa, Japan, Thailand, China, Finland.

**What's Offensive:** In some countries, like China, Japan, and some African nations, the food's the thing, so don't start chatting about your day's adventures while everyone else is digging into dinner. You'll likely be met with silence—not because your group is unfriendly, but because mealtimes are for eating, not talking. Also avoid conversations in places a country might consider sacred or reflective—churches in Europe, temples in Thailand, and saunas in Finland.

**What You Should Do Instead:** Keep quiet!

**Road Rage, Where It's Offensive:** Hawaii, Russia, France, Italy, around the globe.

**What's Offensive:** Honk on Molokai or fail to pay a police officer a fine, a.k.a. bribe, on the spot when you're stopped for speeding in Russia, and you'll risk everything from scorn to prison time. Remember, too, that hand gestures have different meanings in other countries — a simple "thumbs-up" is interpreted as an "up yours" in parts of the Middle East.

**What You Should Do Instead:** When driving abroad, make sure you have an international driver's license; never, ever practice road rage; and keep your hands on the wheel.

### **Health & Immunization Tips for Travelers**

UMKC Student Health and Wellness ~ Caring for the Student Body  
4825 Troost, Suite 115

**Personal health and health history** - Consider having a physical examination prior to travel.

If you have an ongoing health problem, think about what type of support/treatment you might need while gone. Consider having your health care provider draft a letter explaining your condition and the current treatment plan.

Personal Medications—Take sufficient medication in labeled containers. Take a back-up prescription if indicated. This includes contraceptive medications. Consider taking emergency contraception with you if there might be a need.

**Health habits while traveling** - In general, if the food and water supply is not safe, eat carefully. Good hand washing is essential.

In general, boil it, cook it, peel it (yourself) or forget it. More tips:

- Eat only food cooked thoroughly and served hot
- Avoid re-warmed foods
- Drink only boiled or bottled water
- Drink only bottled or canned beverages
- No ice in drinks
- Avoid salads or other raw foods

Use antibacterial towelettes to clean hands and tops of bottled and canned foods.

To prevent diarrhea—try Pepto Bismol 2 tablets every AM beginning 2-3 days before departure. May be taken before each meal.

#### **Suggestions for treatment of Travelers Diarrhea**

Imodium-2 tablets after first loose stool, then two tablets after a second loose stool. With a third loose stool, consider beginning an antibiotic if you have one.

Pepto Bismol. 2 tablets every 6 hours as needed. Can take with Imodium but must separate by 2 hours.

Antibiotic. Consider taking an antibiotic if above fails.

**Vaccine recommendations** - For anywhere: Make sure your current immunizations are correct.

Tetanus (every 10 years),

MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), 2 per lifetime

Specific to destination: Check CDC website for suggested immunizations for your destination (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>)

For Latin American countries: Typhoid-food borne (injectable and oral) and Hepatitis A-food borne --series of 2, 6 months apart (one immunization will give immediate immunity)

**Malaria prophylaxis (mosquito borne)** - Provider will check CDC website for recommended prophylaxis. Most common option is a weekly medication started 1-2 weeks prior to travel and continued 4 weeks after travel. Daily medications may be recommended depending on the traveler's health and allergy status.

**Resources** UMKC Student Health & Wellness can provide services for UMKC students.

See [www.umkc.edu/chtc/health](http://www.umkc.edu/chtc/health) for immunization costs and other information.

CDC— <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/ybToc.aspx#1>

### ***UMKC Safety Guidelines for Study Abroad Participants***

While studying abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own safety through the decisions they make before and during the program and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors. Here are a few suggestions of safety precautions addressed specifically to American students:

- Students should keep a low profile and try not to make themselves conspicuous by dress, speech, or behavior in ways that might identify them as a potential terrorist target.
- Students should avoid crowds, protest groups, or other potentially volatile situations, as well as restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate.
- Students should be wary of receiving unexpected packages and stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, or other areas of uncontrolled public access.
- Students should report to the responsible authority any suspicious persons loitering around residence or instructional facilities or following them; they should keep their residence area locked, and they should use common sense in divulging information to strangers about their study program and their fellow students.
- Students should make arrangements through their overseas program director or host university officials to register upon arrival at the US consulate or embassy having jurisdiction over the location of their foreign study. They should make sure the resident director, host family, or foreign university official who is assigned the responsibility for their welfare always knows where and how to contact them in an emergency and knows their schedule and itinerary if traveling, even if only overnight.
- Students should develop a plan with their families for regular telephone contact so that they can communicate with you directly about their safety and well-being in the unlikely event of an emergency.
- Students should remain in contact with on-site personnel at their location as well as informing them of all travel plans and checking travel advisories for any country they visit.

### **Please Help UMKC Facilitate Communications**

As a regular part of safety preparedness, please carry at all times the phone numbers and e-mail addresses (if applicable) for the following contacts:

- UMKC's Study Abroad & Global Engagement (816-235-5759). Regular office hours are 8:00 AM-12:00 PM and 1:00 PM-5:00 PM, Monday-Friday.
- the UMKC Police Department (816-235-1515) who will contact a member of the UMKC Study Abroad Team at home in the event of an emergency occurring outside of regular office hours
- the Program Resident or Faculty Director, as applicable
- the International Programs Office of the host institution
- emergency phone numbers for the host institution
- the US Embassy and/or local Consulate in any country you are studying or traveling
- family at home and work

### ***CDC's Travel Health Tips for Students Studying Abroad***

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/studying-abroad>

Study abroad programs offer students an exciting opportunity for learning and cultural exchange. These programs are increasing in availability and geographic diversity; thus, students can expect to deal with cultures and environments that are very different from their own.

Students may be at increased risk of illness or injury due to these cultural and environmental differences, such as climate extremes, the presence of certain insects, inadequate sanitation, and poorly lit roads. Travel to developing regions of the world, especially for a period of several weeks or months, can be particularly challenging.

Few events can negatively impact the travel experience more than becoming sick or being injured while far away from home. To reduce health risks while studying abroad, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following general guidelines for students:

#### **Before travel**

- Be sure to check with a health-care provider to make sure you are up-to-date with all routine vaccinations (i.e., measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, hepatitis A and B, meningitis, influenza, and polio). Diseases such as measles and mumps remain common in many parts of the world, including some developed countries.
- See a health-care provider or a travel medicine specialist, ideally 4-6 weeks before travel, to get any additional vaccinations, medications, or information you may need to stay healthy abroad. If it is less than 4 weeks before travel, you should still see a health-care provider since there may be some vaccinations, medications, or prevention information that could be beneficial to you. The section of the CDC Travelers' Health website entitled Travel Medicine Clinics has information about locating a travel medicine specialist or a travel clinic.
- It is especially important that you consult a health-care provider who specializes in travel medicine if you have a complicated travel itinerary (e.g., travel to rural areas of developing countries) or have a current medical condition that will need to be managed while abroad.
- Visit CDC's Travelers' Health website to educate yourself about any disease risks and preventive measures for the countries where you plan to study. If you are visiting a developing country, you are at greater risk for illness or injury than those who travel to developed countries (e.g., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Western Europe), where the health risks are similar to those found in the United States.
- CDC has information on how to prepare a travel health kit that includes
  - an ample supply of your prescribed medications in their original, clearly labeled containers (copies of all prescriptions should be carried, including the generic names for medications, and a note from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery for controlled substances and injectable medications);
  - an antidiarrheal medication;
  - alcohol-based hand gel (containing at least 60% alcohol);

- an antibiotic for self-treatment of most causes of acute bacterial illness;
  - a thermometer;
  - insect repellent containing at least 30% DEET if you plan to study in or visit a tropical or subtropical area;
  - the name and telephone number of your primary health-care provider;
  - a copy of your vaccination records.
- Familiarize yourself with basic first aid so you can self-treat minor injuries.
  - Learn how to swim if you are inexperienced and plan to participate in recreational water activities while abroad.
  - Consider a health insurance plan or additional insurance that covers medical evacuation in case you become sick or injured, if your plan does not already offer this service.
  - Identify in-country health-care resources in advance of your trip in case of a medical emergency. This is especially important if you have a pre-existing medical condition. The Geo-Blue website is very helpful for this. In addition, the U.S. Department of State provides links to U.S. Embassy or Consulate websites for the country or countries you are visiting that can assist in locating Doctors/Hospitals Abroad. Several private travel medicine organizations provide assistance in locating medical care abroad; see Seeking Health Care Abroad in *CDC Health Information for International Travel 2012*.
  - Register with the U.S. Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov/>) so the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your destination country knows of your whereabouts in the case of an emergency when it might be necessary for a consular officer to contact you. This registration is especially important if you plan to stay abroad for longer than one month, if you will be visiting a country that has an unstable political climate, or if there is a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or hurricane.

#### **While residing abroad ... To reduce your risk of illness**

- In developing areas, boil your water or drink only bottled water or carbonated (bubbly) drinks from cans or bottles with intact seals. Do not drink tap water or fountain drinks or add ice to beverages. Avoid eating salads, fresh vegetables and fruits you cannot peel yourself, and unpasteurized dairy products.
- Eat only food that has been fully cooked and served hot and avoid food from street vendors. If living with a host family, discuss any food allergies or dietary preferences in advance.
- Do not touch animals, including domestic pets, and especially do not touch monkeys, dogs, and cats, to avoid bites and serious diseases (such as rabies and plague). If you are bitten or scratched by any animal, get medical attention right away, and immediately clean the wound well with large amounts of soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution, such as Betadine®, if available.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before meals and after going to the bathroom. If soap and water are not available and your hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand gel (containing at least 60% alcohol) to clean your hands.

Cleaning your hands often with soap and water removes potentially infectious material from your skin and helps prevent disease transmission.

- If visiting an area where there is risk of malaria, use insect repellent and a mosquito net for sleeping, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants outdoors between dusk and dawn, and make sure to take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after your trip, as directed.
- If you are visiting a country that has experienced an avian flu (bird flu) outbreak, avoid poultry farms, bird markets, and other places where live poultry is raised or kept. For more information, see the CDC's Outbreak Notice: Guidelines and Recommendations, Interim Guidance about Avian Influenza A (H5N1) for U.S. Citizens Living Abroad.
- Be aware that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS, are among the most common infections worldwide. The most reliable way to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases is to abstain from sexual activity or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship. For people whose sexual behaviors place them at risk for STDs, correct and consistent use of latex or polyurethane condoms when engaging in sexual activity can greatly reduce a person's risk of acquiring or transmitting STDs, including HIV infection. See CDC information on Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

#### **For your safety**

- Automobile accidents are the leading cause of preventable deaths in travelers. Wear your seat belt and follow the local customs and laws regarding pedestrian safety and vehicle speed. Remember to check on what side of the road people drive, because this may differ in the country or countries you will be visiting. Use helmets when riding bicycles and motorcycles.
- Remember not ride with anyone who is driving while drunk. The most important risk factor for road traffic injuries is the presence of alcohol in the blood of a driver or pedestrian who is injured.
- Be aware of the cultural impact of being involved in or causing an accident that includes injury to the local population. In unfamiliar or foreign environments, utilize a local driver.
- Swim in well-maintained, chlorinated pools, and only if you are an experienced swimmer. Drowning is also a leading cause of death in travelers.
- If visiting an area which has risk of water-borne infections (i.e., schistosomiasis), do not swim in lakes or streams or other fresh bodies of water.
- When spending time outdoors, wear sunblock for protection from harmful effects of UV sun rays. This is especially important if you are visiting tropical areas or areas in high altitudes. See Sunburn on the CDC website.
- To prevent infections such as HIV and hepatitis B, avoid receiving tattoos, body piercings, or injections.

#### **After your return**

On return from study abroad, if you are not feeling well or have been injured, get medical attention, including psychological support and counseling, if necessary.

- It is especially important for you to get health care if you have a fever, rash, cough or difficulty breathing, or any other unusual symptoms.

If you are returning from malaria-risk areas and become sick with a fever or flu-like illness, for up to 1 year after your return, get **immediate** medical attention and be sure to tell the doctor or health-care provider your travel history.

### **Resources from CDC**

For more information about CDC health recommendations for travel to specific destinations, select the country you are visiting from the CDC's [Destinations page](#).

For more information about STDs and HIV, see [CDC's Sexually Transmitted Diseases webpage](#).

### **Other Resources**

U.S. Department of State Study Abroad website  
<http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>

International Education Week website (U.S. Departments of State and Education)  
<http://iew.state.gov/>

U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
<http://exchanges.state.gov/>

U.S. Department of Education's U.S. Network for Education Information  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/edlite-index.html>

Association for Safe International Road Travel: Provides resources and information about safe road travel for study abroad. <http://www.asirt.org/>

**Mobility International USA:** Provides resources and support for students with special needs with an interest in study abroad. <http://www.miusa.org/>

Association of International Educators  
<http://www.nafsa.org>

### **SECURITY AND HEALTH DON'TS WHEN STUDYING ABROAD**

1. Don't travel alone
  2. Do not become the "ugly American stereotype" – loud and or boorish  
Here are some positive and negative stereotypes associated with Americans:
    - Outgoing and friendly
    - Informal
    - Loud, rude, boorish
    - Ignorant
    - Immature
    - Hard working
    - Extravagant
    - Sure they have all the answers
    - Disrespectful of authority
    - Wealthy
    - Generous
    - Easy
- Pick out those characteristics that you would like to be remembered by and avoid the others.
3. Avoid attracting attention to you – that is, avoid traveling alone or in a large group.
  4. Do not stand and/or plan to gather on the steps of your residence.
  5. Never, ever leave your residence unlocked.
  6. Do not draw attention to yourself when you are returning to your residence late at night.
  7. Do not pack your essential documents or medicines in checked baggage – luggage gets lost.
  8. Never carry large amounts of cash.
  9. Do not bring expensive jewelry with you.
  10. Even if you feel safe, don't wander down dark alleys or into areas that are known to be high risk.
  11. Avoid restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate.
  12. Also avoid baggage tags that would clearly identify you as an American.
  13. Do not impair your judgment with excessive consumption of alcohol.
  14. Women are sometimes targets of harassment – don't become a target:
    - Travel with some men you know and/or in groups
    - Dress conservatively
    - Do not agree to meet strangers in non-public places
    - Travel in groups
    - Never leave drinks unattended and watch as they are poured
    - Don't let your "natural friendliness" be mistaken for flirtation.
  16. Do not lose your passport, it will not be the end of the world, but it may seem like it is.
  17. Do not joke about bombs or about smuggled items – airport authorities will not find that funny nor will you.



### **UMKC Study Abroad: *Important Links While Abroad***

**AIRPORTS** - Provides listing of major international airports & lodging:

<http://www.hotelstravel.com/airports.html>

**AIRFARE** - [Google Flights](#)

Please note: As you make travel arrangements via the web, you may question the reliability of various websites. Some suggestions include: Always read the fine print; make a tentative reservation, and then call the airlines of which you plan to fly to inquire if they would recommend the web organization you are looking to book through; check with the Better Business Bureau about the sites you are interested in using, <http://www.bbb.org> or look on the Lonely Planet's chat area. Transitions Abroad Magazine reviews all travel websites: <http://www.transitionsabroad.com>. To ensure that transactions are secure, look for the "https" in the web address or the Verisign or TrustE insignias, which assure users that privacy policies and SSL encryption are in place.

Remember, it is always recommended to purchase your airfare directly from the airline, as doing so will help if you need to change your date of departure, or if your flight is delayed/canceled. Also, be sure to ask what the airfare's cancellation or rescheduling policy is. These policies have changed due to the pandemic.

**ALCOHOL** - [http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed\\_alcohol\\_and\\_student\\_exchange.asp](http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed_alcohol_and_student_exchange.asp)

**ATM'S** -Where to find an ATM even if you are not a MasterCard holder: [MasterCard ATM Locator](#)

Where to find an ATM even if you are not a Visa Card holder: [VISA ATM Locator](#)

**COMMUNICATION** - Country calling codes: <http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>

Cell Phone Rental Abroad:

[http://www.frommers.com/activities/tips\\_and\\_resources/article.cfm?articleid=1409&destid=TIP\\_SRES](http://www.frommers.com/activities/tips_and_resources/article.cfm?articleid=1409&destid=TIP_SRES)

Phone cards: [International Prepaid SIM Cards For Travel Abroad | TravelSim®](#)

Please note: There may be more affordable Sim Card options available to you once you arrive in your host country. Make sure to contact your program leader or host university to learn what Sim Card options they know about.

**CONSULATES & EMBASSIES** - This site has advice on contacting American Embassies and Consulates, and other diplomatic missions: [Official list of embassies from the U.S. Department of State \(usembassy.gov\)](#)

U.S. Department of State: <http://www.state.gov/>

This is a database of contact information for embassies worldwide, including U.S. embassies in all countries as well as foreign embassies in the U.S. This site also has information on a host of other topics ranging from calling cards to eco-adventures:

<http://embassy.goabroad.com/>

**COUNTRY INFORMATION** - [The World Factbook - The World Factbook \(cia.gov\)](#)

**CULTURE SHOCK** - Dealing With Culture Shock:

[http://www.worldwide.edu/travel\\_planner/culture\\_shock.html](http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_shock.html) or

<http://globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp>

**CURRENCY ... MONEY** - Current exchange rates: <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic> or <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

From the University of the Pacific's Cross Cultural Training Student Guide, this site gives advice about budgeting, currency exchange, credit cards, and transferring money:

<http://money.cnn.com/markets/currencies/>

**CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION** - <http://www.cbp.gov/travel/>

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE** - <http://www.state.gov/travel/>

**ELECTRICITY STANDARDS AROUND THE WORLD** -

<https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/>

**EMERGENCIES ABROAD** - Assistance if arrested: [Arrest or Detention of a U.S. Citizen Abroad \(state.gov\)](#)

**HEALTH (see also Safety)** - Center for Disease Control - <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

Maintaining Mental and Emotional Health - SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources about stress, adjustment, choices, and seeking help:

<http://globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp>

**HOSTELS** - <http://www.hostelworld.com/>

**SAFETY (see also Health)** - Travel Warnings:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

Offers road travel reports, seasonal hazards, safety tips and common driver behaviors for various countries: <http://www.asirt.org/>

Safety Abroad First Educational Travel Information and contact information:

[http://globaled.us/SAFETI/about\\_safeti.asp](http://globaled.us/SAFETI/about_safeti.asp)

10 Steps to not become a victim: [http://globaled.us/safeti/v2n22002ed\\_top\\_ten\\_list.asp](http://globaled.us/safeti/v2n22002ed_top_ten_list.asp)

Practical listing of measures to take to help ensure a safe travel experience, includes information on hijacking and kidnapping:

[http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed\\_personal\\_safety\\_overseas.asp](http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed_personal_safety_overseas.asp)

On-line Newsletter article by Nancy Newport, Licensed Professional Counselor and Consultant to the Peace Corps: [http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed\\_sexual\\_harassment\\_and\\_prevention.asp](http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed_sexual_harassment_and_prevention.asp)

[\\_sexual\\_harassment\\_and\\_prevention.asp](http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed_sexual_harassment_and_prevention.asp)

Study Abroad Safety Handbook: <http://studentsabroad.com/>

**PARENTS** - Newsletter article by William Hoffa, which helps parents participate in their student's study abroad experience:

[http://globaled.us/safeti/v2n12001ed\\_advice\\_for\\_parents\\_faqs.asp](http://globaled.us/safeti/v2n12001ed_advice_for_parents_faqs.asp)

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION** - Provider of discounted rail passes, covering travel in 17 different countries: <http://www.eurail.com/>

Railway in the UK: <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

Railway in Germany: <http://www.bahn.de/p/view/index.shtml>

Cheap Bus Travels in the UK, Canada, and the USA: <http://www.megabus.com>

Cheap Bus travels in the US and EU: <https://www.flixbus.com/>

**SPECIAL NEEDS** - Ways for students with special needs to have as much access as possible while abroad: <http://www.miusa.org/>

**TIME ZONES** - Provides all time zones and running, up-to-date clocks for all capital cities: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>

**TRANSLATION** - A helpful site for on-the-spot translations of words, phrases and paragraphs into a long list of world languages: <http://www.babelfish.com/>

**TRAVEL GUIDES & INFO -**

Frommers Budget Travel Online - Publishes a variety of travel books and magazines:  
<http://www.frommers.com/articles/7191.html>

A student travel agency offering discounted rail fares: <http://www.statravel.com>

International Student Identity Card (order online): <https://www.isic.org/>

Travel tips geared toward women, including everything from personal travel stories to what to wear: <http://www.journeywoman.com/>

**VOTING** - Provides links to state voting officials, state voting requirements and forms to register absentee and request ballots: <http://www.fvap.gov>

**UNIT CONVERSIONS** - Length Converter:

[http://www.onlineconversion.com/length\\_common.htm](http://www.onlineconversion.com/length_common.htm)

Weight Converter: <http://www.convert-me.com/en/convert/weight>

## **UMKC Study Abroad: *Packing List***

What you bring to your program largely depends upon where you study and who you are. In general, past participants recommend the following:

### **General Packing Tips**

- Clearly identify your luggage inside and out with your name and US & overseas address
- Place a strap or piece of rope around your suitcase to secure it in case the lock breaks
- Check airline regulations for weight, size, and number of bags
- In your carry-on, keep a change of clothes, toiletries, valuables, important documents (passports, visas, arrival instructions) and medication

### **Miscellaneous**

- \$100 in local currency for when you first arrive
- Map of your host city
- Guidebook of your region and of the places where you will travel
- Photocopy of your passport information pages. Also leave a copy at home.
- Photocopy of immunization card, license, credit cards (both sides), insurance, etc. (Leave these copies with trusted individual at home).
- International calling card and access numbers for the countries where you will travel.
- Phone numbers to cancel credit cards in case of theft (800 numbers don't work outside US)
- Board games or cards, as you will not likely have a TV
- MP3 player or IPOD, portable speakers, power supply
- Camera
- Journal
- Addresses and photos of family and friends
- Favorite recipes (note metric & Celsius conversions)
- Small items to use as gifts (e.g., UMKC decals, magnets)
- Travel alarm clock
- Umbrella
- Sunglasses
- Small sewing kit
- Money belt
- Day pack (for short trips; this could double as your carry-on)
- If you plan to travel, Swiss army knife with bottle opener (if legal), corkscrew, & can opener, absorbent fast-drying and small-to-pack towel (available at outdoors and/or travel stores)
- If you bring a laptop, inquire about international voltage converters at an electronics store
- Power strip so you only have to purchase one converter (if you plan to bring several items that require plug-in to an electrical outlet)
- Headlamp may be of use in developing countries or certain circumstances
- Purchase bedding, linens and kitchenware abroad, if your finances permit. They take up a lot of space and are easy to find overseas.
- Consider backing up information from your electronics before leaving home (in case belongings stolen) files from computer, pics from camera, music from IPod, etc.
- Flash drive/media cards to store photos, documents, music, etc.
- Your advisor's email address

- Address of your international destination (and name of a contact person there)
- Portable lock for your laptop computer (these can be very expensive abroad)

### **Clothing**

- Consider both the physical & social climate; dress accordingly. Persons in other countries tend to dress a bit more formally than we do in the US.
- Dark colors do not show dirt as readily
- Take durable, drip-dry, no-iron clothes
- Take items that have multiple uses and (for colder climates) can be layered.
- Comfort and practicality are the keys for both clothing and shoes
- Bring one professional outfit in case of a site visit to a company or job/internship interview
- Bring comfortable walking shoes.

### **Toiletries**

- Don't overstock on toiletries; most things are available in major cities abroad. Women may want to bring a preferred brand of tampons or pads, as they may not be as readily available abroad
- Transfer liquids from breakable containers into plastic containers; use tape to seal the lids when traveling or pack them in Ziploc bags to separate them from clothing
- Prescription drugs for the duration of your time abroad (include the original prescription or prescription bottle)
- Extra eyeglasses
- Saline solution for contact lens wears (can be very expensive/difficult to find abroad)
- Pocket pack of Kleenex
- Personal travel health kit, which may include: anti-diarrheal medication, hand sanitizer, antibiotic, thermometer, insect repellent, name and phone number of primary care provider, copy of vaccinations

### **Voltage**

Most appliances you have purchased in the U.S. are designed to work on 110 voltage, while most of the world outside the U.S. and Canada operates on 220 voltage. To convert the 220 voltage energy to 110 voltage (for your appliance to function), you will need to purchase a travel voltage converter (or, if the appliance is relatively inexpensive, purchase a new one in the host country). Countries that operate on 220 voltage include Austria, Chile, China, Denmark, Hong Kong, Norway and the United Kingdom. Countries that use both 110 and 220 voltage within their borders include France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Singapore, Spain and Sweden. Consider NOT bringing a hair dryer, as these often do not function, even with a converter.

Voltage isn't the only thing that varies from country to country. Electrical wall outlets also differ in shape, assortment, and arrangement of holes. To be prepared, make sure you get an adapter set to go with the converter. If you plan to plug in your laptop, a special computer adapter (with built-in surge protector), might be necessary.

### **UMKC Study Abroad: *Carrying Documents Checklist***

Review this checklist to ensure that you have appropriate documents in these locations.

#### Carry on your person:

- Passport and visa (if necessary)
- Driver's license (if applicable)
- Airline and ground transportation tickets, and travel itinerary
- Money - currency, credit cards, and traveler's checks if desired
- Name, telephone number, and address of contact at host institution and at home
- Medical insurance information / identification card

For semester and academic year study abroad students only:

- Proof of adequate financial means
- Letter of acceptance from host institution

#### Carry in your suitcase:

- Copy of passport and visa
- Copy of tickets and itinerary
- Emergency contact information (name, telephone number, and address) at host institution and at home
- Insurance card, I.D. card, driver's license
- Traveler's check numbers (if applicable)
- Proof of adequate financial means
- Letter of acceptance from host institution

#### Leave at home:

- Copy of passport and visa
- Copy of tickets and itinerary
- Copy of credit cards (front & back) and telephone numbers to reach the card companies
- Emergency contact information (name, telephone number & address) at host institution
- Copy of medical insurance information
- Power of attorney forms, if desired
- Contact information for UMKC's Study Abroad and Global Engagement

### **UMKC Study Abroad: *Pre-Departure Checklist***

- ❑ Write all names, phone numbers, postal and e-mail addresses of campus personnel and offices which you MIGHT need to contact during your time away.
- ❑ Make photocopies of all credit/debit cards, passport, driver's license, insurance card, etc. Leave copies of this information at home with a trusted family member. Remember to include all toll-free phone numbers to report stolen or lost cards, as well as card numbers, expiration dates, and the numeric code on the signature stripe on the back of the card. Notify your bank and credit card companies that you are leaving the country. Credit card companies may suspect theft and try to contact you when foreign transactions appear on your statement. Without notification of your travel plans, your debit and credit card access could be cut off as a cautionary measure.
- ❑ Enroll in UM System MANDATORY health insurance plan (online)
- ❑ Arrange for all required course approvals for major and/or elective credit.
- ❑ Complete required forms for Financial Aid, as applicable.
- ❑ Clear all registration holds and make sure all outstanding balances are paid and all loan promissory notes are signed. If you will be receiving aid after you depart, make sure direct deposit is set up with the UMKC Cashiers Office.
- ❑ If you are going to be gone during the Spring Semester, make sure you know how you will calculate and submit your taxes while you are away.
- ❑ Make sure Study Abroad and Global Engagement has the names and addresses of those persons who should be contacted in the event of an emergency. Also, please leave us an e-mail address that you will be using while away, as well as host country contact information, if known.
- ❑ Set up a plan for calling home once you have arrived safely in your host country.
- ❑ E-mail the UMKC Study Abroad Coordinator ([international@umkc.edu](mailto:international@umkc.edu)) with your host country address and phone as soon as possible upon arrival.
- ❑ Have a physical, dental, eye examination, etc. Make sure you receive all appropriate inoculations. If nothing else, let your physician know that you will be leaving the country. If you are ill or injured overseas, it may be necessary for the foreign medical authorities to contact your doctor.
- ❑ Bring all medication, prescriptions, saline solutions, extra glasses or contacts, etc. If you plan to carry prescription medication, make sure it is legal to bring that particular substance into the host country. Check with the consular office or embassy for that country here in the U.S. Prescriptions should be written out CLEARLY by your doctor, be dated and signed, and use the generic name for the medication. U.S. brand names overseas often are not recognized. It is always a good idea to keep all medications in their original packaging if possible.
- ❑ Pack several passport size photos for miscellaneous use (especially semester or academic year students).

**UMKC Study Abroad: *Important information to leave with a trusted family member or friend in the U.S.***

Name and City of Host Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Point of Contact there: \_\_\_\_\_

Their Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Your exact address overseas (if you know it prior to departure – otherwise can be filled out at later time): \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone Number Overseas: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Email While Abroad: \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Consulate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

STATE DEPARTMENT TRAVEL WARNINGS:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

WORLD NEWSPAPERS: <http://www.world-newspapers.com/>

**UMKC’s Study Abroad and Global Engagement – 816.235.5759**

Kate Wozniak – Assistant Director <a href="mailto:wozniakkj@umkc.edu">wozniakkj@umkc.edu</a>	Natalie Gilkison Brooks – Global Program Coordinator <a href="mailto:gilkisonn@umkc.edu">gilkisonn@umkc.edu</a>
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**UMKC Police – 816.235.1515**



**DON'T FORGET!!** It's always smart to leave copies of visa, passport, driver's license, Social Security card, etc.



**ADDITIONAL PERTINENT INFORMATION**

Consider leaving copies of credit cards (front and back), itinerary, passport, power of attorney and insurance information in the event you lose them.



**Carry in Wallet**

Cut here – carry in wallet while abroad

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFO**

COMPLETELY FILL OUT AND  
CARRY WITH YOU

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Citizenship \_\_\_\_\_

Passport # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Study Abroad Program Name**

Abroad Program Emergency Contact

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**Abroad Housing Emergency Contact or Location (as applicable)**

Contact person \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Home (U.S.) Campus Emergency

Contacts During Business Hours

**UMKC–Study Abroad and Global**

**Engagement** 5030 Cherry Street,

Kansas City, MO 64110 USA

**Kate Wozniak or Natalie Gilkison**

**Brooks**

816.235.5759, [wozniakkj@umkc.edu](mailto:wozniakkj@umkc.edu) or

[gilkisonn@umkc.edu](mailto:gilkisonn@umkc.edu)

**UMKC POLICE: 816.235.1515**

(They have our home/cell contact info  
for after hour’s emergencies)

**(U.S. Family) Emergency Contact**

Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**Insurance Company** \_\_\_\_\_

Policy# \_\_\_\_\_

24 Hour Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #'s \_\_\_\_\_

**Nearest Abroad Hospital or Health Clinic**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #s \_\_\_\_\_

Equivalent to “911” abroad \_\_\_\_\_

Your Blood Type \_\_\_\_\_

Important medical information about

yourself: \_\_\_\_\_

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Other notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Wishes in event of serious injury/death

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REGISTER WITH THE US DEPARTMENT OF STATE SMART TRAVELER ENROLLMENT PROGRAM (STEP):

<https://step.state.gov/step/>

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***What is Travel Registration?***

Travel registration is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. Registration allows you to record information about your upcoming trip abroad that the Department of State can use to assist you in case of an emergency. Americans residing abroad can also get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

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