

Short-Term
International
Programs

2013-
2014

This guide is assembled by the Office for Education Abroad (OEA) as a resource to students preparing for an international short-term program with the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB/SJU). [Updated December 2013]

**Student
Handbook**

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your decision to participate in a short-term international program. Many students report that it is one of the most important and influential decisions of their lives. The Office for Education Abroad (OEA), your Faculty and Assistant Directors and the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (CSB/SJU) want to help you make the most of your experience. We wish you the best of luck on this exciting time of study, travel, and personal growth.

This handbook is intended to be utilized as a reference work. It contains more information than you may be able to read or absorb in one sitting. Nevertheless you do need to familiarize yourself with its contents. Good preparation is the key to success abroad. Though it is impossible to cover every scenario which may take place during your time abroad, we hope this will be a significant starting point. We have tried not to duplicate information found in the many excellent guides to study and travel abroad. We encourage you to consult/purchase a travel guide of your choice (i.e. Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, Fodor's, etc.) What you will find in this handbook has been culled from the experience of former students, added to by faculty, and compiled by the OEA.

This handbook's most important purpose will have been accomplished if you grasp the goals of the international programs: to enter another culture as a sympathetic, curious explorer; to enhance your ability to communicate and function fully in another culture; and to emerge as a sensitive initiate in world citizenship. As a participant on a study abroad experience through CSB/SJU, we aim to help you accomplish the following goals.

CSB/SJU Sponsored Education Abroad Program Learning Goals:

Students who have completed a study abroad experience (regardless of program) will demonstrate:

1. knowledge of the host society;
2. recognition of cultural values and culturally appropriate behaviors;
3. willingness to independently seek out and learn from new intercultural situations;
4. deepened awareness of their own culture and its role in shaping themselves; and
5. integration of their education abroad experience with their CSB/SJU liberal arts experience, with their future vocation, and into lifelong patterns of learning.

We challenge you to think about what these goals mean to you and how you might accomplish them during your time abroad.

This handbook has been added to by many of the students who went before you. It has been revised this year and will be revised for the following year. We, therefore, are anxious for your suggestions, editorial comments, and constructive feedback. The study abroad program you have selected will demand some personal adjustments; but if former students' comments are true, you are in for a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Please take this handbook with you to your program site. It will be a good reference and resource during the entire time abroad.

Should you have any additional questions, comments or concerns, please contact the Office for Education Abroad. OEA is ready to assist you at any time.

BEFORE YOU GO

The Importance of Preparation

Your travel outside the US may be hard to imagine at this point. What will it be like? How hard will the classes be? Will I miss home and my life back at CSB/SJU? What will it be like to live in another country? These are reasonable and useful questions for you to ask before your departure.

There is no doubt you will be altered by your experience abroad. Most students say afterwards that their time abroad was an important experience in their lives. They have thrived in a variety of exciting cultural opportunities, experienced almost every sensation imaginable, met wonderful people, and learned an enormous amount about themselves. Nearly all would love to go abroad again and many do.

But studying and living abroad is not all fun. It can be strenuous, difficult, and uncomfortable. There are three things to remember when times get tough: it takes effort to learn to cope with uncomfortable situations, the unpleasantness will soon pass, and when it does, it will be worth the effort.

The students who get the most out of their off-campus experiences are those who have a realistic understanding of themselves and their culture. They work the hardest to learn about the host culture and adapt their way of living to succeed within it. You are a product of your upbringing and home culture. Everything you do in the course of a normal day is done as you have learned to do it. You cannot change this fact, nor should you. But you must realize that this factor will make you stand out abroad. If people show you kindness or friendship, you can be assured it is not simply because you are an American, or other nationality. Rather, their friendship most likely comes from your efforts to understand them.

It is important for you to be fully aware that the people of every country have their own cultures: unique sets of social mores and characteristics. If you are to make the most of this experience you must try to understand and appreciate the host culture AND to appreciate the individuals within that culture. Just as no two CSB/SJU students are the same, neither are any two individuals from your host country. Observe and try to adapt to local patterns; live as a temporary resident, not a tourist. You will no doubt find that you have many things in common with the people of your host country. Being aware and sensitive to the similarities and the differences will make your semester abroad memorable.

You will receive a practical, pre-departure check-list of important “to-do” activities as a part of the pre-departure packet from OEA. We strongly encourage you to refer to this handbook and your check-list often as you take the important steps towards being prepared to go abroad.

Academic Preparation

Remember that this is a LEARNING experience. One of the greatest challenges and opportunities for you is to experience how other systems of learning work. You will soon note that they are not all the same. Whether or not your short-term program includes a course, you will want to be prepared for your site so that you can learn the most during your time there!

Though it may be impossible to prepare for every learning opportunity that you will encounter, there are many things that you can do before departure to help you be successful. Here is a list to get you started!

1. Attend ALL pre-departure meetings with your faculty director and/or the OEA staff.
2. Buy your textbooks. Not sure if you need any? Ask your faculty director.
3. Complete all pre-departure assignments.
4. Read as much as you can about your host culture. This includes reading about their customs, traditions, languages, politics, current events, etc. You may consider purchasing a cultural guidebook, language guides, travel book, etc. (Be careful of your sources... there may be a lot of information on the internet, but be sure that it is credible.)
5. Stay up on American politics and current events. You can be sure that individuals in your host country will be also reading about the latest election news!
6. Follow-up on special interests. If you have a hobby or interest here, find out how prevalent that subject is in your host country. Can you play rugby in Australia or study music in Ireland? Are there activities/events that happen in your host country which are not possible in the U.S.? Find out what is special about your destination. Get involved!
7. Talk to others who are from the host country or who have also visited. Connect with the Study Abroad Ambassadors and the international students here at CSB/SJU before you go.

You can't know everything about your host country before you get there and you wouldn't want to! Learning while you are there is part of the adventure. But it is important to know the basics of the culture and country you are about to encounter.

Financial Preparation

A short-term study abroad program is a significant financial undertaking. It is important to plan financially for this endeavor.

Tuition and the Program Fee for the program will be charged to your CSB/SJU student account. Be sure to clear all financial and/or academic holds on your account before your departure to study abroad.

It is important to not only consider the cost of tuition, room and board detailed above; but also the additional costs of travel, personal spending, sightseeing and souvenirs. Be sure to build a budget for your study abroad experience! More information and resources about financing can be found on the OEA website at: <http://www.csbsju.edu/OEA/Financing-Study-Abroad.htm>

Accessing Money Abroad

How you will access money while on your program and travelling independently is something that you will want to discuss with your parents and plan for now. We have included details below for several different ways to access money, but please be aware that some of these methods may not be an option at your destination.

Consider taking your personal spending money in a combination of a credit card, an ATM (cash) card, and traveler's checks or cash as an emergency back-up. One problem with relying on one credit or ATM card is that these cards are not 100% reliable or accessible. If you exceed your credit limit, lose your card, misplace your PIN, demagnetize your card, or any other complicating scenario; you will be left without access to your primary source of cash! It is always wise to have a second card and/or some travelers' checks just as a backup.

BANKING CARDS: Like in the US, you will most likely be able to use your debit or credit cards for in-store purchases or to withdraw cash from a machine. Be sure to check with your bank to know what fees will apply

to any international transaction. What interest rate will you be charged? Talk with your faculty director about whether the economy there is more credit or cash based.

Alert your bank and other financial institutions that you will be traveling in _____ country from _____ to _____. If you don't call them before you leave, and the banks all of a sudden see your card being used in China or Ecuador, you may find your cards turned off to protect from identity theft.

NOTE: OBTAIN THE INTERNATIONAL PHONE NUMBER FOR YOUR CREDIT CARD SO YOU CAN NOTIFY THEM IN CASE IT GETS LOST OR STOLEN. Make a photo copy of all cards (both sides) that you will carry with you abroad and leave one at home with your family. Also check the expiration date on all your cards. If any cards expire while you are overseas obtain a new card before departure.

Most international banks are connected to an international money network (CIRRUS or PLUS are common names). The networks' symbols are found on the back of your bank card. You will need to match the machine's symbols to your card in order for it to work in that machine. **NOTE: ATMs may not have letters on their keypads; be sure to know your 4-digit, numerical PIN.** In addition, five or six digit numbers, or PINs beginning with a zero, may not work. Be sure to keep the receipts from cash withdrawals in case of discrepancies. You may consider using an on-line search engine to obtain a directory of ATM machines in your host country. Make sure that your card will work in that location.

EXCHANGING CASH: You may consider purchasing some foreign currency (i.e. \$100-200 worth) before leaving to have some cash when you arrive. You might want some cash on-hand for a bus, taxi, phone calls, food, etc. Large local U.S. banks can often exchange money for you. There is also a currency exchange at the MSP airport which requires **cash** to conduct transactions. We would advise that you complete the majority of your money exchange while abroad - you'll typically get a better exchange rate.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS: Traveler checks are no longer the way in which you would typically take the majority of your funds, but having some along as a back-up might be a good idea. Visa and American Express travelers' checks seem to be the most commonly used traveler's checks. The commission policies vary from between country and between offices. As with all money exchange transactions, you will want to pay attention to the fees charged.

CREDIT CARD PURCHASES: When making large purchases (or small, daily ones) credits cards are more widely used than ever before. It is important to know what types of fees will be assessed if you use your credit cards internationally. Many companies will charge a 2% to 5% foreign conversion fee. Remember to make arrangements to have someone pay the credit card account monthly (on-line or elsewhere). And as always, keep all credit card receipts in case of discrepancies.

WIRING/CABLING MONEY: American Express, Western Union, and many personal banks provide funds transfer by wire/cable services that are secure, prompt and reliable (for a fee). This can be a quick way to get money when all other resources are exhausted. **DO NOT SEND PERSONAL CHECKS FROM A LOCAL BANK IN THE U.S. THEY ARE NOT VALID ABROAD.** You might also check with your U.S. bank to learn if they have an affiliation with any banks abroad. Is there a way to send money through their international networks?

FINANCIAL EMERGENCIES: We are encouraging you to prepare now for the possibility that you will lose your ATM card, that your credit card will not work or that you will encounter some unanticipated expense. PLEASE go abroad with a financial Plan B, Plan C, and Plan D!

In the case of a true financial emergency, the Faculty Director can make a short-term loan to the student from the program funds to help them get by for a short period of time. Students must sign a receipt that they received this money and agree to pay it back as soon as possible. The program must be reimbursed in the local currency BEFORE DEPARTURE. The loan cannot be repaid upon return to CSB/SJU.

Please keep in mind that this method should only be used in the case of a true emergency (Lost/Stolen wallet, medical emergency upon admittance to hospital, etc.). It will not be used if students run out of personal funds (remember to budget!).

POWER OF ATTORNEY: You may consider leaving your parents, or another trusted individual, with a Power of Attorney privilege. This will allow the person you designate to have access to the accounts and records that you specify. In times of emergency, or for normal account management, this can be helpful. OEA does not monitor these arrangements, but some students have found it helpful in the past.

YOUR ACCOUNT AT CSB/SJU: It is important that you check with the Student Accounts Office prior to your departure for your program abroad. Make sure you understand anything you must comply with while you are gone. If you have an unpaid balance on your student account, the Student Accounts Office will put a HOLD on your registration for the following semester until arrangements are made for payment. Until the HOLD is removed, you will not be able to register for classes for the upcoming semester and you will not be able to participate in any CSB/SJU sponsored study abroad program.

Remember to budget your money. There is so much to see and experience, you would hate to miss out on anything due to the mishandling of funds and overspending early in your program. Make a priority list of experiences you wish to have any what the estimated costs are. Put this money aside so that you have access to it when the opportunity arises.

Financial Aid for Summer Programs

CSB/SJU does not award institutional grants or scholarships for summer programs. Instead, the tuition rate is set lower than that charged for Fall and Spring semesters. Therefore, financial aid for summer programs is typically limited to student and parent loans.

Your eligibility and choice of loans depend primarily on how many credits you will be taking. If you will be enrolled in six or more credits, your parents could borrow through the Federal PLUS Loan or you could borrow through the Federal Stafford Loan. However, most students will "reserve" their Stafford loan funds for the academic year (Fall & Spring). If you will be enrolled in less than six credits, you are limited to non-federal alternative loans.

Students who receive funding through the Federal Pell Grant or Minnesota State Grant during the academic year may be eligible for these grants during summer. You must inform the CSB/SJU Financial Aid Office that you will be enrolled, and you will need to file the upcoming year's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be considered.

Scholarship Information

Financial preparation may also include applying for one or more scholarship to help fund your study abroad experience. There are two different types of scholarship opportunities available.

1. Scholarships offered through CSB/SJU specifically for study abroad participants.

(Cooperative Scholarships) You can access additional information at:

<http://www.csbsju.edu/OEA/Financing-Study-Abroad/Scholarships-for-Study-Abroad.htm>

2. Scholarships offered through outside providers specifically for study abroad participants.
(External Scholarships) You may also conduct a national search for study abroad scholarships using www.studyabroadfunding.org.

Many of the scholarships listed on these sites include an extensive application and recommendation processes. It is crucial to spend adequate time on each application and not to wait until the last moment.

You may consider applying for a competitive scholarship or fellowship (i.e. Fulbright, Gilman, Rhodes, DAAD, etc.) You can learn more from the Office for Competitive Fellowships and Awards at:

<http://www.csbsju.edu/Honors/Fellowships.htm>.

In addition, CSB/SJU offers a resource for External Scholarships for students looking for general scholarship information to help fund your undergraduate studies. (<http://www.csbsju.edu/External-Scholarships.htm>)

The Financial Aid offices can also provide helpful assistance. (<http://www.csbsju.edu/FinancialAid.htm>)

Travel Document Preparation

There are a variety of government-issued documents that may be necessary in order for you to participate in this study abroad program. OEA and your faculty/assistant director will advise you about which documents are necessary for your program. In special circumstances, it is always best to consult with the Department of State's Travel website: www.travel.state.gov

PASSPORT PHOTOS & APPLICATIONS: OEA asks all students to have a valid passport at the time of application or to apply for this document immediately upon acceptance. A good rule of thumb is that your passport should be valid (not expire) for a minimum period of six months after return from your international program. It is crucial that students apply for a passport immediately after acceptance to a program.

EVERY participant on a study abroad program needs to have a valid passport (or other appropriate travel document). Students who do not have a passport must submit their passport application immediately after being accepted to their study abroad program. The passport application is available on-line at: www.travel.state.gov. A first time passport application must be submitted in person to a government office; usually a state or county office. A passport renewal can be mailed.

For your passport you will need to provide passport photos. Below are several places where you can obtain these.

- Cash Wise in St. Cloud
- The Camera Shop in St. Cloud
- Walgreen's in St. Cloud
- The Post Office in St. Joseph
- The Passport Office (License Center) in the Administration Center (next to the Court House) in St. Cloud

It is crucial that you have a passport as early as possible!

The most important document of identity is your passport. You will use it when you cross borders, cash traveler's checks, and register in a hotel. *Note: Some countries do not allow entrance if your passport will expire in under 6 months.*

If you should lose your passport, or it is stolen, you must go to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a replacement. Protect your passport at all times! See the specifics of what is needed to replace a Lost and Stolen Passports Abroad on the Department of State Website: www.travel.state.gov. The replacement may be done more quickly if you have a photocopy of the front pages of your passport. **Before leaving home, make several photocopies of your passport and leave one copy with your parents and carry the remaining copies someplace other than with your passport.**

VISAS: This is not the same type of visa as described under the financial section! A visa is a government issued document which allows you to enter and remain in that country for a specified period of time. Persons staying in a country for longer than three months will usually need a visa. However, the length of stay may vary according to the country. The faculty director, in consultation with OEA staff, will research the necessary requirements and communicate the requirements to the students.

A visa is obtained from the local Consulate or Embassy of your destination country. Consulate Offices are generally located in large U.S. cities and the majority of Consulates that CSB/SJU works with are located in Chicago. *It should be noted that some Consulates require students to appear in person. More instructions will be provided by your Faculty Director.*

Please note: International students participating in a CSB/SJU international program may have different visa requirements. These individuals should work with their Faculty Director and OEA Advisor early in the process to check into the visa requirements for the program. They must also check on the visa requirements for each country they plan to visit, as it is possible they would need a visa for each of those countries. In addition, students must be sure to notify the Director of International Students, of their plans to study abroad. They will need an updated I-20 in order to return to the U.S. after the semester abroad.

Voting in Absentee

If you will be abroad during an election period and would like to cast a ballot, you will need to request an absentee ballot. To make voting easier, we recommend that you register to vote before you leave. To request an absentee ballot, you need to fill out an absentee ballot request and send it to your county auditor before you leave. Your ballot will be sent to you at your study abroad location before the election.

Medical Preparation

The best source of information concerning medical preparations for your program abroad is your own physician or a travel clinic. Students should make an appointment with the CSB Health Services Office, the SJU Health Center, or another medical professional to discuss your travel itinerary. These appointments should be made well in advance of departure as some vaccination series require intervals between shots. **Six weeks before departure is the minimum recommended time to have this appointment.** Any travel consultations, immunizations and health exams, are the financial and personal responsibility of the traveling student.

Although most foreign countries have adequate medical services (i.e. a full range of doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, and medical services), everyone traveling to another country assumes some risks, particularly in

an emergency situation. Students studying on all study abroad programs should research the specific health and safety concerns for their destination using the following websites:

- The Department of State's Travel website (www.travel.state.gov) has thorough information on International Travel and Health, Travel Warnings, Consular Information Sheets, etc.
- The Centers for Disease Control website (www.cdc.gov), has complete information on health issues, safe food and water, vaccination requirements, health information for specific countries, etc.
- World Health Organization website (www.who.int).

Students on all programs must be sure to carefully study the information and heed the precautions recommended to prevent infection or illness. The Department of State, Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization websites should not be used in lieu of advice from a medical professional.

ON-LINE HEALTH & EMERGENCY CONTACT FORM: Each student will be sent a link to an on-line health and emergency contact form which must be completed before departure.

This form is designed to encourage students to self-disclose any physical, mental or learning disabilities. This will help Faculty/Assistant directors, along with OEA staff, in case of an emergency. It will also allow for important plans to be put into place about how you will succeed abroad given any particular concern. It is our goal to work between OEA, the Faculty Director and the student to devise a plan to address any physical, mental, or learning disabilities. *Please note: No student can be removed from a program due to such concerns, but we want a plan in place to help you succeed! Please be completely open and honest about any conditions you may currently have.*

TB TESTING: It is recommended for all CSB/SJU students studying for a semester in countries with a high TB prevalence (According to the WHO, this applies specifically to China, Guatemala, India, Japan and South Africa, as well as any other country with a high TB prevalence.) :

1. Have a baseline tuberculin test within one year of departure.
2. Have a follow-up tuberculin test 8-12 weeks following your return from abroad.

We advise all students to please discuss this disease with your medical provider during your Travel Consult.

PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS: If you have a medical condition that requires regular attention, make sure that you have disclosed this on your medical disclosure form. Your program director should be made aware of your condition and any special instructions. Ask your personal physician to write a letter including background information and instructions (including information about any medications prescribed) in case you need to be cared for abroad. You should also give a copy of the care instructions to your program director.

HEALTH INSURANCE: CSB/SJU policy requires students to have health insurance coverage plan through a family plan, an individual policy, or a student plan. If you do not have private health insurance which will cover you while abroad, and would like additional information about the CSB/SJU student policy, contact the Student Accounts Office for more information. Contact 320-363-5387 or csbstacct@csbsju.edu at CSB AND 320-363-2193 or sjuacct@csbsju.edu at SJU. Health insurance coverage must be in place and in force throughout the student's semester abroad.

It is the student's personal responsibility to maintain insurance coverage and protection for any accident,

disability, repatriation or any loss related to their person, property or activities throughout their participation in a study abroad program. The student, in consultation with his or her parents, is responsible for determining and acquiring the appropriate levels of insurance coverage. Students are responsible for any expenses not covered by any insurance coverage plans and policies.

Check with your health insurance carrier to confirm that it will cover you while you are abroad. Become familiar with the coverage provisions, deductible items, and the process for making claims.

Typically while abroad, you will need to pay for your medical care before you leave the clinic or hospital, even if you have adequate health insurance. In order to apply for reimbursement from your insurance company in the U.S., you will have to provide a copy of all the receipts and bills for your treatment. You can send the bills and receipts home to your parents so they can submit them to the insurance company for reimbursement. Be sure to keep anything the hospital or clinic or anyone else gives you regarding your medical care!! It is very difficult to obtain this information once you have returned home.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD (ISIC): All students and faculty on CSB/SJU short-term study abroad programs will be required to purchase an International Student ID Card (ISIC) or International Teacher ID Card (ITIC). These cards are easy to obtain and you will find an application, along with an overview of the coverage, included in your packet.

The ISIC or ITIC cards are not meant to be a primary health care coverage, but more of a secondary plan for major medical emergencies. CSB/SJU looks for the Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation Insurance which is included. This card offers a limited amount of health insurance (NOT recommended as a primary source of insurance), with a significant benefit for emergency evacuation and repatriation. View a summary of benefits on the ISIC website at: <https://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/Travel/Main.aspx?MenuID=5004> In addition, students traveling abroad may be eligible for discounts on lodging, attractions, museums, transportation and other services. The web site for ISIC is: www.myisic.com.

You can view their coverage through our site at: www.csbsju.edu/oea/students/before-you-go/isic Or visit: www.myisic.com The basic insurance coverage through our office is \$25. Be sure to check with your home health insurance provider and discuss with your families if you have enough coverage.

Please note: It is important to know the requirements of your insurance coverage in order that you get the most benefit. For example, if you have to go to the doctor while abroad and want to use the insurance benefits of your ISIC card, **YOU MUST CALL THE 1-800 NUMBER BEFORE YOU GO!** If you do not do this, you may not be covered for things which would otherwise be part of the plan.

Flight Preparation

You will need to know if your short-term program includes the international airfare, or if you are required to make your own flight arrangements. If you need to book your flight, you might consider contacting a travel agent or using an on-line search engine to find the best ticket prices. Student travel websites include: Student Universe www.studentuniverse.com or STA Travel www.statravel.com. Other web sites you might try are: Orbitz at www.orbitz.com, Kayak at www.kayak.com, Expedia at www.expedia.com or Travelocity at

www.travelocity.com. There is no magic formula to purchasing the best priced ticket. We recommend that you search around, including checking the above sites often to track varying ticket prices.

Travel Sustainably

Sustainability means meeting society's present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability considers economic, social, and environmental factors to make decisions that enhance personal and community well-being. Sustainable living helps deepen an abroad experience because it encourages decisions such as sampling the local cuisine and adapting host country practices to more thoroughly experience the people, economy, and environment of a place. Here are a few ways to start thinking about sustainability abroad, before you go!

- Enroll in the **Green Passport Program**. Connect with like-minded students and explore ways to creatively live sustainably abroad. To learn more about the Green Passport Program visit <http://www.greenpassport.us>.
- **Take a Lifestyle Awareness Quiz** and calculate your ecological footprint. Save your results. (<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>)
- Travel to destinations that have been deemed as striving towards sustainability. For this information check out Ethical Traveler (<http://www.ethicaltraveler.org>)
- **Offset the greenhouse gases from your air travel**- Study Abroad air travel is the 4th largest greenhouse gas source at CSB. Carbon offsets can occur in many forms- from paying an outside provider to finance renewable energy projects to reducing your emissions in the US by using CFL light bulbs, biking more, etc. Buy carbon offsets, or make carbon-offsetting lifestyle choices, for your air travel between your study abroad location and the United States.

Travel Guidebooks/Reading Materials

A good guidebook provides essential information about transportation, accommodations, cultural and historical background, visa requirements, health and safety precautions, etc. Plan to purchase guidebooks before you travel because it gives you a chance to read up in advance. For travel on a student budget, we suggest one or more of the following series:

- Let's Go Guides
- Lonely Planet Guides
- Moon Guides
- On a Shoestring Guides
- Rough Guides
- Rick Steve's Travel Guides

Be sure to have a travel guidebook for your host city/country and other places you intend to visit. You may inquire with others on your trip to purchase a variety of books and plan to share these resources. The CSB/SJU bookstore carries many of these series.

Be sure to explore the web, but be wary of the source of information you are reading!

Packing Preparation

We are all guilty of overpacking on many occasions. When you travel abroad, the consequences for overpacking can be great. **TRAVEL LIGHT!!!** Believe it or not, if you bring enough for a week, you can make it last the entire trip. Here are some tips and tricks to help!

CLOTHING: The secret to success regarding your wardrobe is versatility. What you wear will obviously depend upon the program site and where you plan to travel. The more you can mix and match and the more

you can use one garment for several functions, the less you have to carry around.

There are several things to remember when selecting clothing. Avoid bulky items. It should be easy to wash, be colorfast so it can be laundered together, dry quickly, and be wrinkle-free. Try to pick one color scheme and have everything you bring match so a few garments go a long way. If possible, pack things that can be considered casual and somewhat dressy.

You should be sensitive to the culture of which you are a temporary resident. Clothing should be flattering to you and acceptable to members of the culture you plan to visit. It should not be offensive or make you stand out. Provocative, grubby and frayed outfits may offend in some areas, just as they would in the U.S. Consider the impact your clothing has on others. When visiting churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples, dress conservatively.

It is also important to consider that many other cultures dress more formally than the average American college student. Ask our Study Abroad Ambassadors about the everyday dress in that country. Many students are surprised by the standard of dress at the schools they attend abroad. Most students upon return state that they did not have enough nice clothing. In addition, past participants offer the following items that you might not consider packing.

- Rain gear: It is important that you have some waterproof attire and that your luggage and/or backpack is moderately waterproof if you plan to travel extensively.
- Coat: Depending on your site, you will want a versatile, waterproof, lightweight yet warm coat. Some programs will require a winter coat.
- Athletic or Active Wear: What do you plan to participate in while you are abroad? Make sure you have hiking attire if appropriate, athletic clothing, appropriate footwear, etc.
- Other: Students recommend packing plenty of socks and underwear.

OTHER USEFUL ITEMS: Though you may want to pack your entire house with you, it is important to remember that they do have the majority of the items that you will need in country. For traveling and student life, the following have been recommended by past participants.

- Bath towels, hand towels and wash cloths that dry quickly (if not provided)
- Plastic bags of all sizes
- A reusable water container
- Bandanna or hat
- Passport pouch, money belt, or travel wallet
- Travel alarm clock
- Small sewing kit
- Lots of film (or plenty of digital picture memory!)
- ALL prescription medications in their original containers. It is also a good idea to carry a note from your doctor which includes the generic names of your medications. **YOU DO NOT WANT TO TRY TO FILL PRESCRIPTIONS WHILE ABROAD.** Travelers should also check with the foreign embassy of the country they are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics.
- Non-prescription medications including Tylenol/Advil, cold/allergy medication, antibiotic ointment
- An extra pair of glasses/contact lens, and contact lens solution
- Feminine hygiene products
- Enough shampoo, conditioner, etc. to get you through the first week or two until you can buy more.
- Sleeping bag or sleep sack for staying in hostels.

LAPTOP COMPUTERS: Many students ask about bringing laptop computers with them. Most students report that laptops are very convenient for schoolwork and staying in touch with friends/family. Speak with your faculty director about bringing a laptop. Many students rely on Skype as a primary form of communication. If you do decide to bring your laptop with, please consider the following:

- Check your parent's homeowner's insurance policy to ensure that your computer will be covered overseas. Laptops are not typically covered in basic property insurance, and usually require a separate rider... but it may be worth that extra expense if it is lost.
- Find out if your computer will need either an adaptor and/or electricity converter to be plugged in.
- Minimize the frequency of traveling with your laptop; we hear many reports of students having them stolen. Is there a safe place at the hotel or hostel where you can leave it while you are exploring?

LUGGAGE: You will need sturdy luggage and/or a travel backpack and a carry-on. It is not necessary to buy expensive luggage or have more than two pieces of check-in baggage and a carry-on. You must be able to comfortably carry whatever you bring. The airlines will generally CHARGE you extra if you have more than one piece of check-in baggage, if it is over-weight (for most carriers the weight cannot exceed 50 pounds per piece), or if it is over-sized. Remember there will not be anyone to help you carry your luggage. Your trek from the airport to the group meeting point might be a long one. Try walking around the block and up and down five flights of stairs with your packed luggage... you will be ready to lighten the load!

Be sure to check the luggage requirements of the airline on which you are traveling as the number of pieces allowed, weight limit, and size of luggage may vary from airline to airline. Also check out the information on the Transportation Security Administration's website www.tsa.gov/public/ for information on what you may pack in your check-in luggage, what you may pack in your carry-on luggage, locking your checked luggage and approved TSA locks.

Pre-Departure & On-Site Advice from Past Participants

What are the most important things you should know for your adventure abroad? Our own student travelers give you their best tips for studying and living abroad:

- Pack light. (The No. 1 suggestion from all participants).
- Bring an umbrella.
- Experiment and be adventurous: Don't be embarrassed to ask about or try something new. Be open, curious, and not afraid to say you don't know.
- Walk wherever possible.
- Budget wisely. (Make lots of money before departure.)
- Avoid big groups of Americans. You want to meet individuals from the host country. (Go to cafes and mingle with the locals.)
- Don't stereotype people or have a closed mind.
- Women: DON'T be too friendly to men you do not know. If you're hassled by anyone, be firm and mean it. Try to ignore them.
- Try everything new, especially the food.
- When traveling independently, stay overnight in the nicer parts of town.
- Spend more money on experiences and less on gifts.
- Get addresses of relatives and friends abroad before leaving.
- Keep a money/passport pouch with you at all times.
- Read about the country in which you will study before leaving.
- Keep a journal or a blog. And take lots of photos!
- Don't expect anything before your arrival. You don't necessarily have to compromise yourself, but

since you must adapt to another culture, your American attitudes must be malleable.

- Know the difference between naïveté and open-mindedness -- it could be crucial.
- Expect to find out a lot about yourself!

WHILE ABROAD

Customs & Immigration

Upon your arrival at your destination airport, you will be asked to clear immigration and customs. Immigration officials will check your passport and they will ask why you have come and how long you plan to stay. Customs insures the safety of travelers, protects the country against disease, and helps regulate foreign economic relations. It is normal to be nervous, just as you would be if any officer of the law was speaking to you in an official capacity. Act natural and be honest.

Most of the time, Customs Officers will wave you through without a lot of difficulty. They are oftentimes looking for large numbers of items that they fear you are going to sell while visiting their country or for suspicious items. In some countries the officials are looking for offensive material (writings or photographs) that are offensive to the government. Here are some tips to help you navigate customs:

- Have your passport and any additional documentation ready.
- Do not wrap gifts so that they can be checked quickly.
- Carry receipts for anything you want to declare (typically high value items).
- Be prepared to re-pack your own bag if it is inspected.
- Be polite, courteous and answer all questions which are posed to you.

On your return flight to the United States, you will be given a Customs Declaration Form to fill out. It is illegal to omit any items of significant value that you have purchased while outside of the U.S. There may be penalties levied by Customs if you fail to declare items. Detailed information on duty free exemptions, restricted or prohibited articles, "Know Before You Go" customs hints for returning U.S. residents can be found on the U.S. Customs and Boarder Protection web site: www.cbp.gov (click on Travel).

Culture Shock

Homesickness and culture shock are a difficult, but natural part of international travel. Even students on short-term programs have reported dealing with these feelings. Culture shock is the "psychological disorientation most people experience when they move for an extended period of time into a culture markedly different from their own" (L. Robert Kohls, Survival Kit for Overseas Living, 1979; p. 62). You may find yourself missing family and friends, hating your new host culture, and wanting nothing more than to return home. Though difficult, these feelings are normal and will pass if you hang in there. Just remember that it will get better.

Some students will more easily adapt to a new culture with a minimal amount of anxiety and discomfort. Others will need more time. Here are a few antidotes for culture shock:

1. Know as much as possible about your destination (city/country) before departure.
2. Consciously look for logical reasons behind everything in the host culture which seem strange, difficult, confusing, or threatening. Take every aspect of your experience and look at it from the perspective of your hosts. Relax your grip on your own culture in the process. There's no way you can lose it, but letting go a bit may open up some unexpected avenues of understanding.
3. Find someone from your host country who is sympathetic and understanding, and talk with that person about specific situations and about your feelings related to them. Talking with Americans can be helpful, but only to a limited extent. Your problem lies in your relationship to the host culture.
4. Above all, have faith: in yourself, in the essential good will of your hosts, and in the positive outcome of the experience.

Residential Life

Housing arrangements for each program will vary. Students abroad will live with families, in dormitories, flats, hotels, hostels, cottages, student residences, etc. Services provided for students will vary from program to program. Information specific to your program can be obtained from your Faculty Director.

VISITORS: Housing on the CSB/SJU study abroad programs has been carefully arranged for members of each program. We do not wish to jeopardize these arrangements, therefore, students will not be allowed to house family, friends, fellow CSB/SJU students from other programs or strangers in their room, whether it is in a dormitory, a family, an apartment, a hotel, etc.

VALUABLES: Do not keep large amounts of cash in your housing and always be sure to lock your doors. Do not leave expensive items lying out in the open, as this could be an invitation for some one to take it. Roommates are expected to respect one another's property, but we can not guarantee the security of items.

ELECTRICITY: The electric current and the shape of the plug-ins in most countries are different from that in the U.S. In order to use an appliance purchased in the U.S. while you are abroad you need two things:

1. A converter which changes the voltage to 220 (most foreign countries) from 110 (U.S.)
 2. A plug adapter which allows you to plug the cord in the socket.
- Most laptops, i-pods, cell phone chargers or other modern electrical appliances have a converter built-in (read your battery or charger to assure that the Voltage adapts from 110-240).
 - You can purchase "personal travel accessories" such as blow dryers which change between 110 and 220 volts.
 - It is important to pay special attention to what voltage is needed. If you plug a 110 appliance into a 220 socket, the results are expensive, dangerous and an inconvenience to all in that area. You will melt the appliance and blow a fuse.
 - You may consider communicating with past participants to purchase items.

Academic & Disciplinary Policies for Study Abroad Programs

All students must agree to the waivers and releases of liability and sign the Agreements/Waivers signature form before departure. Remember that there are several items you have agreed to abide by while abroad. Please review these again before you leave.

Short-Term, Off-Campus Program Waiver and Release Form

All participants of short-term, off-campus programs should print this form and submit it to their program director after signing. By signing this document you are confirming that you have read, understand and agree to the terms on the following Agreements, Policies, Forms and/or Waivers:

1. **Health & Emergency Contact Information for Off-Campus Program Travel Form** (to be submitted [online](#))
2. [Short-Term, Off-Campus Agreement and Waiver](#)
3. Short-Term Program Student Handbook (this document)

All of the above documents are available for download from this website and paper copies will be made available to any applicant upon request. **I have read and understand the above documents and I agree to all terms and conditions of these documents made effective with the date of my signature recorded below.**

These documents are available on-line at: <http://www.csbsju.edu/OEA/Short-TermWaiver.htm>

Communication

Remaining in contact with your friends and family in the U.S. and elsewhere is a priority for many students while studying abroad. Technology makes this easier and cheaper today than ever before.

WORD OF CAUTION: Many students report having almost daily contact with family back home during their international experience. OEA wishes to support the communication between overseas sites and the US and below are some ways in which students have successfully communicated in past years. We would like to also urge students, families and their friends to consider the impact that your involvement with home can have on your international experience. While abroad, it is important to immerse yourself in the learning, culture and language. The more time you spend focusing on home, your facebook account, and calling a significant other; the less present you are with the host culture. It is important to remain connected with your family and friends back home, but it is essential that you find the balance between staying in contact and losing touch with the host culture.

CALLING HOME: International phone calls can be very expensive; especially if you do not plan ahead. Generally, the most expensive time to call is during business hours of the place where the call originates. Reduced rates are available during evening hours and on weekends. When you arrive at your host country, you can inquire about the availability of international calling cards to use with a payphone or landline.

CELL PHONES: Students on many programs are now purchasing mobile/cell phones when they arrive on their program site. The mobile phones do not require long-term commitment, as with most U.S. plans. They are a pre-paid or pay as you go option. Many of these prepaid phones offer free incoming calls; so your friends and family can call you, without you footing the bill. You can also consider taking your U.S. cell phone with you, but you must make sure it will work in your host country and check with your cell phone provider about the cost of service... It is probably not "free nights and weekends"!

Students may decide to purchase a prepaid phone before departure where the bills are applied to a US credit card. It is convenient that you do not have to "top up" your phone during your time abroad. However, past student participants have been surprised by their bills. It is much more costly per minute than a typical plan in the US. You might consider having it for emergencies and using text messages (which are cheaper). There are also several other pre-paid phone options you can consider either before you leave or upon arrival in country.

CALLING CARDS: You can make telephone calls from most public and private phones in any country using a prepaid phone card. You can purchase phone cards at most convenience stores. In addition, many US companies such as AT&T, Sprint, and MCI have direct access numbers that you can use and the call is billed to a calling card. You should obtain the access number and any necessary information from your long distance company before leaving the US.

SKYPE: Increasingly students are using Skype to communicate with home. This is a free or very cheap service where you communicate via the internet. Visit their website for more details. Remember that the speed of your internet connection abroad may not always support this technology. (www.skype.com)

EMAIL: Some housing facilities will have wireless access, but not all. Otherwise, internet cafes are located in almost every international city.

MAIL: International mail takes anywhere from several days to several weeks to arrive. In most cases, letters generally arrive in a week to ten days. Be aware the packages can take significantly longer. Everyone likes to receive letters and postcards while abroad, but you need to know if this is realistic with your program.

Remember that your family and friends back home will appreciate these as well!

IMPORTANT: Please note that any packages received from abroad may be subject to Customs and Duties (inspection and taxes). Such duties are usually (but not always) based on the assessed value of the package provided by the sender, and are the sole responsibility of the receiver of the package. Certain items will be taxed at higher rates (examples are electronic items and makeup) and some items will not be allowed to pass through Customs at all (prescription medication). Furthermore, you may be required to fax a copy of your passport to Customs authorities in certain cases. It is generally advised to never mail medications or items of great value.

Health and Safety Concerns

At CSB/SJU, we take the safety and security of our students and faculty very seriously. Over the years, the college has continuously evaluated security operations, and has made a number of suggestions to improve and strengthen the security of students participating in our Study Abroad programs. It is our goal that students have a harmonious environment in which to pursue their study abroad education. If there are disturbances and disruptions brought about by crime, everyone in the community suffers and the educational environment can be seriously altered.

Though it is impossible to completely prevent sickness and accidents while abroad, there are many things that you can do while on-site to minimize the risks.

Personal Risk While Abroad

As mentioned above, CSB/SJU take the health and welfare of students very seriously. However, it is impossible to remove all personal risk from study abroad. Some of the most risky behaviors or incidents which result in injury or death of students while participating in study abroad involve:

- Travel or traffic accidents
- Use and abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Sexual harassment and assault
- Consuming too much alcohol
- Crime or petty theft
- Making poor decisions under the influence of alcohol
- Mental health issues/stress
- Missing program activities due to abuse of alcohol.
- Diseases and illnesses that exist in the host country

If you have read these bullet points, you will notice the most common risk factor is alcohol. Just as it is at CSB/SJU, overconsumption is a real threat to the health and wellbeing of our students. Resources and information about avoiding many of these issues can be found below. It is important to remain aware of your surroundings at all times. Consider what the “locals” do in particular situations and learn from their knowledge. When in doubt, do not put yourself in a questionable situation. Use the same safety precautions abroad as you would if traveling in any unknown city in the U.S. Research the countries, cities, and areas to which you plan to travel independently. If you plan to be gone overnight during a program break, leave an itinerary and instructions on how to contact you in case of emergency with your program director.

INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS UPON ARRIVAL: Travelers, especially those having just arrived, are often targets of crime and are at higher risk of harm. There are several reasons for this, including:

- Being unfamiliar with the surroundings
- Lack of fluency in the local language
- Clearly recognizable as a foreigner
- Have not yet learned the social norms or unwritten rules of conduct
- Eagerness to get to know new people and the local culture
- Naive to the intentions of people around them
- Carrying all their valuables with them when they first step off the plane, train, or boat

PICK POCKETING: Nonviolent, crimes of opportunity can occur while you are abroad. Remain alert when you have been bumped, had your foot stepped on, or have been pushed around in a crowd; these are perfect times for pickpockets to do their work. Remember that pickpockets may be children.

Backpacks are another easy target for pick-pockets. Remember to turn your pack around when traveling in crowded areas. As always, passports and other essential items should be kept in a pouch close to the body.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION: Non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) which are considered harmless in the U.S., may be offensive to people in other countries. The list of gestures considered rude in other countries can grow beyond the obvious. Find out what is appropriate in your destination.

SEXUAL CRIMES: No one wants to think about sexual crime. And while it can make you feel angry, sad or frightened, you cannot ignore the subject. One cannot assume with certainty that sexual assault, rape or harassment will not take place, even on a study abroad experience. As with all other forms of personal risk, it is important to be aware.

- Don't let your guard down because a date happens to be a host family member, classmate, or even a new "friend."
- In a different cultural setting, the offender may misread or imagine that a desired "silent message" or attitude is being communicated by the victim. Saying NO may not always be interpreted as NO in other countries or cultural contexts.
- If you have been violated, do not keep it to yourself. Get to a safe place and then talk to a trusted person (Your faculty/assistant director, host family, etc.)
- OEA, along with the CSB/SJU's Counseling and Health Promotions Office will work with the Faculty Director to identify appropriate counseling services in the country the student is studying in.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES: Keep yourself free from sexually transmitted diseases by using protection (like condoms or abstinence). Inform yourself of the diseases prevalent in your host country.

HOW TO DRESS: It is often best to dress conservatively by local standards, so you can't be identified on sight as a tourist or a U.S. citizen. It is also a good way to avoid causing offense to your hosts.

JEWELRY AND OTHER VALUABLES: Be cautious with how you display valuables (does it look like you're flaunting wealth?). Leave your good jewelry at home, and keep money in a safe place like a money belt or hidden pouch under your clothes. As a rule of thumb, never bring anything with you that if it were to be lost or stolen, it would ruin your time abroad.

BECOME AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS: You should be aware of your surroundings, remembering to:

- Pay attention to what people around you are saying.
- Find out which areas of the city are less safe than others. Avoid being alone in these areas.

- Stay and walk only in well-lit, well-trafficked areas.
- Know where and how to get help from authorities or trusted individuals. Do you know what the “911” equivalent is in your host country?
- Do not accept suspicious items like letters or packages from someone you don’t know.
- Know what is "normal" and "not normal" to see on a daily basis in the areas you frequent.
- Do not respond to explosions or gunfire by going to a window; seek cover away from windows and exterior walls.

KNOW THE EFFECTS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: Political dissent in the United States exists around almost every issue. There will be just as many opinions of U.S. foreign policy in your host country. In some cases, Americans living abroad can be targets of the frustrations of these individuals. Consider the nature of the political climate and relations between the U.S. and the countries you plan to visit.

Avoid political rallies, which can often increase tensions and emotions. Try not to engage in conversations about contentious political issues with host nationals and avoid retaliating against hostile remarks about Americans. Whatever your view of American politics, it is best to “test the waters” of your new environment before publically proclaiming your beliefs.

REGISTER WITH THE U.S. EMBASSY or CONSULATE: OEA requires all students & faculty/assistant directors to register INDIVIDUALLY with the U.S. Department of State and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to your study abroad site. This process is called the *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)*. To begin with your registration, visit: www.travel.state.gov. They encourage all travelers to enroll in order to stay informed, connected to the U.S. Embassy and safe while abroad. The STEP website includes a good explanation about the benefits of enrolling.

In addition to the individual registration process described above, OEA will also monitor the US DOS travel warnings and alerts using the STEP program.

ALL students should register with STEP before they leave for their time abroad!

COMMUNICATION IS CRITICAL: It is important to let others on your trip and back home where you are and what you are doing. You should:

- Complete a TRAVEL FORM (see the next page) and leave it with your program director before every independent trip outside of the host site.
- Inform your host family or roommates about where you are going and when you expect to be back. Leave a contact number if at all possible.
- Communicate with family back home when you are leaving town, where you are going, how long you will stay, and when they should expect you back.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF ALCOHOL ABROAD: If you choose to drink alcohol while abroad, you are expected to do so responsibly. Not only must you abide by the laws of the country in which you are living, you must also be aware of the consequences of your alcohol use. As a participant on a CSB/SJU study abroad program, you agree that:

- You will not miss any scheduled event or becomes ill due to the effects of alcohol consumption.
- You will not engage in inappropriate behavior toward other individuals, or destructive behavior toward property that is the result of alcohol consumption.
- You will not engage in behavior that causes embarrassment to the other members of the group, the faculty members or the in-country hosts as a result of alcohol consumption.

- You will not facilitate, encourage or ignore a fellow student who is abusing alcohol.
- You will use good judgment if consuming alcohol at private homes or other accommodations.

You are encouraged to discuss issues related to alcohol abuse by other members of their group with the faculty director. Also note that you are responsible for knowing U.S. customs laws regarding the possession of alcohol upon returning to the U.S. (e.g., you must be 21 years old to legally bring alcohol into the U.S. from abroad).

Behavioral violations resulting from alcohol use and abuse may be reported to CSB/SJU, resulting in students being required to go through the appropriate judicial process while abroad and/or when they return to campus after their semester abroad.

Emergency Medical Procedures

Every effort is made by CSB/SJU to provide a safe environment for students while abroad. However as colleges we cannot be responsible for accidents. In the event of an accident or medical emergency we want to be as helpful as possible. The following steps should be carried out:

1. An ambulance or appropriate medical care will be sought immediately. When the victim is attended to, the Director/Assistant will, if possible, accompany them to the hospital or clinic.
2. As soon as the victim's needs are being appropriately attended to, the Program Director, or designee, will call the parents of the victim and the Director for Education Abroad to notify them of the incident. The Program Director will file an Incident Report with OEA.
3. The Director for Education Abroad will remain in contact with the students' family to provide them with any additional information and assistance.
4. If the family makes arrangements to travel overseas, the Program Director will arrange to meet them upon arrival.
5. Upon arrival of the parents, the Program Director will turn over discussions with the attending physicians to the parents.

TRAVEL FORM

Please complete as thoroughly as possible. This form should be given to your program director before you leave for an overnight or longer independent travel experience.

Departure Date:	Return Date:
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Name:
Address:
Mobile phone number:

Destination(s):
Hotel(s): <i>Please include address(es) and phone number(s)</i>
Company / travel agent traveling with:
Mode of transport:
Flight number / ferry number, etc.:

Traveling companions:

Remember to communicate with your program director, host family, and/or roommates about your expected travel plans. It is also important to stay in touch with your family at home.

Your program director will alert you as to how they would like this form submitted.

Legal Issues

There are many misconceptions about crime and punishment outside the United States. Please read the following carefully: ***Once you leave the U.S., you are no longer under the jurisdiction of the American legal system. If you break a law in a foreign country, it is that country's penal code that determines your fate.***

The American Embassy/Consulate DOES NOT take an active role in getting you out of jail if you get into trouble. If you are arrested, you should contact the Embassy. The local U.S. officials will contact the Program Director, the Director for Education Abroad, your family, or someone else you request. They can also help obtain an attorney. Be sure to follow exactly the advice given you by American consular officials.

Not all Americans arrested internationally knew they were committing a crime. What would be a prank in the U.S. could be treated as serious crimes overseas. Do not steal the hotel's towels and ashtrays, at minimum you could be charged a fine by the hotel. Drug possession and use, as well as drinking and driving are usually treated much more severely outside the U.S. If you are caught, there is nothing anyone can do to help you.

In addition to assistance provided by the US Embassy, students may also contact the 24/7 assistance line provided for by your ISIC subscription. They can provide legal assistance including referral to a local legal advisor, advance bail, and legal fees. See the ISIC benefit materials for details.

Making the Most of your Experience

EXPLORE YOUR SURROUNDINGS: Get a map and venture out. Get lost and ask directions. Ride the public transportation. Discover old or important structures, stare, and ask admiring questions (people love to talk to interested newcomers). In doing this your language skills will improve, your ear will grow keen, and you'll feel right at home.

STUDY HUMAN INTERACTIONS: Sit in the park or a sidewalk cafe, stand in a market or store, and observe. How do people greet one another, visit, and say goodbye? How do friends act? How does one show respect? What types of mannerism do people use? What seems to be typical dress for the different age groups? Can you spot an American? What are the American giveaways in dress, movement, voice, and gesture?

After observing, discuss what you saw with members of your group. Ask them what they have observed. Discuss what you saw with individuals who are not from the US. Ask what they observed. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Try to behave as the locals do, blend into your surroundings and the culture. You might not be mistaken for a local, but that is okay. Compare the way you are treated when you act in this manner to how you are treated when you act as an American.

EXPAND YOUR SOCIAL CIRCLES: How do you feel when you see a close-knit group of friends walking, talking, and eating together? Are you able to easily approach these groups? Does it seem impossible to break-in? How would you even begin to break the cultural, ethnic or social barriers?

If you hope to form acquaintanceships, which hopefully lead to friendships during the short time you will be in your host country, you must open yourself up to others. The more you spend time in large groups of American (or English-speaking) friends, the more you send out the message that you prefer these friends. Consider how approachable your group is.

MASTER, OR AT LEAST ATTEMPT, THE LOCAL LANGUAGE: Force yourself into situations where you must talk - no matter how scary, difficult, or awkward it may seem. You'll be surprised how fast you win the trust and respect of nationals when you attempt to and can speak their language. Practice makes perfect!

Engage through Service Learning or Volunteerism: Service-learning is a learning process and teaching method that incorporates a relationship between the student, community, and the classroom. Students who engage in service-learning during their programs will work towards positive, sustainable change in the community while enhancing your own education. Currently Chile, India, and South Africa have built-in service-learning courses. If you will study on a different program and still want to connect with the community, please seek out volunteer opportunities which will allow you to engage with important issues in your host site. Check with your Faculty Director for more information about options and opportunities!

Practice Sustainability Abroad: Think about social, economic, and environmental impact that you will have during your time abroad, and make a conscious effort live and travel in a respectful and responsible manner. Below are a few tips and issues to consider:

- **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** – This is a tried and true practice for sustainable living everywhere.
- **Educate Yourself** – Research your country! Look into the history, politics, current events, etc. Ask questions about issues that are impacting your host country (water pollution, worker exploitation, etc.).
- **Support Sustainable Operations** – Stay at accommodations and go on tours that are sustainably accredited.
- **Fill out Comment Cards** – Encourage hostels, tour companies, etc. to become more sustainable by leaving a concrete suggestion on their comment cards. If you notice their operations could utilize renewable energy or local food, recommend it.
- **Go Local** – The best way to experience the local culture is to eat local food, stay in local accommodations, and use local goods. Not only does this enhance your experience, but it supports the economy of your host country. Avoid stores or fast food places that you can experience at home.
- **Bargain Fairly** – A few dollars could be more valuable in your merchant's pocket than yours.
- **Respect Restrictions** – Buy camping permits and follow the signage requests; do not walk on the ecological preserve. Respect the wildlife. Do not litter. Leave natural artifacts, such as seashells, plants, etc.
- **Consider Transportation** – First walk or bike, then try reliable public transportation such as buses or trains. If you must drive an automobile, use a car and fill all the seats, and try to fly less as airplane travel is emission intensive.
- **Be Water & Waste Conscious** – The average walking distance to water in parts of Asia and Africa is 3 miles; be mindful of your water use. Carry a reusable water bottle if clean water is accessible. Some places do not have a sophisticated waste removal programs. Try to simply reduce the items you need to toss. If recycling is available, use it!
- **Be Mindful About Electricity Use** – Turn off lights/electronics/appliances when they are not in use.

ASK QUESTIONS: Ignorance is not bliss. If you do not understand something, are curious, or need help, just ask someone. People's responsiveness may surprise you. Plus, questions are great conversation starters.

BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT: Plunge right in! Do not wait to adjust before you participate, you adjust by participating. Your host country has its own culture with its own traditions, customs, manners, and written and unwritten laws - immerse yourself. If you do all of the above, you cannot help but feel like a part of your host country. Talk to as many people as possible, they have a lot to offer and you have a lot to learn.

UPON RETURN

Reverse Culture Shock

Coming home can be a very exciting time as you reunite with all of the people, places and things that you craved while abroad. It can also be a tough transition as you find yourself longing for the sights, sounds, smells and feelings that you had immersed yourself in during your time abroad. This phenomenon is called reverse culture shock. It can affect travelers at different times and to varying degrees. Some students may feel profoundly impacted by reverse culture shock; while others seem to be barely scathed, as they transition easily back to their lives in the US.

Almost all travelers expect to experience some degree of culture shock when they leave the US, but not as many anticipate the difficulties they may experience upon return. News flash: the world did not stop while you were abroad. Your family, friends, roommates, coworkers and classmates continued on with their lives while you were gone. They have had many experiences, just the same as you have. (Ok, so maybe they didn't get to stand on the top of the Eiffel Tower, or climb the Great Wall of China, or dwell in Nelson Mandela's cell on Robben Island, or live with an aboriginal family in Broome!) But they did have experiences, and it is important to honor the important events which took place in their lives.

The most important thing to realize about reverse culture shock is that it is a normal part of the process. Missing what you left behind means that you really embraced your experience abroad. It is important to recognize it and seek out ways to share your experiences with others and stay connected with your "abroad life". And don't worry, it shall pass.

Re-entry Programs

Returning from your time abroad can range from difficult for some students to a smooth less transition for others. Program directors will oftentimes sponsor a reunion for you to reconnect with your group and make the most of your international experience.

Make the Most of Your International Skills

After you tackle the hurdle of reverse culture shock, you realize that the show must go on. But what in the world are you going to do with this vast knowledge and experience that you just acquired? The challenge before you now is to make the most of it. Visit our website section entitled "Upon Return" for complete details. (<http://www.csbsju.edu/OEA/Students/Upon-Return.htm>)

- Attend Re-entry meetings hosted by your faculty directors: Your group are oftentimes the best people to help you debrief your experience and reminisce about the time abroad.
- Continue to document your journey. There are resources to help you continue to process how important your study abroad experience was. You may find it helpful to blog, journal, sing, write poems or just share your transition (either in private or in public).
- Consider sharing your experience: Do you want to encourage others to participate in an international program? Did your group complete a project or research or take place in a conference while abroad? Consider sharing this with the CSB/SJU campus. There are many ways that you might do this. Contact OEA if you would like more information about how to do this. (And they will probably have some funds to help support refreshments!) You might consider a campus presentation, making it part of your senior research or another creative outlet.

- [Join the photo contest](#): You can submit photos to the CSB/SJU photo contest. Relive your experiences while perusing for the best photos and share these with the campuses. You may even win a great CA\$H prize!
- [Attend the MN Study Abroad Returnee Conference](#): Colleges and universities from around the states of Minnesota have joined forces to offer an annual *Study Abroad Returnee Conference*. This day is designed to help you take your international experience to the next level. <http://www.csbsju.edu/MN-Study-Abroad-Returnee-Conference.htm>
- [Connect with International Alumni](#): You now belong to a special group of CSB/SJU alumni and this link will stay with you forever.
- [Go abroad again](#): The most common reaction from students upon return is "When can I go back?!" So, when can you? Consider visiting your host country again to participate in a work, intern or volunteer experience. Or venture into uncharted territory and expand your international portfolio.

Program Evaluation

Program participants may be asked to complete a program evaluation several weeks after the conclusion of the international program. This will provide the office with information on the strengths and challenges of each program and also give us an indication of changes that may need to be made on a program.

OEA staff are available for group reflection and personal meetings about your experiences abroad. We look forward to your constructive feedback to help with the development of the programs.

CONCLUSION

We sincerely hope that you will find the information contained in this handbook to be helpful. Please remember that the Office for Education Abroad is always available as a resource throughout your international adventure.

If you have any suggestions or additions for future editions of this handbook, please let us know.

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