



Planning on Studying, Interning, Service Learning, etc. ABROAD?

Checklist – ver. 12/28/2009

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Please review the following timeline and checklist with critical items that you should consider as part of your planning! This list is not intended to be inclusive of everything, it is the beginning and you may find that for your particular experience there will be more to add to the list or less of the list that applies.

12 - 18 months ahead

- Begin your adventure by reading this Study Abroad Handbook designed for all students planning on going abroad: <http://www.studentsabroad.com/index.html> or <http://www.studyabroad.com/guides/handbook/> and the resources at: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>
- Discuss opportunities for study, intern, service learning and exchange abroad with family, school counselors, teachers, and advisers
- Collect information on a variety of programs: www.iepassport.org, www.studyabroad.com, www.goabroad.com including their application information.
- Consider how you might finance your planned activities – how much you may need to save or earn and
- Look into financial aid and scholarships <http://www.studyabroadfunding.org> and <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/funding.html>
- Talk with your faculty in your classes as well as your academic advisor(s).
- Talk to other students who have studied abroad for advice and suggestions
- Talk with the Office of International Education, 320 AHE, intledu@usouthal.edu**

9 - 12 months ahead

- What is your academic progress at USA like? Do you have the required 2.5 GPA or HIGHER to participate in a study abroad program? If your GPA is between a 2.0 and 2.5 have you met with the USA OIE advisors AND your academic advisors to determine the best option for you?**
- Explore and narrow down your program options, including
 - location – where in the world
 - duration - summer, semester (fall and/or spring), winter break, other
 - courses – what do you need for your degree, to enhance your career potential, to strengthen your language skills?
 - housing – homestay, apartment, dormitory, what are the roommate options, etc.
 - meals – how many included in package? what options and costs are involved
 - excursions – how many are included in the program? do they offer optional excursions? what about personal time and optional travel?
 - tuition and other fees – what is included? How many classes, hours of credit, etc.?
 - cost – what are your limitations? what scholarships might you be able to apply for? what is included in the program fee (remember not all programs include the same thing)? is airfare included – none, roundtrip, one-way, how easy can you change your flight plans, etc?
- Ask questions (study abroad advisor, academic advisor, financial aid, students returned from study abroad Apply to program(s))
- Collect ALL application forms (USA and host program) for the program you are interested in. If you need recommendations decide on who you will use and ask them to go over your decision with you.



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- Apply for financial aid and scholarships – many programs have dates well as far ahead as 12 months, don't wait until it is too late.
- If you have a passport check its expiration date – it must be valid for at least six months beyond the last day you plan on being abroad on your program. Processing time for renewals can be 2-4 weeks. If you do not have a passport, get official copies of birth certificate and documentation needed to obtain a passport and visa, passport information is available at: <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/getapassport.html> http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html
- Meet with a USA Study Abroad Advisor to go over your choices the USA and program application requirements and deadlines.**

6 - 9 months ahead

- Are you maintaining the required G.P.A. and eligibility status to study abroad. If you are having problems check with your academic advisor and with OIE advisors immediately – do not wait.
- Have you finished reading the Study Abroad Handbooks <http://www.studentsabroad.com/index.html> or <http://www.studyabroad.com/guides/handbook/> and the resources at: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>
- Get courses pre-approved using the USA Transient Course Approval Form. **This form and instructions are available online at:** <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/transient.html>
USA OIE can assist you with this process – visit with the OIE advisor.
- Begin making arrangements for financial aid and/or applying for scholarships.
- Talk with your program host and find out when all deposits, payments are due, and find out about their refund policies – most payments are NON-REFUNDABLE.
- Check on visa requirements for your host country: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/> This applies to all students – US citizens, US Legal Permanent Residents and Foreign/non US citizen.
- READ and review any US State Department information on your host country: <http://travel.state.gov>
- READ and review the US State Department information for Students: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>
- Find out more about flight arrangement schedules for the host program, who makes the ticket arrangements? where do you depart from? what are the costs? what are the restrictions if your plans change? etc. DO NOT PURCHASE TICKETS UNTIL YOU ARE APPROVED or ADMITTED TO THE PROGRAM by both USA OIE and the host program.
- Meet with a USA Study Abroad Advisor to go over your choices the USA and program application requirements and deadlines.**

3 - 6 months ahead

- Make sure you have your passport. **IF YOU ARE NOT A US CITIZEN** you must confer with the Office of International Education and your host program regarding visa requirements to enter the host country!
- Check visa requirements for the country you plan to study in see the [foreign entry requirements for US Citizens traveling abroad section at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)
- Make sure you have a WRITTEN agreement with your academic advisors on the courses you will be taking abroad and how they will apply upon return – you must also have a USA transient credit form completed BEFORE departure.
- Make flight arrangements and consider purchasing any other optional travel passes that the host program might recommend.
- Attend any information sessions, read ALL predeparture/program orientation information.



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- Talk with your physician or health care provider about medical issues (review CDC recommendations for immunizations, prescriptions, mental health, etc. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>). Some immunizations must be initiated 6 MONTHS in advance of travel. All should be completed no later than one month prior to travel unless otherwise specified by your family physician or health provider. Make sure you have proof of immunizations with you in case your host or immigration authorities ask. Minimally you should have an updated Tetanus vaccination, flu shot (common and H1N1), and others as recommended base on the destination of choice.
- Confirm that you have submitted all necessary enrollment forms and program documentation to USA OIE AND to your chosen program.**
- Confirm that your financial aid and any scholarships will be disbursed appropriately and what the dates of disbursement will be. Make arrangements for direct deposit of any payments and confirm how any deferred payments will be made if funds are available after you begin your program.**
- Discuss with your current housing managers your plans to be away. Confirm where you will live when you return to your campus after study abroad
- Update your PAWS/Banner information at USA** for emergency contacts, next of kin, mailing address while you are away, clear holds, make sure you meet with your academic advisor and confirm plans for semester after your program, etc.
- Look up local news online from your host country: <http://www.newspapers.com> - <http://www.nettizen.com/newspaper/>

1 - 2 months ahead

- Make sure your USA application materials are all completed and updated if any changes have occurred.**
- Learn about cultural transition adjustment <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>
- Check on your major medical health insurance plan – make sure it will cover you while abroad. You must have a personal health insurance plan in addition to any insurance provided by your host program or USA as part of their study abroad support.
- Meet with your family physician or health care provider and go over any pre-existing conditions, prescriptions, and other health related concerns that may arise as part of your experience abroad.
- Arrange to receive any final vaccinations/immunizations needed to go abroad
- Request a copy of your medical history including prescriptions (including for eye glasses and contacts) record to keep with you overseas
- Purchase optional travel insurance for personal possessions, lost or stolen money, airline and rail tickets, etc. These policies have significant conditions for when they will apply, read them carefully.
- Continued participating in program-sponsored information events and orientation sessions. Have you read all the pre-departure information sent to you by the host program or provided by USA?
- Make sure you have a suggested packing list for your program, including culturally appropriate clothing and household items you may need – for a generic listing go to: <http://www.studentsabroad.com/whattopackandnotpack.asp>
- Make sure you have a credit card and debit card which can be utilized overseas, contact your financial institutions and inform them that you will be out of the country for an extended time. DEBIT and CREDIT CARDS all have security blocks that will keep you from using your card abroad unless you call the card companies and let them know where you will be and the dates. You may want to consider placing a daily limit on your card transactions. Also check to see what ATM services your card works with – PLUS, STAR, etc. Find out where these ATMS are located in your host country (many have online maps to guide you). REMEMBER YOUR PIN NUMBER, if you do not have one you may need one to be able to use your card, check with the card company.



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- If you are forwarding your US mail, fill out a change of address form and have current mail forwarded to permanent address in the U.S. <https://moversguide.usps.com/>
- If you will be out of the country during elections (national, state, local elections) file an Absentee Voter registration (US Federal <http://www.fvap.gov/>)
- Check with your host program about cell phone service availability in country. Contact your cell phone provider in the US to verify what the charges are for international calls and whether you have global roaming. If your cell phone is GSM capable and has a SIM card then make sure it is UNLOCKED (you have to ask the provider for the code) so you can purchase a local SIM card to make calling less expensive). Consider using SKYPE or other similar services if you have a laptop. Make sure everyone you will be talking with knows the TIMEZONE differences and dialing code information. For information on time around the world and calling codes go to: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>. From the US to dial abroad your family and friends may need to dial 011 country and city code and the phone number. <http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/> What is the calling code for dialing the US from abroad? Check for your specific destination.
- Consider implementing a Power of Attorney for financial aid or income tax purposes. Who has access to your checking account and can they make payments for you? BE VERY CAREFUL with this.
- Refill prescriptions and purchase any over-the-counter health and hygiene products that may not be available in your host country (check with your program to make sure what you are carrying with you is legal in the host country – just because you can take them here in the US does NOT mean they are available or legal in the country you will be going to)
- Obtain written authorization (letter) from your physician for any prescriptions you will be taking abroad, any relevant health conditions, and refills for prescribed medications. This is especially critical if you are carrying more than 30 day supply or will be abroad for more than four weeks. You may need to refill your prescription while abroad.
- Explore options/costs for using phone service to and from your host country

1 week ahead

- Register your travel plans with the U.S. State Department <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/>
- Create your account with USA's 24/7 emergency assistant provider – MEDEX SECURE – for your ID card and insurance information go to: <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/emergencyassist.html> - login at: <http://www.medexassist.com/Groups/Default.aspx> the account information is on the ID card. PRINT A COPY AND CARRY WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES.
- Make photocopies of all important documents, tickets, and travel passes
- Prepare a small travel file to hold your important documents: passport, plane ticket, insurance, emergency contact numbers, medical records, directions for when you arrive in your host country, name and phone number of program coordinator
- Make several photocopies of all important documents, tickets, travel passes (leave one copy with responsible family member and pack one copy separate from your carry-on items)
- Get travelers' checks or debit cards. Check on banking arrangements in country, for example what are the fees charged for converting traveler's checks, debit cards, credit cards, etc..
- Exchange a small amount of currency to host country currency to carry with you. Check with a local bank or you may be able to do so at the airport however sometimes the exchange rates are "expensive" and not the best. Ask your host program for advice.



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- Get out your luggage, carry-on and begin packing what you plan on taking. Practice carrying all your luggage up and down at least three flights of stairs, walk around the block three or four times. Remember you will have to do a lot of walking in your host country and while CARRYING or PULLING all your luggage. Travel light!
- Check out the airport maps, weather and flight information for all the airports you will be flying through or at your ultimate destination – try: <http://www.flightstats.com/> or <http://www.ifly.com/> - there are many different resources. You can also find online subway maps, bus and train schedules for many cities of the world.
- Check the local weather of your host city to make sure you dress appropriate for the weather - Remember southern hemisphere is winter when it is summer in the northern hemisphere also weather patterns often follow those of the US – if the US is having bad weather you may find that China or Europe are also having similar bad weather – be prepared!
<http://www.accuweather.com/world-index.asp?partner=accuweather&traveler=0>
- Find out what the airline regulations are for carry on AND checked luggage. Check the weight limitations and penalties for excess baggage and weight. CHECK the rules for the airlines in the host country if you are connecting abroad, rules may vary between domestic and international flights (even in the US).

1 - 3 days ahead

- Pack for real! Keep in mind airline regulations on what you can and cannot put in your luggage and carry-ons
- Decide on what snacks you may want to carry or to have handy in case schedules change or you are hungry on arrival and need a quick snack.
- Place your documents folder in a carry-on bag, BUT keep airline tickets and passport separate from copies, perhaps in a small purse, wallet or "fanny pack"
- Confirm airline and other travel arrangements
- REVIEW phone/address list to take with you, including: family, friends, program sponsor, school at home and abroad, home country embassy or consulate
- Make a list of credit card and travelers check numbers; keep one in your document folder and leave the other with a parent or family member in case of emergency. Confirm with the card company that your card security has been updated.
- Make plans with your family or significant other on how you will contact them if delayed or following arrival. DO NOT AGREE TO CALL THEM the minute your flight lands, give yourself time to clear immigration, customs and to get your bearings. NOTE: IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS OFTEN DO NOT ALLOW THE USE OF CELLPHONES WHILE YOU ARE BEING PROCESSED. You can have your phones confiscated and be significantly delayed if you do not follow their guidelines.

Departure day

- DO NOT PACK YOUR ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS IN YOUR SUITCASE TO BE CHECKED – CARRY THESE WITH YOU IN YOUR CARRY ON. DO NOT LEAVE THESE OUT OF SIGHT and carry them securely.
- Remember the carryon rules including limitations on liquids you may carry on to the plane. You can buy water after you clear the security checkpoint however check the security conditions at the time of your trip for any updates on carryon and security checks that may occur when you board the plane at the gate. These rules are subject to change without notification.
- Take two forms of ID - at least one should have a photo (your PASSPORT) - to the airport
- Make sure to leave an emergency contact phone number with your family
- Place luggage ID tags on each piece of baggage with your destination address , out a copy of your name and destination information inside your luggage.



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- Arrive at the airport at least **THREE** hours ahead for all international flights, this is also recommended for domestic flights so you can clear check in and the security check points without rushing.
- Dress comfortably and in layers, flights can often be cooler than expected and blankets may not be available.
- Make sure you have appropriately sized carry-on items with no more than one quart size zip-top bag with maximum of 3oz liquids inside and avoid prohibited carry-on item
- Carry-on necessities:
 - passport
 - airline ticket / e-ticket confirmation
 - emergency contact information including 24/7 assist insurance information & #'s
 - address and phone number for destination contacts
 - prescription medication
 - one change of clothes, two or three changes of underwear in case of long delays
 - credit/debit cards and at least US\$300 cash
 - a good paperback and perhaps some magazines
 - cell phone with charger and extra battery
 (remember 240 volts is common abroad, make sure your system is compatible)

IN-Flight (and delays)

- If for any reason your flight is delayed, if at all possible make an effort to email, phone your HOST program, family and the USA Office of International Education keeping them informed as to your schedule.
- Rest, sleep if you can AND drink plenty of fluids.
- Fill out the immigration and customs forms that the airline may hand to you at departure or during the flight. Every country is different check with the air crew if you are unsure.
- Update your watch to the time zone you will be arriving in.
- REFRAIN FROM ANY ALCOHOL USE** even if you are of legal age, it does not help.

Upon Arrival

- You will go through **IMMIGRATION** and **CUSTOMS** (where you pick up your baggage). You must show your passport and the appropriate arrival/departure forms to the immigration officials (keep these with your passport when they are returned to you as you will need them when you depart the country). Customs may check your baggage or may not, extremely variable. You will clear immigration and customs even if you are going on to a domestic flight, if you are connecting to another international flight you might go to the in transit terminal and clear immigration/customs at your destination point.
- Once you have your baggage and carry-on luggage and enter the terminal **DO NOT LEAVE THEM OUT OF YOUR SIGHT, DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK ON THEM.** These are often confusing times for you while you get oriented and travelers are most often vulnerable to thefts during this time and especially when departing the terminal.
- Follow the instructions of your host program: will they meet you, do you have their contact information, etc.. If anything changes or you miss a scheduled time call or contact them to get any follow-up advice. You should always have alternative instructions with you.
- Contact your family, significant others once you have got your bearings. Your family will expect to hear from you more often than not within hours if not minutes of your arrival, before departure you should prepare them for a slight delay but you should contact them within 12 hours of arrival if at all possible (even with time zone differences). Even if your call costs a few dollars just a quick "I arrived and all is OK" is worth the cost.



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- Within 72 hours of arrival and settling in, update you're the Office of International Education with your local contact information, even if it is the same as the information you left with them – CONFIRM that nothing has changed and that you have settled in.
- Take your time and develop a schedule for meals and daily activity. If you arrive early in the morning try to stay up all day and active so you can sleep during the local night cycle.
- REFRAIN FROM ANY ALCOHOL USE even if you are of legal age, it does not help.
- REFRAIN FROM TRYING ALL THE LOCAL NEW FOODS, take your time and adjust as you will have a better time overall this way.
- Do you know what Culture Shock is? You are about to experience this – everyone goes through this at different levels and at different times, read this carefully: http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_shock.html AND <http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/1.6- Surprises and Shocks.htm>

While on the program

- As soon as you have your course registration for the program email or have the host program notify the Office of International Education of your courses. If for any reason you are taking different courses email the new information to OIE or complete the form at: <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/docs/transcript.doc> THIS WILL PREVENT A DELAY IN YOUR CREDIT TRANSFER AFTER YOU RETURN
- Hand to your host the transcript delivery instructions also found at: <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/docs/transcript.doc> All transcripts should be sent to the Office of International Education for processing.
- Stay in touch with USA OIE, let us know how your program is going, what challenges you are having, etc.
- IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY ABROAD <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/icoe.html> – make sure you work with your host program contacts AND/OR notify MEDEX SECURE as well as OIE. MEDEX will notify OIE if you contact them. If you are not feeling well, have a safety concern, or have any other issues that you consider problematic contact your host OR the USA OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IMMEDIATELY (do not worry about the time difference in an emergency).
- Enjoy your program, study hard as your academic program is critical to your graduating on time!
- Participate in any cultural activities, travel with other students, etc. AT ALL TIMES if you will be traveling outside of the host city make sure you host knows where you are going and how to reach you in case of an emergency back home or elsewhere in your host country.
- REMEMBER ALL LOCAL LAWS APPLY – you may not know them and you might assume that you do or that they are similar to laws in the US – YOU WILL NOT KNOW THE LOCAL LAWS AND THEY ARE MORE OFTEN THAN NOT DIFFERENT THAN THE US. In the absence of stronger laws the laws of the US, USA student conduct code apply at all times.
- NOTE: THE USA STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT APPLIES AT ALL TIMES. You are an ambassador for the University of South Alabama, the State of Alabama and the United States at all times.
- Access PAWS to register for classes and to check the status of your USA accounts. If you have any holds, etc. feel free to contact OIE for assistance.

Getting Ready to Return

- Make sure you request that your transcript be sent to OIE – use the local forms and the form noted in the handout at: <http://www.southalabama.edu/oie/docs/transcript.doc>
- If you are GRADUATING UPON RETURN or at the END OF THE NEXT SEMESTER make sure your host knows this and request a RUSH transcript be processed. Transcripts from host programs can take one to four months to be received by USA.



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- BRING COPIES OF ALL YOUR COURSE SYLLABI, ASSIGNMENTS (if they are returned to you – keep copies for your files), and ANY COURSE MATERIALS back to USA for your academic advisor to review.
- If possible get an assessment of your grade for each course prior to departure so you can have this information for your registration pre-requisites for the next term.
- Access PAWS to register for classes and to check the status of your USA registration.
- Check flight schedules, make sure you have all your documents in hand. Follow similar steps above for 1-3days before and day of departure.

Upon Return

- COMPLETE any program evaluation forms sent to you by USA, your host program or the program provider here in the US. Your feedback is critical to ensuring the program address the challenges, strengthens the good and positive things and improves on what is working. Offer suggestions!
- Stop by the Office of International Education to share your experience and let us know how your program went.
- Meet with your academic advisor and department faculty, share your experience with them. Update your academic progress and plans for graduation. Bring copies of all syllabi and course materials with you.
- Do you know what Re-Entry Shock is? You are about to experience this – everyone goes through this at different levels and at different times, read this carefully: http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_reentry.html AND http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/2.2-Neither_here_nor_there.htm
- It is your responsibility to check regularly with OIE to verify the status of your transcript processing, dont wait until the end of the semester or until the day before graduation! An email once a week works well, or come by and ask. DO NOT GIVE UP BECAUSE THE TRANSCRIPT HAS NOT ARRIVED.
- Check with your HOST program regularly to verify when they have sent your transcript. Give a copy of the verification information they send to you to USA OIE.
- Share your story and photos by giving us materials for the PAWS AROUND THE WORLD WEB PAGE!
- Write an article for the VANGUARD and send it to them! Send your story to your home town newspaper! Stay in touch with USA through USA alumni office after your graduate. Help us help other students go abroad!
- GRADUATE WITH DISTINCTION _ YOU ARE A GLOBAL JAGUAR NOW!

This is the beginning of the adventure.....

NEED HELP?

USA OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
320 ALPHA HALL EAST
251-460-7053
INTLEDU@USOUTHAL.EDU
WWW.SOUTHALABAMA.EDU/INTERNATIONAL