

Pre-Departure Guide

Know Before You Go!

PCC Study Abroad Office

Office of International Education-Rock Creek Campus, Bldg. 3 Room 223
(503) 614-7151 studyabr@pcc.edu

January 2009

Inside this guide:

Legalities	2
Academic Issues	3
Safety & Security	4
Health Considerations	5
Packing	9
Communication	10
Money Matters	11
Cultural Considerations	13
Culture Shock	15

Congratulations!

In choosing to study abroad, you are embarking on an adventure of a lifetime! Studying abroad is a unique educational and cultural experience. You will make new friends with people from different cultures, see new parts of the world and develop cross cultural competence; all while expanding your academic interests and career possibilities!

Please take the time to carefully read through this pre-departure guide. The guide addresses critical topics

to review, understand and implement prior to the date of your departure.

Before leaving on your trip and, especially during your stay abroad, be sure to utilize all the other useful references available on our Study Abroad website at: www.pcc.edu/about/international/study-abroad.

All of us at the Office of International Education wish you the best of luck in your studies. Bon Voyage!



Passports & Visas

All travelers between countries must have a passport. The passport is your official identification as a citizen of the United States. It's important to remember your passport is your most important legal document while traveling overseas. In most countries, non-citizens are required to carry a passport at all times.

Guard your passport carefully and do not travel away from your study abroad site or outside your host country without your passport. If your U.S. passport will expire while you are abroad, you should

apply for and receive a new passport before leaving the U.S.

Losing a passport while overseas may seem like the end-of-the-world, as the process for being issued another is complicated and time-consuming. If you should lose your passport, notify the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy immediately. You can find a list of U.S. embassies & consulates abroad at: www.usembassy.gov Theft of a passport should also be reported to local police authorities.

A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by the government of that country. If you plan to do any travel beyond the country where your program takes place, you must check the visa requirements for all the countries you plan to visit. For additional information, visit www.travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744

Special Points:

- For stays less than 90 days, no visa is required to study in Italy, France, Spain, Mexico, or Costa Rica
- Passports must be valid for 3 months beyond the proposed departure date of your stay abroad.

Legalities

Pre-Departure Responsibilities

Income Taxes

ATTENTION SPRING TERM PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS! If you have earnings requiring you to file federal and state income tax returns, keep in mind you will be out of the country through April 15th. Persons temporarily living abroad may request a deadline extension to file tax documentation. Extensions are usually until June 15th. Contact the U.S. consulate or embassy in your host country for information on your tax obligations. They may have 1040 forms and can help you with questions. It is possible to from abroad if you make arrangements to do so.



Don't forget to obtain property insurance to cover loss of money, luggage and personal effects due to trip interruption, cancellation, loss or theft

Power of Attorney

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal document during your absence, you should make arrangements for "power of attorney" to be held by an appropriate person to act on your behalf. You can do this by writing out in detail the specific duties that the person you choose will execute. Be sure to have this document notarized by an official notary.

Absentee Voting

If you are not in the U.S. at election time, you can still vote from abroad. First, you must register to vote before leaving. Check with your local city or town hall to obtain information on procedures for voting by absentee ballot, including timing. Make note of your party, ward, district, and voter registration number. If necessary, your absentee ballot can be notarized at a U.S. embassy or consulate

Immigration, Customs, Duties & Tariffs

As you enter any country from another country, you must show your passport, required visas and proof of immunizations. This occurs after you debark from the plane, but prior to picking up your luggage. Remember, admission to the country is entirely at the discretion of the immigration officer. Be polite and dress neatly. The immigration officer, who determines the length of stay to be authorized and stamped into your passport, will ask you about the purpose of your visit and how long you plan to remain in the country. All of this can be unnerving at times, but it is routine and always required.

After your passport has been stamped, and you have collected your luggage, you must pass through a customs inspection. You will receive a customs declaration form to fill out. This will be reviewed by customs officials when they

carefully examine your luggage. Be prepared to be detained or asked to pay duties any irregularities or violations of customs regulations is noted. **NEVER "joke" about "bombs" or smuggled items! Most likely, you will be waved through with no special attention.**

Thinking ahead to your return to the U.S., be sure to register all cameras, MP3 players, personal computers, etc. (particularly new and foreign-made items) that you take abroad. Registering these items Customs, prior to leaving the U.S., will prevent duty payment issues when you return. You should also get and save sales slips for any major purchases you make overseas and intend to take home.

United States residents are permitted to bring into the U.S. \$800 worth of foreign souvenirs and gifts duty free. You will be assessed import duties based

on 10% of the fair market value for anything in the \$400 to \$1400 range. Import duties vary according to the nature of the articles over \$1400. All articles acquired abroad and in your possession at the time of return to the United States must be declared to Customs officials, either orally (if you do not exceed the \$400 limit) or in writing. Declaration forms will be distributed during your flight back into the U.S.

Personal belongings of U.S. origin taken abroad may be sent back by mail duty-free if. Packaging should be marked "American Goods Returned" or "Personal effects being returned without repair or alteration abroad."



U.S. Customs Office

(877) 227-5511
or
(703) 526-4200
(while abroad)

www.cbp.gov

See the Travel Tab

Academic Issues

Books & Supplies

Books for program classes should be purchased before leaving the U.S. On occasion, students are required to purchase a particular book abroad. If this is the case, it will be noted on the program reading list and you should budget for this expense accordingly.

Books can be ordered directly from Powell's Book Store, the publisher or internet book suppliers such as Amazon, Barnes and

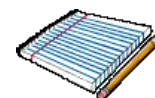
Nobel, College Books Direct and eCampus.

The Office of International Education compiles class lists and reading lists and distributes them well before departure. The cost of textbooks abroad is comparable to what you would spend on textbooks at your home campus for similar classes.

The Office of International Education can not purchase your books and will not mail

them to the study center, so please plan ahead!

You are welcome to bring other class supplies you may need, although basic supplies are available to purchase in your host country.



Lighten your luggage by purchasing basic school supplies in your host country.

Program Changes & Grades

It is your responsibility to make sure any course work you take while abroad is applicable to your future degree. It is strongly recommended you meet with your academic advisor to review your proposed program and class schedule.

You have two weeks after the start of classes to make changes in your academic program. **You MUST contact the PCC Office of International Education before the end of the 2nd week of class if you need to add/drop a class.**

No changes will be allowed after the first two weeks of term; however you may drop classes within PCC's established deadlines as long as you remain enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits per academic term. However, this requirement does not apply to students participating in our summer study abroad programs. Remember! Dropping below full-time may affect your financial aid eligibility. Be sure to contact the financial aid office at 503-977-4366 for additional information about

drop deadlines or consult the PCC schedule of classes at: www.pcc.edu/registration/dropping

Grades are generally available on MyPCC within a couple of weeks after program completion, unless there is a hold on your account. Chiba and Barcelona students are required to meet with the PCC program coordinator before their grades will be issued.



Attendance on program excursions is mandatory!

Registration for Next Term

Class schedules for the term following program completion will be posted on the PCC website 4-6 weeks before the start of term. Plan to register on-line at: www.pcc.edu on the date of your priority registration to insure the best chance of preferred courses enrollment. Tuition

and fees can also be taken

care of on-line. Payment is due by the 2nd Friday of each term.

Contact the Office of International Education at (503) 614-7151; fax: (503) 614-7170 or studyabr@pcc.edu if you need assistance or any part of the process is not clear.

Remember! No special registration allowances are

made for study abroad students, so it is very important that you register as early as possible. The Office of International Education cannot get you into closed classes. Mark your priority registration date in your calendar now!



Don't forget to mark next term's registration date on your calendar!

Safety & Security

Precautions

There are certain common sense precautions American students should take while living abroad. Do your homework, listen to and follow the counsel you are given.

The U.S. Government monitors political conditions in every country around the world. For current country information, advisories or warnings, visit www.state.gov, call the U.S. State Department at (202) 647-4000, or contact the U.S. Embassy where you are visiting abroad.

Safety Do's and Don'ts

- Avoid crowds, protest groups, or other potentially volatile situations, as well as restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate.
- Keep a low profile and try not to make yourself conspicuous by your dress, personal accessories (cameras, sunglasses, MP3 players, etc), speech, or careless behavior. Clothing or behavior broadcasting "tourist" or "young American" could attract unwanted attention.
- Be discreet with your cash, never flashing large sums for all

to see. Do not carry more money than you need for the day. Keep money, credit cards and your passport in a money belt, front trouser pocket, or a pocket inside of buttoned up clothing.

- Use common sense in divulging information to strangers about your study abroad program. Do not tell strangers where you or other fellow students live.
- Make sure the resident director, host family, or foreign university official who is assigned responsibility for your welfare always knows your schedule and itinerary when you are traveling (even if only overnight). That person should know how to contact you in an emergency.
- If you travel to countries beyond your program site and expect to stay for more than a week, register upon arrival at the U.S. consulate or embassy having jurisdiction over the location.
- Develop with your family a plan for regular telephone or e-mail contact, so that in times of heightened political tension, you can communicate directly about your safety and well being.

- Know local laws! Laws and systems of justice are not universal. Do not assume that just because it is legal in the U.S. that it is legal abroad.
- Do not impair your judgment with excessive alcohol consumption or fall under the influence of drugs.
- Report to responsible authorities any suspicious persons loitering around residence or instructional facilities, or following you. Keep your residence area locked.
- Female travelers are more likely to encounter harassment. Uncomfortable situations can usually be avoided by dressing very conservatively. Avoid walking alone at night and meeting with strangers in a non-public place.



If an incident occurs while abroad and you need urgent advice, contact the nearest US Consulate or Embassy. Visit www.state.gov or call the American Traveler Hotline at: (202) 647-5225

Tips for Securing Valuables

Personal Data File – Put together a file of important information to leave behind with your family. Include the address & phone number of your residence abroad, as well as contact information for PCC's Study Abroad Office and

Packing - Never pack essential documents, medicine or anything you could not do without – in your checked luggage. Put them in your carry-on bag.

Cash – Do not carry large amounts of cash. Traveler's checks are a good idea. Have three lists of your travelers check numbers. Leave one at home in your personal data file, keep one with your checks and carry one separately from the checks. **Keep** the receipts for your checks separate from your traveler's checks. For cash you need on hand, use a necklace pouch or money belt.

Credit Cards - Take only the cards you will use on the trip. Keep a separate list

of cards, numbers, and emergency replacement procedures. Put a copy of this list in your personal data file.

Insurance - Since you may need to contact your agent(s) while abroad, keep all names, phone numbers and policy number(s), with you in a safe place. Leave a copy of this information in your personal data file.

Luggage - Mark luggage, both inside and out, with your name, phone number and address. Keep a copy of your itinerary and passport inside each bag. Keep a list of what is in each bag and carry the list with you. Mark your bags in some distinctive way, to find easily. Travel light, it is much safer/ less cumbersome!

Medicines - Take all you need for the trip. Keep a copy of your prescription(s), with the generic name of the drug(s). Keep medicines in original drugstore containers. Take extra glasses and your lens

prescription with you. Leave copies of your drug and lens prescriptions in your personal data file.

Passport - Carry with you, separate from your passport, a lost passport kit: two extra passport pictures, passport number, date/place issued, and a certified, not photocopied, copy (not the original) of your birth certificate. Leave a duplicate kit in your personal data file.

Plane Ticket - Make a copy of your ticket & make a list of all ticket information (flights #'s, arrival & departure dates/times, names and addresses of issuing agency). Keep this list separate from your original ticket and leave a copy in your personal data file.



Students often get pre-occupied with all that they need to take and forget to consider what information they should leave behind with family!

Health Considerations

Medical Care Abroad

The on-site coordinator or director of your program (as applicable) should be able to help you contact the appropriate physician or other medical authority when attention is required. In order to local medical authorities abroad with sufficient information to respond promptly and effectively to situations requiring medical attention, you to complete a medical history form at the time of program acceptance.

During weekend or post-program travel, you may find yourself in a variety of unfamiliar and even remote locations. If you are not fluent in the language of the host country, try to seek out an English speaking doctor if you

need medical attention. When it comes to health matters, you will not want to take any chances with a breakdown in understanding.

American embassies and consulates, many large travel agencies, and a number of larger hotels abroad will have lists of English-speaking physicians. Some agencies have also been established to assure travelers needing specific medical care (e.g. preexisting medical issues) a reasonable, preset fee with reputable physicians fluent in English. If you have a pre-existing medical condition or are concerned about health facilities while overseas, you should find out about health care in each country you

expect to visit.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that “Diabetics or others who require routine or frequent injections should carry a supply of syringes and needles sufficient to last their stay abroad.” It is not uncommon to bring needles for your own use. However, be aware that carrying needles & syringes without a prescription may be illegal in some countries. Take a note from your doctor if you should need to carry needles and syringes. Some countries have needles and syringes for sale.



**Overseas Citizen
Emergency Center**

(202) 501-4444

www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212

Insurance

Be sure you have adequate health insurance and understand your policy coverage; especially what is and what is not covered outside the U.S. Make sure you Be familiar with how the company process works (ie: how bills are paid) in the event of a medical emergency and routine treatments.

Personal liability insurance against injury or damage

caused by, or resulting from your acts or omissions, during enrollment in our program is highly recommended.

Should you require medical attention abroad, it may be necessary for you to have sufficient cash on hand to make payment at the time of treatment, as it is likely the foreign physician and 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. It might also be helpful to carry a few blank claim forms with you in case you should need them during your travels abroad.



**Int'l Association for
Medical Assistance
for Travelers**

(716) 754-4883

www.iamat.org

Immunizations

At the present time, no immunizations are required for entry to or return from Australia, Western Europe, Japan, Israel, or Russia.

Specific immunizations are required for travel in Mexico and Latin America. This can change, so it is always good to check the latest status just prior to your departure. This is especially important if your

post-program travel plans include visits to other countries.

Even though you may be limiting your travel to Western Europe, you may still wish to discuss with your personal physician the advisability of receiving certain basic immunizations, like tetanus and typhoid fever. Since you will probably be doing a lot of knocking around overseas, you

will get a few minor cuts and abrasions. It is a good idea to have protection against tetanus just in case such a wound should become contaminated or infected.



**Center for Disease
Control & Prevention**

(800) CDC-INFO

www.cdc.gov/travel

Health Considerations

Prescriptions



Prescriptions

If you are currently under the care of a physician or require regular medication or injections (e.g. insulin or allergy shots), be sure to check with your physician for recommendations concerning your welfare while abroad. It is a good idea to notify the onsite program coordinator of any special needs you may have.

If you need medications regularly, take an adequate supply with you. Do not buy medications “over-the-counter” while overseas unless you are familiar with the product. Over-the-counter drugs abroad are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

If you have diabetes, are allergic to penicillin, or have any physical condition that may

require emergency care, carry some kind of ID- a tag, bracelet, or card - on your person at all times that indicates the specific nature of your medical issue. It should spell out clearly what must or must not be done should you become unable to communicate the information yourself (e.g. in case of unconsciousness).

A letter should accompany all prescription medicines from your physician. The letter should include a description of the problem, the dosage of prescribed medications to assist medical authorities during an emergency, and the generic name(s) of the medicine(s) listed.

Any special health needs or

medical conditions should be noted on the medical history forms you are advised to travel with. If you are required to take a medicine containing habit-forming or narcotic drugs you should carry a doctor’s certificate attesting to that fact. It is also advisable to keep all medicines in their original and labeled containers. To avoid potential legal problems with carrying habit-forming or narcotic medication, you should consult the embassies of all countries you plan to visit before departing the U.S.



Health Risks

The risk of becoming ill while traveling abroad will depend on three important factors:

- Making adequate pre-departure preparations
- Knowing what health and safety risks are involved where you
- Following sound medical counsel.

In addition, you should know living away from the cultural environment you are used to can sometimes cause mental and emotional stress, which, in turn, can trigger physiological consequences.

The impact of studying abroad on your personal relationships, on counseling, if you are in therapy, and on your general health, especially if you are on medication of any kind, is something you need to consider as you prepare for

your trip abroad.

In most developed countries and regions, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Western Europe, health risks may be no greater than comparable risks while traveling in the United States. On the other hand, in the countries of Africa, Asia, South/Central America, the South Pacific, and the Middle/Far East, living conditions and standards of sanitation and hygiene can vary greatly, depending on where you are. Some cities in these areas provide safer and healthier environments than outlying rural areas. But the opposite can also be true. The key to survival and good health is, beyond everything else, knowing what to expect. Wherever you go, if your travel

is limited primarily to tourist areas, there is usually less risk of exposure to food or water of questionable quality, and thus the risk of disease remains narrow. But as a student, you may travel to cities off the usual tourist routes or live in small villages or rural areas for extended periods of time. In doing so, you enrich your education, but you may also run a greater risk of acquiring infectious diseases through exposure to water and food of uncertain quality.

Health Considerations

Common Travelers Illnesses

Diarrhea is commonly and strikes a couple of days after arrival in a new area of the world. In general, symptoms seldom last longer than five days. Diarrhea is nature's way of ridding the body of noxious agents and is body's normal way of cleansing the intestine. The most important way to treat diarrhea is to maintain adequate fluid intake to prevent dehydration. Most cases of diarrhea require only simple replacement of fluids and salts lost. Readily available fluids such as canned fruit juice or hot fluids with electrolytes and non-prescription medication, such as Imodium, will aid in the relief of most symptoms. However, it is strongly recommended you consult a physician rather than attempt self-medication if:

- the diarrhea is severe or does not resolve itself within 5-7 days
- there is blood and/or mucus in the stool
- fever occurs with chills
- there are signs of dehydration.

Tetanus, commonly known as "lockjaw," is an infection of the nervous tissue caused by a contaminated wound or injury. Severe muscle spasms occur, and if left untreated, tetanus can be fatal. Cleanliness (using lots of soap and water to remove contaminants in a

wound or injury) is one of the most effective weapons to prevent this kind of infection. Tetanus immunization is available, often in combination with the diphtheria vaccine. Tetanus boosters are recommended every ten years after the initial series of three injections administered one month apart.

Hepatitis A (Infectious Hepatitis) is most prevalent in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. However, it is possible to contract the disease anywhere (including the United States) that living conditions are crowded and unsanitary. Hepatitis A is transmitted orally through the ingestion of contaminated food or water. Clams, oysters, and other shellfish, especially if eaten raw, are common sources of the disease in contaminated areas. A variety of symptoms are associated with the disease, including fever, nausea, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, and yellowing of the eyes.

Malaria, which is transmitted by female mosquitoes, is common to parts of the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Anti-malaria medication is available and is required for those participating in program in Africa. Instructions on taking the medication must be

followed carefully to insure adequate protection; you must usually begin taking the medication prior to your departure, during the entirety of your visit, and for two or three weeks after return to the United States. (The organisms that cause the disease do not invade the red blood cells until about a week or so after the bite of the mosquito.)

Other Infectious Diseases: Many viral, bacterial, and parasitic infections acquired abroad may not result in any immediately illness. Some diseases may not produce symptoms for as long as 6-12 months after a traveler returns. Should you become ill after returning to the United States, be sure to inform your physician of all travel outside the United States within the 12 months preceding illness onset. Knowledge of the possibility of exposure to certain diseases abroad will help the physician arrive at a correct diagnosis.



Travel Medication & Health Kits

www.travelmed.com

Travel Health Kit

The contents of the health kit are based on destination, duration of travel, type of travel, and the traveler's pre-existing medical conditions. Below is a list of basic items that should be included:

- acetaminophen or aspirin
- ibuprofen
- antihistamine
- decongestant
- antacids
- anti-diarrheal remedy
- mild laxative
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- antibacterial ointment
- antifungal cream
- throat lozenges
- motion sickness remedy
- aloe vera gel
- insect repellent w/DEET
- sunscreen
- moleskin for blisters
- eye drops
- rehydration solution packets
- basic first aid items- band-aids, gauze, tape, ace wrap, antiseptic, cotton swabs, tweezers



Health Kit

Health Considerations

Food and Water



Food & Water

In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available, or where hygiene and sanitation are poor (most of Western Europe is excluded from this category), travelers should be advised that only the following may be safe to drink:

- tea and coffee, made with boiled water
- canned soda or juice
- canned or bottled beer
- wine

Anywhere water may be contaminated, ice should be considered contaminated. It is generally safer to drink directly from the can or bottle of a beverage than from a questionable container. Wet cans or bottles should be dried before being opened, and surfaces that come into direct contact with the mouth should first be wiped clean. If no source of safe drinking water is

available, like verifiably safe bottled-water, tap water that is uncomfortably hot to touch may be safe, once it has cooled and put in a sanitized container. Bottled water can also be used for brushing teeth

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables



Fruit & Veggies

In areas of the world where hygiene and sanitation are known to be poor, to avoid illness, fresh food should always be selected with care. Unpasteurized milk and milk products, such as cheese, should be avoided. It is best if you eat only fruit you have peeled yourself. Since the sources of the organisms

causing travelers' diarrhea are usually contaminated food or water, precautionary measures are particularly helpful in preventing most serious intestinal infections. However, even when persons follow these general guidelines for prevention, they may still develop diarrhea. You may prepare your own fruit juice

from fresh fruit. Iced drinks and noncarbonated bottled fluids made from water of uncertain quality should be avoided.

Restaurants



Restaurants

It is difficult to generalize about the quality of restaurant food in the U.S., and even more to do this about all the varieties of restaurant food you are likely to encounter overseas. Most likely, establishments catering to outsiders and/or are in the expensive price range will offer

safe and nutritious food. Restaurants on the cheaper end of the spectrum, as well as those that serve locals, may or may not offer food safe enough to be eaten by foreigners. Assuming there are not many expensive restaurants or you are on a limited budget, the best advice is to seek sound

advice from reputable travel guides, your program director or on-site hosts. They can suggest local foods and eating styles safest for you to experience.

Street Food



Street Food

Many developing and developed countries offer an abundance of food sold from stands, along the road. It is advisable to avoid such food unless and until you have ample evidence from reliable local sources that it is safe for visitors to eat.

Note that many locals may have no trouble with such food or drink, because they have developed, over time, bodily immunities against possible impurities in street food. This is not the case for visitors. You will be tempted, but remember to be careful.

Following the guidelines listed above is your best defense against serious intestinal illness and diarrhea.

Packing

General Packing Suggestions

Number one rule: pack lightly! You will have to bring everything back that you take over *plus* all of the things you collect while there. Don't buy new clothes before leaving the U.S. Save your money to purchase clothes in your host country. Fashion styles may seem similar, but your style will be distinctly American. You will likely feel more comfortable if your clothing blends in with the locals in your host country.

When packing, remember you will be responsible for carrying your own luggage. You may not fly directly to your final destination and will have to take trains, busses, metros, and taxis to your living quarters. Doing this for the first time will be difficult enough without the added burden of

hauling several large suitcases. A large traveler's backpack is great for keeping your hands free and carrying your stuff through airports, subway stations and busy streets. Such a backpack, along with a small carry on bag, will also be useful for smaller trips you may take during your stay abroad.

Bring only the books you were required to purchase for class, a good travel guide and a dictionary. Books are heavy to carry and expensive to ship.

Prepare for the weather of the host country. Does it rain a lot? Will there be snow? Do you need a heavy coat? Layer your clothes. This gives variety to your wardrobe and will keep you comfortable in all climates. Good shoes for walking is essential for most countries, as

you will like walk more than you ever have in the U.S.

Bring some photos, a few mementos and some favorite recipes from home for the inevitable homesick moments you will have. Even though you are studying abroad to learn about a new culture, there's nothing wrong with sharing your own culture. You might want to leave some of your mementos (ie: posters, postcards, t-shirts, etc) with your new friends at the end of your trip!



Take half as many clothes and twice as much money!

Suggested Packing List

CLOTHES

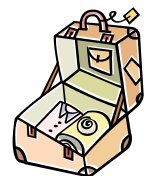
- sturdy, easy to wash, neutral clothing that can be layered, mixed and matched (long sleeve, short sleeve, jeans, shorts, sweaters, sweatshirts, etc.)
- 1 or 2 dressy outfits for ballet, opera, dining out, going to clubs
- one weeks worth of socks (avoid white) and underwear
- waterproof coat with hood, small umbrella
- comfortable, broken-in walking shoes
- slippers or flip flops for hallways and bathrooms
- bathing suit
- small travel bath towel and wash cloth

PRACTICAL ITEMS

- basic toiletries to last for first few days. More can be purchased upon arrival
- sunglasses
- camera
- money pouch
- passport and ATM card
- passport size photos
- contact lens, solution, extra eye glasses
- battery alarm clock
- Swiss Army knife
- travel sewing kit
- prescription medication, traveler health kit
- film or digital memory cards/camera batteries
- 3-6 pocket tissue packs
- journal and address book
- electric converter/adaptor
- photos of family and friends
- IPOD/MP3 player

DO NOT BRING!

- Bed linen or pillows-these are provided
- Large, heavy electric appliances (hair dryers, radios) - they are bulky to carry and usually can be purchased cheaply in your host country.
- Clothing with special washing instructions (dry clean only)
- Anything you would be upset to lose



Pack clothes that can be easily washed and dried. Microfiber, fleece, and jersey knits are ideal for traveling

Communication

Telephones



Phones

If you are studying abroad on a short-term program, purchasing a phone card from a U.S. telecommunications company with access to numbers abroad is the best way to keep in touch with family and friends in the U.S.

In general, local and long distance telephone calls are more expensive in foreign countries. Making calls directly through a U.S. long-distance company can be the least expensive way to call the U.S. Simply dial the access phone number for the country from which you are calling plus the U.S. country code (always "1") followed by the appropriate U.S. area code and local

number. You may find that local phone cards work better, but it is still advised to bring a U.S. card.

Many phones abroad require phone cards instead of coins. The cards are inserted into a phone slot and debited as you place calls. You can purchase them at post offices, grocery stores and other locations for varying fixed prices.

Avoid expensive calls from hotel phones; there is usually a surcharge. Cell phones are an increasingly attractive option for staying in touch with family and friends.

If you are studying with a host family, check about phone use. Most families will object to your

use of the phone, even for local calls because they are not free. Since your family may not discuss this situation in advance, it is important to ask what is expected in order to avoid hard feelings.

Be aware of the time at the other end of the phone. Even if you call at a reasonable hour where you are, it may be the middle of the night elsewhere!



Postal Mail

If you decide to send letters, postcards or packages home to the U.S, be aware that posting abroad usually takes longer than mailing items within the United States.

Ask your program director or on-site hosts where the nearest post office or mailing kiosk is located. You should be able to purchase stamps and air mail envelopes at the post office or

in local shops. Letters should be marked "air mail" to ensure prompt delivery. If it is not marked, mail may be sent by ship and can take up to three months to be delivered.

Mail sent internationally must include the destination country as a final line in the address to ensure delivery. Check with the local postal agency to find out

Prior to departure you will receive your contact address and telephone number abroad. Be sure to leave this information in your data file with family members.

Computers, Internet & Email



Internet

Students often can access computers and the internet at cyber cafes, public libraries and bookstores offering hourly rental rates. Most study abroad programs offer computer access to students through an on-site computer lab or library. Wireless service is generally available for students with laptops.

Access to your PCC e-mail

account will vary according to the facilities available to you on site. You can login to your PCC account at: www.mypcc.edu.

You may wish to obtain a free web-based e-mail address through Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo, or AOL. Web-based email accounts may be easier to access from abroad than PCC accounts. Since you will be

responsible for knowing the information PCC sends you through your PCC account, be sure to forward all PCC e-mail to the web-based e-mail account you may be using.

Money Matters

Budgeting

The overall cost of living abroad can sometimes be higher or lower than living at home. Because you are in an unfamiliar environment, with local costs stated in a currency you may not be able to translate immediately into dollars, it is easy to be misled. You could also be confronted

with an endless choice of entertainment possibilities and attractions. A go-slow approach to spending money is best. Try to live within a prudent budget, first taking care of necessities, next budgeting for excursions or entertainment, and purchasing luxuries last. Sticking to a budget allows you

to live on the means available to you for your entire stay. It can be quite distressing to run out of money overseas, with no quick or easy means of replenishing those funds.



Budgeting

Currency Exchange

It is not recommended you carry large amounts of cash on your body. Traveler's checks are the safest and most convenient way to take money overseas. Lost or stolen cash can't be replaced; traveler's checks can be refunded. Be sure to keep a separate record of your traveler's check serial numbers. It is best to have three copies of these. Should the checks be lost or stolen, you will have to provide these numbers to obtain a refund.

Traveler's checks can be purchased in the various denominations of most foreign currencies and can be obtained at most banks. Bank of America, Citicorp, Thomas Cook, American Express and Visa all issue traveler's checks for a small fee. Purchasing traveler's checks in smaller

denominations means you will carry a bigger wad of checks with you, but also allows you greater control over the amount you receive each time you cash in checks.

Currency can be exchanged at most international airports, banks and railroad stations abroad. It is helpful to have some local currency on-hand before leaving the airport to pay for bus fare, taxi fare, a cup of coffee or a snack. The exchange rates and service fees charged at U.S. airports tend to be less favorable than those charged at the international airport of your arrival. Avoid exchanging currency at hotels, retail shops or restaurants, as their rates are the least favorable to you.

Banks abroad tend to offer the fairest exchange rates

available. Expect to pay a commission each time you exchange currency. In some countries, the commission is based on a percentage of the amount you exchange, while other countries charge a flat fee regardless of the amount exchanged. It is to your advantage to exchange larger amounts where a flat fee is charged, although you may end up carrying more cash than advisable. Try to find a balance between carrying large amounts of cash and paying repeated bank fees for exchange transactions.



Currency Exchange

Banking

Most students wait until after arrival in their host country to establish a bank account. Your program orientation will usually tell you how to do this (as applicable). This allows you to become acquainted with the various banks, compare their account services and find out which branch office is closest to where you are during banking hours. Many banks have their own bankcards,

allowing you to make withdrawals from their ATM's.

While there are advantages to having your own foreign bank account, it is also possible to use Visa or MasterCard at many foreign banks, to get cash in the local currency, drawing on money you or your parents have deposited. If you have a credit card or bank card on either the CIRRUS or PLUS network, (check the logos on

the back of your card) you should be able to withdraw money from most bank machines around the world. Check with your program advisor, as some ATM machines will accept only American Express or local bank cards.



Banking

Money Matters

Transferring Money from Home



American Express
MoneyGram Services

1-800-543-4080

www.moneygram.com

If you should run short of cash while abroad, more funds can be sent from home in a variety of ways:

The quickest, but most expensive way, to send more money abroad is to wire cash from your U.S. bank to your bank abroad. Be sure to look into this option before leaving the U.S. Your hometown bank may have to process all cable transfers through an internationally recognized American bank, which will then have to deal with a comparably recognized bank overseas. Wire transfer fees can be \$40 or more per transaction, so it is better to send one large transfer rather than many smaller transfers.

American Express offers a

service called MoneyGram that will transfer money from a U.S. AMEX office to an AMEX office in your host country within 30 minutes. You do not have to be an AMEX card holder.

Payment can be made using Visa, MC, Discover, check or cash, and the amount will be received in the form of AMEX traveler's checks. Although there is a transaction fee, this service is especially useful for students and is highly recommended.

It is also possible to obtain a foreign currency draft from an American bank drawn against a recognized bank in your host country. This draft can then be sent to you, by registered or certified mail, to cash abroad. Should you prefer to receive a

bank draft in American dollars, a cashier's check drawn against a major American bank can be obtained from your U.S. bank and mailed abroad, again via registered or certified mail. However, this usually is a slow way of obtaining the needed funds, as the foreign bank must confirm the check's validity.

Personal checks drawn against your local U.S. bank will be virtually worthless because of the long amount of time required for each bank to clear the check.

Debit Cards vs. Credit Cards



Make sure your debit and credit cards can be used in the PLUS or Cirrus ATM networks.

ATM cards with a PIN number starting in "zero" will not work abroad!

Debit and credit cards make most foreign currency transactions easy. These two methods of payment are not only convenient; they also offer the best exchange rate. Since most automated teller machines (ATM) abroad are part of the worldwide Cirrus or PLUS networks, day to day cash can be withdrawn from your U.S. bank account using a debit or cash card. Credit cards can be used to pay for larger purchases and are also helpful in an emergency.

But, use your debit and credit cards wisely. Overspending is so easy to do, especially in countries where the dollar is weaker against the local currency. Figure out the rate of exchange before you make a purchase to avoid sticker shock later. Keep in mind that transaction fees and credit card interest charges can and will

add up quickly. Before leaving the U.S., let your U.S. bank and credit card companies know of your plans to study abroad in order to avoid potential card deactivation due to irregular or fraudulent use concerns.

Ask your bank if they can waive non-bank ATM fees while you are abroad. This will save a lot of money in the long run, especially if you withdraw money more than a couple times a month. Ask for a toll free phone number you can call from abroad in case your debit card is lost or stolen. You will want to freeze your bank account immediately should this happen.

Possession of an American Express card, Visa card, or MasterCard will be helpful if you need to acquire emergency funds while awaiting money from home. Do not use credit cards for

routine cash advances, unless it is an emergency! Credit card companies often charge more interest for cash advances than they do for purchases.

In the case of all financial transactions abroad, be sure to always have picture identification with you, ideally your passport.

Not all of the preceding advice may be true in every country. It is more accurate for travel in westernized countries, and may not always apply in other parts of the world. More or less, the information here is applicable for most of PCC's study abroad program locations.

Cultural Considerations

Racial & Ethnic Concerns

No two students studying abroad ever have quite the same experience, even if they participate in the same program and country. This fact is true for students of color and students from U.S. minority ethnic or racial backgrounds. Reports from past participants vary from those who felt “exhilarated” to be free of the American context of race relations, to those who

experienced different degrees of innocent curiosity about their ethnicity, to those who felt they experienced both familiar strategies.

Very few minority students conclude that the potential racial or ethnic problems which may be encountered while studying in another country represents sufficient

enough reason for not study

abroad.

On the other hand, they do advise students be aware of what they could experience as a racial or ethnic minority and prepare themselves to face some issues.

Try to find others on campus who have studied abroad and, thus, can provide you with some counsel.



Racial & Ethnic Concerns

Cultural Stereotypes

Numerous studies have been done to identify specific characteristics distinguishing one culture from another. Most overseas visitors and those who receive are often caught up in misleading and often dangerous stereotyping. Many Germans, Japanese, Italians, etc., have stereotyped perceptions of the “American,” just as most Americans have stereotyped images of “Germans,” “Japanese,” “Italians,” etc. Misperceptions usually exist on all 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 a chance to drop all civilized inhibitions. It is up to you to behave in a manner that will convince your hosts that these are unjustified stereotypes that cannot be applied to all Americans.

Possibly because of the unique social and cultural milieu in the United States, most Americans tend to be less reserved, less inhibited, and less restrained in their efforts to communicate friendliness and sociability.

But, in some areas abroad, this outgoing manner can be grossly misinterpreted: a friendly smile and a warm “hello” on the streets of Rome could easily be interpreted as something more than mere friendliness.

This is to say that until the feeling for the social customs characteristics of the area where you are living and studying are developed, it is wise to be more formal and restrained in your social contacts. By the same token, do not expect the local populace to respond to you immediately with open arms. Their formality and restraint is not necessarily an expression of unfriendliness, but may simply be characteristic of their social manner with strangers.

Unfortunately, attempts to categorize cultural characteristics often end up in cultural stereotypes that are unfair and misleading. In adjusting to your study abroad environment, you will have to deal not only with real cultural differences, but also perceived cultural differences. Keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as likely to stereotype the American as we to stereotype them. The results may not always be ideal. The following are a few examples of

the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others often 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 and 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 individual differences are considered, not every American fits the descriptive characteristics listed. The same tenet is true of your own preconceptions of the culture you are visiting.



Additional Reading on Managing Cultural Stereotypes

www.amerispan.com

www.talesmag.com/tales/practical/ugly_american

Cultural Considerations

Cultural Differences



Cultural Differences

It is difficult to know what life is like in a country or region whose culture one has never experienced directly. Every culture has distinct characteristics that make it different from other cultures. Some of these differences are quite evident, (like language, political structure, religion). Others can be so subtle that adjusting to the differences can be complex. A feeling of confusion and discomfort may arise and one may feel “off-balance” for awhile.

One of the significant difficulties students and travelers have in adjusting to foreign life arises due to

misleading stereotypes and preconceptions they may have about other people. In addition to an overall lack of awareness of basic cultural nuances, feeling out-of-place is likely and should be anticipated as normal, at least for a while.

According to Robert Kohls, Director of Training and Development for the United States Information Agency; “Culture is an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are typical of the members of any given society. It includes all that a related group of people thinks, says, does, and makes - its customs, language, material artifacts and

shared systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation.”

Culture is not identical to the genetic heritage that can differentiate one group of people from another. Learning about differences in the attitudes and feelings of a different culture is one of the more subtle aspects of one’s overall study abroad experience.

Of Special Note to Women



Women’s Travel Resources

“Gutsy Women: More Travel Tips and Wisdom for the Road”

“Wanderlust and Lipstick: The Essential Guide for Women Traveling Solo”

Some women who have studied in South America, the Middle East, Japan and some parts of Europe have had a hard time adjusting to the overall cultural attitude they may encounter between men and women. Men from these countries may openly express their positive (or not so positive) appraisal of women in ways that many American women find offensive. It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, loudly and verbally appraised or noticed simply for being an American woman. American women, especially, are seen as “liberated” in many ways. As a result, foreign misunderstandings and expectations may lead to potential difficult and unpleasant experiences.

Sometimes the attention can be flattering. However, it may also become annoying, angering or possibly feel threatening. Eye contact with strangers or a smile at

someone passing in the street, not uncommon in the States, may result in totally unexpected invitations. As such, women feel they must stare intently at the ground while they walk down the street. Many American women students find this hard to do or feel resentful that they have to behave differently in public in their host country than they do in the U.S.

You will have to learn what the unwritten rules are about what women can and cannot safely do abroad. Women from your host country are an invaluable resource and can offer helpful suggestions and support. Former female study abroad students suggest you get together several times early in your stay overseas to talk about what works and what doesn’t for dealing with the unwanted attention. Local women, who often experience the same sort of treatment, are taught how to ignore the

attention.

Needless to say, this special and surprising status may make male/female friendships more difficult to develop. Be careful about the messages you may unintentionally communicate. Above all, try to maintain the perspective that these challenging (and sometimes difficult experiences) are part of the cultural understanding and growth you are seeking in your study abroad program.

Prepare yourself by trying to understand the uniqueness of American gender politics, which may or may not be understood well by citizens of other countries abroad.

Culture Shock

What is Culture Shock?

Many study abroad students experience an initial period of euphoria and excitement due to the thrill of being in a new and unusual environment. As the initial sense of adventure wears off, you will gradually become aware of the fact that learned habits and routine ways of doing things may no longer be useful. Gradually (or suddenly), you may start to feel uncomfortable and will feel like the outsider you are. Minor problems may seem like major crisis, and you may find yourself growing depressed and withdrawn. Often, students experience an anxiety that results from losing all the familiar symbols and signs of social interaction. This is what is known as “culture shock.” Such feelings are perfectly normal. Knowing this, and with a bit of conscious effort, you will soon find yourself making adjustments that enable you to adapt to your new cultural

environment.

There is no clear-cut way of dealing with culture shock. Simply recognizing that it is real and accepting your vulnerability to experiencing it is an important first step. As long as you know in advance that you may fall victim to culture shock at some level, you can prepare yourself psychologically to accept the temporary discomfort. Successful students turn it into an advantage by learning from it. Remember you are not the only one experiencing occasional frustration, irritability and depression. Falling victim to culture shock does not imply any psychological or emotional shortcomings on your part. Culture shock is, in some degree, inevitable. It is the occupational hazard of living overseas and a necessary evil one has to endure to enjoy the pleasures of other countries and cultures in depth.

Undergoing culture shock is, in itself, a learning experience that should be taken advantage of. It is a way of sensitizing you to another culture at a level that goes beyond the intellectual and the rational. Just as an athlete cannot get in shape without going through the uncomfortable conditioning stage, you cannot fully appreciate the cultural differences which exist without first going through the uncomfortable stages of this psychological adjustment.



Culture Shock

Reverse Culture Shock

Just as you will have had to brace yourself for a period of psychological disorientation when you leave the United States, you should also be aware after your time abroad, you may experience a parallel period of readjustment when you return home. Why? Simply, you have changed some while you have been abroad and, thus, the place you return to may appear to have changed, as indeed it might have. Even though these changes are not huge, and may not be apparent to others, you are likely to be very aware of them.

Immediately after your return, expect to experience an initial stage of excitement and euphoria. Most students feel

overwhelmed by the sheer joy of being back in their native country. But, as you settle back into your former routine, you may recognize your study abroad experience has changed how you do things. Many of your perceptions and assumptions, even what it means to “be yourself,” will seem different. You may even discover you have become, in a sense, a new person. Expect a period of disorientation as you adjust to the seemingly “new” home environment.

The readjustment period is usually short-lived, since “home” will never seem as “foreign” to you as the foreign environment you adjusted to overseas. Your successful experience of coping with

culture shock while abroad will provide you with the psychological tools needed to deal with the challenges of readjustment.

Obviously, the more you have changed (often a by-product of the time you were away and how deeply you immersed yourself), the more difficult it will be to feel a previous notion of normality. However, if you are aware of the changes, and seek to learn from them, a smooth transformation will be all the more likely!



Reverse Culture Shock

Culture Shock

General Guidelines to “Fitting In”



Social customs differ greatly from one country to another. It is impossible to give guidelines applicable for every culture. Generally speaking, you can be yourself as long as you remain friendly, courteous, and dignified. Always keep in mind that you are the guest in another country. Your behavior should be regulated in the same manner as if you were a guest in someone else's home. As an outsider, especially if you err on the side of being respectful, some allowances are likely to exist for the things you do not immediately feel comfortable with or understand.

Politeness - In keeping with the relatively formal manner of social customs abroad, you should place much more emphasis on the simple niceties of polite social interaction than you might at home. Be prepared to offer a formal word of greeting to whomever you meet in your day-to-day activities. For example, should you approach a clerk in a local store, begin your conversation with, “Bonjour, Madame (Monsieur, Mademoiselle)” before you launch into your inquiries about the products. Become familiar with the appropriate expressions of gratitude in response to your hosts' hospitality.

Humor - While each country has its own particular brand of wit and humor, few cultures appreciate the kind of “kidding” that Americans are accustomed to. Comments, even when intended to be humorous, can be taken quite literally.

Speaking the Language – In general, most people will be flattered rather than amused at your efforts to communicate in their native language. Do not feel intimidated or inhibited when practicing your own limited command of the language. It is generally best to avoid slang expressions, which are usually unique to a

particular culture, and may be totally meaningless or inappropriate in the context of another culture. Be aware of the differences between the “familiar” and the “polite” forms of address, and be sure to use them properly.

Do not try to translate English idiomatic expressions directly into the native language, as Idioms tend to translate into complete nonsense in other languages. Be wary of making impolite comments within the hearing distance of locals. Some English words are familiar almost everywhere.

Physical Contact: - When meeting new people in your host country, carefully determine the familiarity level you should adopt. Physical contact, for example, may not be understood by someone unfamiliar with the American idea of friendliness. A cheerful pat on the back or a warmhug may be quite inappropriate in certain cultures.

All cultures have different notions about social space, how far away to stand or sit when conversing and how to shake hands or say goodbye. Restraint is advisable until you learn how personal space is perceived in your host culture.

Personal Questions - Let your hosts point the way when engaging in “small talk.” While Americans may find it easy and acceptable to talk about themselves, other cultures may view this as being as impolite as asking personal questions of them.

Drinking and Drunkenness - Be extremely sensitive of others' attitudes and feelings when it comes to drinking. You will probably find that your hosts enjoy social drinking as much as any American. But, they might not perceive public drunkenness as either amusing or tolerable.

Talking Politics - Expect

people abroad to be very articulate and well informed when it comes to matters of politics and international relations. Do not be surprised if your counterparts try to engage you in political debate. There is certainly no reason to modify your own convictions, but you should be discreet and rational in your defense of personal convictions.

Photograph Etiquette - You may want to record many of your memories on film, and it is likely you'll include some of the local populace in your photographs. However, keep in mind the people you take pictures of are human beings and not curiosity objects. Be tactful and discreet in how you photograph strangers. It is always courteous and wise to first ask permission before taking someone's picture.

Price Bargaining - Haggling over prices can be another sensitive and vague subject. Haggling can be appropriate and even expected in some circumstances. The trick is to know when it is appropriate to haggle. You can always test the waters by indicating that you like a product very much but that it is a bit more than you had anticipated spending. If the merchant wishes to bargain further, this will give him the opening he needs to offer you the product at a lower price. If it is not that kind of an establishment, you can simply (and politely) terminate the conversation.



Social Customs

