

GLOBAL EXPERIENCES PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

2016-2017



Education Abroad

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

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Contacts

In Case of Emergency

In case of an emergency that cannot wait until the next business day –

Education Abroad Emergency: (303) 653-1671

CU Boulder Police: (303) 492-6666

Education Abroad Staff

General Global Experience

Office: 303-735-5948

Email: globalexperiences@colorado.edu

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**Education Abroad After-Hours Emergency
Phone Number:**

+1 (303) 653-1671

Other CU Boulder numbers

Police Department: (303) 492-6666 (any time; can also be called if you cannot reach anyone on this list)

Office of Victim Assistance: (303) 492-8855
Available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
After hours, call main number (303) 492-8855 and press "2" to speak to a professional.

Counseling and Psychiatric Services: (303) 492-6766
Available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
After hours, call main number (303) 492-6766 and press "2" to speak to a mental health professional.

Other U.S. telephone numbers

Gallagher Global Assistance: Group health insurance for CU Boulder study abroad participants and directors, including emergency medical evacuation coverage.

24/7 Customer Service

Gallagher Global Assistance

Toll-free number within the U.S.: 1 (866) 693-6873

Collect number for outside the U.S.: 1 (312) 935-9242

Website: www.GallagherGlobalAssistance.com

Claims

Health Special Risk, Inc.

HSR Plaza, 4100 Medical Parkway, Suite 200

Carrollton, Texas 75007

Email - ColoradoClaims@hsri.com

Phone number: (972) 512-5600

Fax: (972) 512-5816

The policy number is **GLM N14285477**.

U.S. Department of State's Overseas Citizens Services Office

Monday-Friday, 8:15 a.m.-5:00 p.m.:

(888) 407-4747 (toll-free) or (202) 501-4444

After-hours emergencies, Sundays, holidays:

(202) 647-4000

Getting Ready to Go

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Registering with Education Abroad

Each participant will need to complete a registration their international travel with Education Abroad. We will notify you via email once your registration is open.

You will have an account with Education Abroad, which will allow you to access important information such as health insurance coverage, health and safety reports, and a comprehensive Global Experiences Handbook. We will also ask you to provide emergency contact information, travel itineraries, and details of your program if you are traveling independently.

Passport Information

You should already have a passport, and it should be valid for at least six months after the end of your travels.

If you are a U.S. citizen and do not have a passport, everything you need to know about U.S. passports (how to apply, how to get a rushed passport, what documents you need, etc.) is on the following web site: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

Getting a passport quickly

There is a Passport Agency in Denver, which is designed to meet urgent passport needs (those who are traveling within 14 days or under a tight timeline to apply for foreign visas).

Colorado Passport Agency

Cherry Creek Place III Corporate Center
3151 South Vaughn Way, Suite 600
1 (877) 487-2778

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/information/where-to-apply/agencies/colorado.html>

There are other options for expediting your passport. The websites below provide information about expediting a passport application through the U.S. State Department and also about private visa services. <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/services/expedited.html>

Participants who do not have urgent passport needs should apply for a passport at a regular passport acceptance facility.

Taking care of your passport

Your passport is a valuable document; guard it carefully. Here are some important tips:

- Make two copies of the photo page of your passport. Add to a file all copies of all airline tickets, rail passes, other ID cards, and traveler's check numbers.
- Leave a copy with your family, spouse or other responsible party.
- Carry a copy of your passport with you at all times, separate from your wallet or purse, and keep your actual passport in a secure location until needed for travel.
- If you must carry your passport, you should consider keeping it in a money belt worn underneath your clothing.
- If you lose your passport abroad, notify the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy.

Lost or Stolen Passport

Immediately report a **lost/stolen passport** to the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 1 (877) 487-2778 or the embassy/consulate abroad. You must complete Form DS 64, Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passports. Additional information can be found at

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/lost-stolen.html> OR

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies/lost-or-stolen-passports-abroad.html> ?

Visas

There may be entry requirements for your host country that you must adhere to in order to participate.

You are responsible for knowing and addressing the current visa requirements for your host country. We advise that you pay close attention to consular updates, as requirements may change at any time. This is an independent process. Education Abroad and the University of Colorado Boulder are not responsible for obtaining visas nor are they in any way responsible for visa complications, delays, or visa denials.

Many countries require U.S. citizens to obtain a visa in order to enter the country – even for short periods. For some countries, the visa application process is long, complicated and may require substantial fees as well as out-of-state travel to the appropriate consular office. Processing times for visas can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months.

Visa requirements change regularly. If you are a U.S. passport holder, you can find visa information (or at least links to visa information) at the following website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/americans-traveling-abroad.html>

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you should research the entry requirements for your destination country by contacting that country's embassy in the U.S. Do not assume that requirements for U.S. citizens are applicable to you.

If you are an international student, it is your responsibility to know re-entry requirements from travel outside the U.S. Please speak to an ISSS advisor before you depart. **Note:** ISSS is unable to advise international students on entry requirements for countries other than the U.S. Researching these requirements is your personal responsibility.

If you plan to travel to other countries during your time abroad, you should first research any entry/visa requirements that may apply. Ensure you plan ahead.

Additional visa information for U.S. citizens is also available via the [U.S. Department of State's Students Abroad website](#).

U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

The **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** is a free service provided by the U.S. government to citizens traveling to or living in a foreign country. Registration in this program records information the U.S. Department of State can use to assist you in case of an emergency. Once enrolled, you will receive pertinent email alerts. Make sure to download the **Smart Traveler app** on your smartphone.

U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 people each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency.

When an emergency happens, or if a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your time abroad, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By registering, you can help them assist you when you might need it the most.

Before you leave, you should register your travel and residency plans with the U.S. Department of State if you haven't already (note that you have likely already been encouraged to register during the Education Abroad registration process). Registration is free, and you can enroll via the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program** enrollment page. You must include your email address when you register so you can receive email alerts.

NOTE: If you are not a U.S. citizen, you should register with your embassy in the country or countries where you are traveling or studying. The services that the U.S. government provides to U.S. citizens while abroad (including assistance in an emergency) will not be available to non-U.S. citizens, even if you are hosted by a U.S. program.

Planning: Communication from Abroad

Cell Phones: It may be possible to use your current cell phone abroad or to easily purchase one abroad. If you plan to bring and use your own cell phone, check to be sure it can be used in the countries where you travel and verify the costs with your cell phone company. You will need to have the phone company unlock the phone before you leave. You may also find that pay-as-you-go cell phones are very affordable, which may be worth the purchase for your time in the country. If not, buy a phone card to use for emergencies in each country you enter. If you have a cell phone abroad, give the number to your group leader to use in case of emergency.

Calling Cards/Phone Cards: You can buy phone cards in the U.S. or in-country. Calling cards bought in the U.S. can be purchased from a U.S. phone company or from Target, Wal-Mart, or Sam's Club. Check to see which card is best for you. Many provide you with toll-free numbers that connect you to a U.S. operator. Be aware that in some countries these might not work at all. Purchasing phone cards in-country is probably a wiser option. Locals can help you purchase the best one.

Skype is the best option for keeping in touch internationally if you have a reliable internet connection. Download, for free, the Skype program on your computer, and encourage your family and friends to do the same. Calls and chats between Skype accounts are free; you must buy credit to make calls to landlines or cell phones (about 2¢ per minute).

Google Voice is another good option while abroad. Google Voice is an internet-based phone service anyone can use regardless of phone type and cell phone provider. One great feature of Google Voice is the ability to place international calls at low rates. Create an account for free, and then purchase credits through Google Checkout. You can either use the Google Voice mobile app or Google Voice website to make your call at about \$0.10/minute, depending on your location.

Electrical Equipment

Electrical systems are different around the world. In most countries you need:

- An **adaptor** (because the plugs and outlets are different shapes and sizes).
- You may also need a **converter** due to differences in the electrical voltage for appliances with a motor (such as hair dryers, electrical razors, etc.). Even with a converter, these types of appliances may not work correctly. Thus, we advise purchasing these types of appliances after arrival abroad.

To find out about the electricity and the types of plugs used in your host country, you can check the following web site: <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

If you bring your laptop overseas, check to see how to insure it against damage or theft outside the U.S. Most new laptops have internal currency converters, but you will still need to get the proper plug for the country.

Accessing the CU Boulder Libraries

You can access many of the electronic resources at the CU Boulder libraries while you are abroad. If you plan to take your laptop, make sure that you have downloaded the CU Boulder VPN to your computer or you will be unable to access scholarly journals and other resources.

Downloading VPN: <http://www.colorado.edu/its/vpn/>

Jet Lag

The best way to avoid jet lag is to get plenty of sleep before your trip and drink lots of fluids before and during the flight to prevent dehydration. Reports also advise avoiding caffeine and alcohol and eating light meals on the plane to minimize jet lag. The TravelSmart Newsletter has some good tips on avoiding jet lag: <https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/health/jet-lag> or <http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20322187,00.html>.

Packing Tips

1. Number one tip: Pack light. If you don't use it almost every day, don't bring it! At some point, you will have to carry ALL of your luggage, sometimes a fair distance. You've over-packed if you couldn't walk a block carrying all of your luggage by yourself.
2. Call your airline to know the weight limits and the number of bags you are allowed. Ask about fees for going over the allotted weight limit.
3. Either leave plenty of room in your suitcase or bring an empty duffel bag in case you purchase items on your trip.
4. Label all your luggage (both outside and inside) with your name, address, phone and destination.
5. Take at least one small suitcase or bag with locks for your valuables (this can serve as a weekend bag).
6. Use a money belt or pouch for cash, plane tickets, and passport.
7. Pack an interchangeable wardrobe. GO BASIC. Dark colors are more versatile and don't show dirt. Bright colors tend to stick out and draw attention. Layer clothes to add warmth or cool down.
8. Take easy washables.
9. Rolling, not folding, your clothes saves space and cuts down on wrinkles. Use separate waterproof bags to pack toiletries. Ziploc bags are great for this and for storing wet items.
10. Don't take family jewelry or items that have great sentimental or monetary value. You shouldn't pack anything you can't afford to lose.
11. Register imported items (cameras, cell phones, etc.) with U.S. Customs before leaving the States. Foreign-made items are subject to duty charges when you reenter the U.S. unless you can prove you purchased them here. Take the items to Customs at the airport and fill out a registration slip.
12. Insure your valuables: You can buy or rent bikes, skis, or other large items overseas. If you insist on taking your own, pack them properly and insure them. Be prepared to pay an excess luggage

charge or to substitute one of your pieces of luggage for the extra item. Check with your airline regarding fees and packing restrictions. If you take valuable items such as laptop computers or video recorders, consider insuring them before you leave.

Sample Packing Checklist

This checklist is provided courtesy of Eagle Creek and Changes in Latitude. It is meant to help you fully brainstorm about what you may want to bring with you.

The basics:

- Passport (with visa)
- Insurance information
- Credit Cards with PIN numbers
- Traveler's checks (if you want to bring them)
- Currency of host country (about \$100)
- U.S. cash (dollars bills could come in handy)
- Plane tickets
- Health Documentation
- Extra ID
- International Student ID card
- Emergency info (medical, itinerary, relatives)
- Photocopies of important documents

Healthcare:

- Prescriptions/Birth Control
- Condoms (better to bring than assume they will be available)
- Band Aids
- Moleskin
- Antiseptic cream
- Sunscreen
- Tweezers
- Scissors
- Pain reliever
- Antacid
- Cold medication
- Medication for upset stomach
- Diarrhea medicine
- Malaria pills (where needed)

Clothing:

- Drip-dry, no iron, minimum care clothing that doesn't show dirt
- Layerable clothes for changing weather
- Waterproof jacket
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Sweats and slippers for cold rooms

- Socks—thin cotton, thermal, wool
- Hat
- Gloves/scarf (if applicable)
- Swimsuit
- Underwear
- Jewelry you could stand to lose (leave wedding rings and other valuables at home!)

Important Details:

- Travel pack or daypack
- Empty duffel bag
- Money belt or neck pouch
- Strong travel locks
- Luggage Tags
- Camera and accessories
- Batteries, if needed
- Dictionary of the host language/grammar books
- Alarm clock (battery-operated)
- Watch
- Pictures from home
- Small gifts from your home for new friends/acquaintances

Miscellaneous:

- Cards, games
- Pocketknife (only in checked bags!)
- Sewing kit, super glue
- Towel & washcloth (for travel)
- Leisure reading
- Umbrella
- Sunglasses
- Ear plugs
- Plastic zip-lock bags
- Journal
- Travel Guides
- Maps
- Stuff sack

Disabilities

If you have a disability, communicate with your GE leader and (if you are registered with Disability Services) your coordinator about the upcoming experience, your specific needs, and how you can all work together. (Request a meeting with your leader and your coordinator if you prefer.) Disclose your needs early (preferably right after acceptance to a program) so appropriate arrangements can be made in advance. Students with disabilities and allies may explore resources at this link: <http://abroad.colorado.edu/?go=Disability>.

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Accident and Health Insurance

Coverage while abroad

You will be provided with limited health and accident insurance for the time that you are abroad through the Education Abroad group policy with Gallagher Global Assistance.

Here is what you need to know:

- The policy provides benefits not often available in participants' personal coverage and differs from the insurance available through Wardenburg.
- The insurance includes evacuation for medical emergencies, political and social unrest, and natural disasters.
- The insurance also includes repatriation coverage, which sends a body home in the event of a death.
- The insurance covers pre-existing conditions.
- The policy does not cover everything, so refer to the policy to be aware of exclusions.
- Coverage is good anywhere in the world, including the U.S. (at a limited amount).
- Even though there is no deductible required, you will be expected to pay for medical treatment yourself; you then submit a claim to Gallagher to be reimbursed.
- If you withdraw from the program, you will have your Gallagher insurance cancelled. However, we recommend that you purchase an insurance policy of your own if you remain abroad. Many options can be found at <https://www.insuremytrip.com/>.
- Once you have been enrolled, Gallagher will send you an e-mail containing your individual certificate number, their website address, and copies of your verification letter, summary and identification card.
- The policy number is: **GLM N14285477**.

Dates of coverage: see email that will be sent to you by the insurance provider, Gallagher Global Assistance.

It is not possible to purchase additional coverage through Gallagher if you decide to travel after the date that your coverage ends. If you would like to purchase similar coverage for travel after that date, you can find more information on this website: <http://www.insuremytrip.com>.

Gallagher Global Assistance Contact Information:

24/7 Customer Service

Gallagher Global Assistance

Toll-free number within the U.S.: 1 (866) 693-6873

Collect number for outside the US: 1 (312) 935-9242

Website: www.GallagherGlobalAssistance.com

Claims

Health Special Risk, Inc.

HSR Plaza, 4100 Medical Parkway, Suite 200

Carrollton, Texas 75007

Email: ColoradoClaims@hsri.com

Phone number: (972) 512-5600

Fax: (972) 512-5816

The policy number is GLM N14285477.

Gallagher provides an online portal with important health and safety information. You may access this portal at any time by logging in at www.GallagherGlobalAssistance.com with the following credentials:

username: GallagherGlobalAssistance@ajg.com

password: ajgco

Coverage by more than one policy

You may have one or more other insurance policies provided for your program:

- A required national health plan for the country you are visiting
- You may continue to have personal coverage while abroad

Paying medical bills and making a claim

Take information about the companies, policy numbers, and dates of coverage that apply to your program so you can file any necessary claims overseas. **Most policies require you to pay your medical bills at the time of treatment** and submit a claim for reimbursement after the fact.

ALWAYS keep copies of claim forms and receipts until the claim is completely settled.

Deciding Whether to Keep Your Current Health Insurance Coverage

Since insurance coverage is provided while you are abroad, you may be thinking about dropping your current coverage. **We recommend that you maintain Affordable Care Act-compliant health insurance at all times (even during your time out of the country) in order to avoid any potential tax penalties for failure to comply with the Affordable Care Act's mandatory insurance requirement.**

You should contact your insurance provider with any questions about your specific policy. The Office of International Education does not sell insurance or in any way guarantee payment of benefits. Do not make any assumptions about your coverage.

The CU [Student Gold Health Insurance Plan](#) (offered through the Wardenburg Health Center), unlike many parental policies, will cover illness and/or accidents outside the U.S. at an in-network coverage level. Additionally, the Student Gold Plan has evacuation and repatriation benefits, not typical on any parent plan, and often required to obtain visas.

If you choose to continue your CU student health insurance, you must speak with Patient Services at Wardenburg Health Center to make arrangements for coverage and payment. Patient Services is located in Wardenburg Health Center, room 333. For more information, call (303) 492-5107.

Health Preparations

Recommended Medical Exams

Have a general physical exam and a dental checkup if you haven't had one recently. You should be up-to-date on all vaccinations required for travel to your program location.

If pertinent, have a gynecological checkup. If you plan to take prescription birth control, ask your doctor about getting a large enough supply to last the duration of your time abroad.

If you wear glasses or contacts, bring a typed copy of your prescription and an extra pair of glasses and/or a sufficient supply of contacts. In some countries, contact solution is difficult to come by or requires a prescription; ask your program provider or alumni if you need to bring your own supply.

Prescriptions

If you take prescription medication, speak with your doctor. Some medications may not be available in your host country, may only be available in generic form, or may be illegal to possess. This is especially true of medications for psychological conditions and ADD/ADHD.

Prescription medications vary from country to country in name, potency, and purity and may NOT be sent to you through international mail.

If possible, take enough medication to last the whole time you are abroad (some doctors and/or insurance companies will not permit you to obtain a large supply in advance). Keep all medication in its original container. Ask your doctor for a letter to present to customs officials and overseas doctors explaining what you need to take, including a generic breakdown (not just a generic name) of the medication.

In some countries, medications that require a prescription in the U.S. are available over-the-counter and for very little cost. It can be tempting to stock up when the opportunity presents itself. However, some FDA-approved medications have the same brand names as medications that are marketed outside the U.S. but contain completely different active ingredients. No international regulatory system exists to ensure that new brand names are sufficiently different from existing ones elsewhere in the world. This could lead to confusion by pharmacists who are filling prescriptions from outside their country.

We advise that you consult the U.S. Department of State's [Health Information for Americans Abroad](#) page, which includes advice about traveling and prescription medication. You can also contact [International SOS](#) to determine if the prescription medication you plan to bring abroad is legal in your host country.

First Aid Kit

Take a small first aid kit and over-the-counter medications for colds, pain relievers, antibiotic ointment, stomach upset/diarrhea, Band-Aids, analgesics, etc.

Vaccinations

Check with reliable authorities to find out what vaccinations are currently recommended for your program site. Do not delay since you may need several shots taken weeks apart.

Resources

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** at (404) 332-4559
- **Wardenburg Travel Clinic** at (303) 492-5432
- Your program organization's pre-departure materials

In addition to the required travel vaccinations, consider getting a flu shot (influenza vaccine). Remember that your immune system may be weakened due to travel and exposure to new germs, making you vulnerable to the flu.

International Certificate of Vaccinations

Some countries require proof of certain immunizations for entry. The **World Health Organization** (WHO) has an International Certificate of Vaccinations you can use to maintain a record of your immunizations. You can get this certificate from many physicians, passport offices, or the local Department of Health. You may be asked to present it upon entry to countries that have immunization requirements.

Wardenburg Health Center Travel Clinic

If you are a fee-paying, CU Boulder student, you can schedule an appointment at the **Travel Clinic** at **Wardenburg Health Center** to prepare for your program. Wardenburg staff can assess individual needs and provide customized advice for your destination, recommend and administer vaccinations, prescribe medications if needed, and complete any required medical paperwork.

Plan ahead. If your program or visa application requires medical paperwork and/or a medical exam, you must schedule an appointment at least two weeks in advance by calling (303) 492-5432. When scheduling your appointment, you will be asked which countries you are planning to visit. Please allow one hour for your travel appointment.

For more information on university health insurance coverage, pricing, and travel services visit the **Travel Clinic** website.

Additional Travel Clinic Options & Information

Passport Health has locations throughout the U.S., including Boulder and Denver.

Worldwide Travel Clinic at Boulder Community Hospital

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Travel precautions, vaccine recommendations, and advice for your destination.

While Abroad

Continuing Treatment

If you will need to see a doctor on a regular basis, inform Education Abroad before you leave. Inform the on-site director upon arrival so they will be prepared if you have a medical emergency and need fast assistance.

Take a complete medical record to your program site, along with medical and prescription histories. Know your blood type.

If You Become Sick While Abroad

Make sure you know who to call and where to go in case of any health concerns that come up. If you become ill, get proper care. Don't hesitate to tell your host family or on-site director if you are ill, and don't

be afraid to visit a doctor or hospital just because you don't speak the language fluently.

Healthy Responses to Stress

Think now about how you handle stress and plan a healthy response during your time abroad. Start an exercise program, get together with new friends, plan excursions, listen to music, get involved in a volunteer activity, find a conversation partner, or join a club.

If you are having problems with adjustment, talk to the program staff for recommendations and advice. They have all had experience with the challenges of cultural adjustment.

Jet Lag

You should expect to feel jet lag on arrival overseas. It will take a few days for your system to adjust to the time and climate changes, so pace yourself.

To avoid the worst effects of jet lag, get plenty of sleep before your trip and drink lots of fluids before and during the flight to prevent dehydration. Avoid caffeine and alcohol, and eat light meals on the plane.

Protection, Contraception and STIs

Protection and Contraception

Regarding being prepared for sexual contact: To minimize your risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI), use latex barriers such as condoms or dental dams. To prevent pregnancy, use a reliable method of contraception such as condoms or hormonal birth control pills.

You should bring STI protection and/or contraception (if relevant) with you abroad. Each country has a different policy regarding their availability.

HIV/AIDS

Some countries require you to have an HIV test after arrival to get a residency permit. If you think there is even a remote chance that you will test positive, have a test done well in advance of your departure.

If you are traveling in a region where HIV is widespread, you should take additional precautions. The most obvious of these is avoiding sexual contact or, if you do engage in sexual contact, practice safe sex.

HIV can also be transmitted through blood, and you should be extra cautious in any situation involving needles, such as medical procedures, acupuncture, and tattooing. Needles for blood tests or injections must be sterile, preferably disposable, and come pre-packaged in a sealed container. In doubt, ask how the equipment has been sterilized. In some countries you can buy needles and syringes and take them to the hospital for your own use.

For more information, see the [CDC fact sheet](#) on HIV and AIDS.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is much more infectious than HIV and also has no cure. The disease is endemic in Africa, the Pacific Islands, Asia and the Amazon region of South America. You should get the vaccine before you leave.

Nutrition While Abroad

Be careful what and where you eat, especially in developing countries or if you have a sensitive stomach. Make sure that all fruit and vegetables are peeled and that all foods are thoroughly cooked. Always wash your hands before eating.

If you are unsure about the safety of local water, drink bottled water. Avoid ice cubes or drinks made with ice if the local water is unsafe. Wash produce with boiled water.

Drink plenty of liquids such as purified water or clear juices, and avoid alcoholic drinks or caffeinated sodas as these are dehydrating.

Take over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medicine for normal traveler's diarrhea, but if the condition lasts more than 24 hours, seek medical attention.

Celiac Disease and Gluten-Free Diets

If you are a gluten-sensitive traveler, you may wish to do research ahead of your program abroad to determine how you may need to adapt your diet in your host country. The following websites can provide resources, suggestions, and advice that may be helpful in making your preparations:

- [Celiac Disease Awareness Campaign](#)
- [Celiac Travel](#)
- [Gluten-Free Traveler](#)
- [Select Wisely](#)

When You Come Home

If you become sick after returning, tell your health care provider that you have traveled outside of the U.S. Because some diseases have a long incubation period, you may not be sick until after you return. Schedule a tuberculosis skin test for three months after your return. If you were exposed to tuberculosis while abroad, you wouldn't necessarily be sick. Testing is the only way to prevent serious problems later. Complete any immunization series (such as Hepatitis A or B) that you started before travel.

Additional Resources

You can find additional resources on how to stay healthy overseas in the final section of this handbook: [General Travel Resources](#).

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Thinking about Safety: A Partnership

Your personal safety while you are away from home is very important to you, to your family and friends, and to Education Abroad. Travel to another country is not inherently dangerous, but there are risks for students that are unique to an overseas setting. When an incident occurs, the impact on participants and their families is often more profound because of the unfamiliar context and the distance that separates students from their families and friends.

Education Abroad is committed to promoting a safe support system and to offering reliable information on potential risks and necessary precautions; however, you exercise choice in following these precautions.

The best way to prepare for a healthy and safe education abroad experience is to inform yourself and discuss basic health and safety issues with your family and Education Abroad staff before leaving the U.S. Education Abroad views safety and security as a partnership with you.

Student Responsibilities

You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. There are basic precautions you should take before you go abroad and while you are outside of the U.S. Do your homework, get to know the culture of your host country before you go, and be aware of the resources available to you. You should:

- Accept responsibility for, and consequences of, your own decisions and actions.
- Consider your own physical and mental health and safety needs when accepting a place in a CU Boulder program.
- Disclose accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy education abroad experience.
- Read and carefully consider all materials given to you that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, and cultural conditions in your host country. Participate fully in orientations.
- Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of your whereabouts and wellbeing.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily decisions.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in the host country. Be sure to know the in-country equivalent of 911.
- Provide your family with emergency contact information. Keep them informed of any travel away from the program site.
- Be alert, be respectful, be informed, and use your common sense.

The Role of Education Abroad

The office adheres to the following practices regarding its programs:

- We monitor U.S. Department of State *Travel Advisories* to assess health and safety conditions at our program sites.
- We provide health and safety information so students can make informed decisions while abroad.

- We consider health and safety issues when evaluating the appropriateness of an individual's participation in an education abroad program.
- We provide orientations that include information on how to deal with health and safety issues, potential risks, and appropriate emergency responses.
- We provide limited accident and health insurance coverage, including coverage for emergency evacuation and repatriation.
- We use care when contracting with any third party to provide products or services.
- We communicate applicable codes of conduct and the consequences of noncompliance to participants. We take appropriate action when we become aware of violations. In cases of serious health problems, injury, or other significant health and safety incidents, we maintain good communication with all who need to be informed.

Education Abroad cannot:

1. Guarantee or assure your safety or eliminate all risks from the education abroad environments.
2. Monitor or control all of your daily personal decisions, choices, and activities.
3. Guarantee that you will not engage in illegal or dangerous activities.
4. Ensure that U.S. standards of medical care or the process to receive care will be available (even in developed countries).
5. Ensure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings; nor can we provide or pay for legal representation for you.

Prior to departure, all participants sign contracts indicating their agreement with Education Abroad policies regarding Health and Safety, including Emergency Medical Authorization, Personal Conduct Agreement, and Release. These are available in all participants' applications, and contain specific information regarding responsibilities of the office and participants.

Involving Your Parents/Guardians and Families

Parents or guardians and families can play an important role by helping make decisions and, sometimes, by influencing behavior overseas. Encourage your loved ones to take an active part in ensuring your safety abroad. The [Parents & Family](#) section of the Education Abroad website is the best source of information.

Discuss your emergency plan with your family before you go so that they are familiar with all emergency procedures.

Keep in touch with your family. If you are traveling away from your host city, make sure to share your travel plans with your loved ones in order to prevent any undue alarm.

Make sure that your emergency contacts have up-to-date passports and bring them along when traveling within the U.S. This will ensure that, in case of illness or injury, they can get to you abroad as quickly as possible.

Take Precautions Abroad to Reduce Risks

There are a number of precautions you should take to better ensure a safe and healthy experience. Remember, as a foreigner you may be subject to increased scrutiny. Get to know the local culture, be aware of your surroundings, and use your common sense.

General Best Practices

Educate Yourself about Your Host Country

Read newspapers and listen to news, both local and international. Know what's going on in the world. Keep track of travel advisories in your region by checking with program staff or visiting the U.S. Department of

State [International Travel Information](#) website, the [U.S. Study Abroad Office](#) website, and <https://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>.

Learn how to ask for help in the local language of every country you visit, and know what to do in case of emergency. Many countries have the [equivalent of 911](#).

Prepare to Live in an Urban Environment

Many education abroad locations are in major international cities. You may experience conditions associated with dense urban living anywhere in the world: increased crime, pollution, sexual harassment, and standards of living that are not comparable to life at CU Boulder. You will need to practice the same safety tips you would in any place you are not familiar with. The more you learn now about these realities, the better prepared you will be to handle the challenges and rewards of studying abroad.

Pay Attention to Your Actions and Appearance and Try to Adapt

Pay attention to your surroundings. Plan your route and walk confidently. Pedestrians can be at risk, so be especially careful crossing the street. Never assume that you have the right of way.

As a foreigner, you may be subject to increased scrutiny. Try to avoid drawing attention to yourself: avoid looking like a U.S.-American tourist, speaking loudly, or wearing your camera around your neck. Don't wear t-shirts, sweatshirts, or baseball caps with U.S.-American logos.

Especially in cities with lots of tourists, look at maps and metro guides before leaving the hotel.

If you are being followed, feel threatened, or are lost, go into a store, restaurant, or other public area. Know what feels comfortable and what doesn't. If your instincts tell you a situation is not right, trust them and move along. The International SOS [Travel Tips](#) site offers additional advice in their brief 'Street Smarts' video.

Use Common Sense

The same rules of being safe in the United States apply while abroad. If you wouldn't do something at home, don't do it abroad.

Avoid walking alone at night. Stay in well-lit, well-trafficked areas. If you plan to travel, go with a friend. Do not hitchhike. Avoid arguments, especially in public places. Be extra cautious if you have been drinking.

Transportation Safety

Road accidents are the leading cause of tourist death and serious injury worldwide. These far exceed deaths resulting from disease, violence or terrorism. University policy prohibits students from operating motor vehicles and airplanes (including but not limited to scooters, motorbikes, motorcycles, cars, and airplanes) while participating in an education abroad opportunity. Faculty and staff may not drive vehicles abroad in which students are passengers without consulting Education Abroad and University Risk Management prior to departure from the U.S. to discuss liability, insurance coverage, and risks associated with this activity.

As a result, student groups should use public transportation wherever that option exists and is safe. Where vehicles and drivers are hired, student groups should use only licensed and appropriately insured/bonded professional drivers and vehicles abroad.

University contracts require certain levels of insurance that might be informative for student groups. The U.S. Department of State (DOS) [Road Safety](#) resources should be reviewed. Transportation plans should not include roads that the U.S. DOS or [ASIRT](#) recommends avoiding or that are indicated as extra risky at certain times.

Traveling to Other Regions or Countries

Always tell someone where you are going, including your program's on-site staff. Ensure that your visa will allow you to return to your host country. Whenever possible, avoid traveling alone.

Neighboring countries can be very different culturally and politically. Make sure you do your research and prepare, as you did before entering your host country. In some regions, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, travel outside of your host country may be not possible at all. Follow the safety guidelines and rules of your program site, and report all travel to your program staff.

Make a list of important telephone numbers and addresses in the locations you will visit. Write down the telephone number of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Breaking the Law

Each year, 2,500 U.S.-Americans are arrested overseas. One-third of the arrests are on drug-related charges. Many assumed that as U.S. citizens they could not be arrested.

When you are overseas **you are subject to the laws of that country**. U.S. citizenship gives you no immunity from local laws. Make no assumptions about your "rights;" in many countries, legal processes are quite different.

You may be in a country where the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" is not assumed by the legal system. Penalties for crimes can be much more stringent, bail might not be granted when drugs are involved, evidence obtained illegally may be admissible in court, or the prisoner might not be present at the trial.

Demonstrations and Protests

It is important that you do not participate in strikes or demonstrations and that you abide by the regulations of the host institution and laws of the country. Although strikes and demonstrations may occur in your host country, be aware that as a foreigner participating in political activities abroad you can be arrested and/or deported. The local constitutions of many countries around the world prohibit political activities by foreigners.

You are urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible and to exercise caution if you are within the vicinity of any demonstrations. Anti-U.S. sentiments may be expressed at some political events, and even demonstrations that are intended to be peaceful can sometimes turn violent. You don't want to be caught in the middle of such situations. Participating in an illegal demonstration or strike might not only cause you physical harm, it might also be harmful to CU's relationship with the host institution or country.

Fire Safety

Fire safety standards differ drastically from country to country. No matter where you are staying – in a residence hall, homestay, or hotel – you should be aware of fire danger and have an emergency evacuation plan. Exercise additional caution in hotels and older apartment buildings where fire alarms and sprinklers may not exist. If possible, stay on a low floor, and always know where the exits are.

See more information on fire safety and education abroad on the website of the [JUSTICE Foundation](#).

Socializing Abroad

A truly wonderful part of travel abroad is making friends with people from different cultures. It is fun and educational to exchange ideas and find common ground with people who speak a different language and/or come from a different background. However, there can be risks because of cultural differences and

misperceptions about U.S.-Americans.

Given the potential additional detriments of language problems or unfair stereotypes, you could unwittingly encounter trouble. Add alcohol or drugs to cloud your judgment, and you could find yourself in a dangerous situation, including the potential threat of a physical or sexual assault. This is true for both men and women.

If you find yourself in an encounter that makes you nervous, do what you can to get out of the situation. This may mean overcoming your own concerns about embarrassing yourself or offending others. Keep in mind that dangerous situations are often unpredictable, and what seems like a harmless situation can turn into a threat quickly and without much warning. You can't always prevent a bad outcome.

Help is always available and CU takes any form of harm very seriously regardless of the relationship of those involved or the circumstances surrounding an incident. You can get assistance by contacting your on-site staff or CU Education Abroad for support in the event of any incident.

Dating, Relationships and Sex

Take time to learn about cultural norms that govern relationship roles and dating. Know that what is seen in the U.S. as casual dating may be seen in some countries as one step away from a lifetime commitment. Some behavior that is acceptable at home may be viewed as provocative overseas.

When considering a romantic relationship, be aware that you may not know very much about appropriate and expected behavior. Having a clear sense of what you want and don't want, and communicating this to a potential partner, can help ensure that your experiences are within your boundaries. Language barriers and cultural expectations can make this type of communication more difficult but increase its importance.

Safety Considerations for Women

From the [U.S. Department of State](#):

Many women travel safely each year without incident. However, when it comes to health and security, women travelers are more likely to be affected by religious and cultural beliefs of the foreign countries they visit. The truth is that women face greater obstacles, especially when travelling alone.

Before You Go

Know the location of the U.S. embassy or consulate for your destination.

Research Your Destination

Visit the Department of State's official website, [Travel.State.Gov](#), where you will find country-specific information for every country of the world and contact information for the closest U.S. embassy and/or consulate. You will also find information about visa requirements, crime and security conditions, health and medical considerations, local laws, areas to avoid, and more. Most foreign countries require a valid passport to enter and leave. There are countries that may require a woman to have a male escort to leave a country.

Pack Accordingly

Each country that you visit will have different local laws and customs regarding women's clothing and appearance. For example, what you wear in a mall in Mexico might not be acceptable in a mall in the United Arab Emirates.

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

It is important for women travelers to understand the cultural norms of the country they will be visiting. Pay attention to local laws and customs, because they can be quite different from the U.S., especially if you intend to travel alone. Avoid dark, isolated areas at night.

The safety of public transportation varies from country to country. In many places, informal taxis or mini-buses pose particular threats to people unfamiliar with the local conditions, especially to women traveling alone. Find out from reliable sources, such as local authorities or tourism officials, what is and is not safe.

Create Boundaries

Be cautious when sharing information about your plans and itinerary with strangers. Do not feel the need to be overly polite if someone bothers you. While it may seem rude to be unfriendly to a stranger, creating boundaries to protect yourself is important. Use facial expressions, body language, and a firm voice to fend off any unwanted attention.

LGBTQ Concerns

We recognize that not every LGBTQ student is going to come out to program staff or other students while abroad. If you identify as LGBTQ, we advise you to learn about your host country's stance on those identities before you travel. Some countries are more accepting than others, and some countries have drastic laws concerning same-sex behavior, gender expression and transgender identification. If you feel comfortable, and would like more resources and support on these issues, please let your on-site staff or CU Education Abroad Program Manager know about your concerns.

Additional Resources

You can find links to helpful online resources on Education Abroad's [website](#), including U.S. State Department recommendations for safe travel and resources for LGBTQ students, students of color, students with disabilities and more. In addition, the International SOS 'Prepare and Prevent' video on its [Travel Tips](#) site provides a quick overview on how to prepare for a secure time abroad.

Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

Legal Issues

When traveling overseas, it's important to obey the laws and regulations of the country you are visiting, especially those pertaining to drug and alcohol use. Every year, many U.S.-American students are arrested abroad on drug charges or because of their behavior under the influence. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, so be informed. It is **your responsibility** to know the drug laws in a foreign country before you go, because "I didn't know it was illegal" will not get you out of jail.

Be aware that a Colorado medical marijuana prescription is not valid outside of Colorado. Additionally, laws in the State of Colorado, including the legalization of marijuana, do not apply anywhere outside of the State, including abroad. In many countries marijuana laws are strictly enforced and can carry serious consequences.

The U.S. State Department provides a detailed warning about illegal drugs on its Student Travel site:

Avoid underage and excessive alcohol consumption. Many arrests, accidents, rape, and other violent crimes have occurred in part due to excessive alcohol consumption. While abroad, driving under the influence and drinking on the street or on public transportation may be considered criminal activities by local authorities, as they would be in many places in the U.S.

Don't accept packages from anyone. Some U.S.-Americans think it's a good idea to take advantage of an offer for an all-expenses paid vacation abroad in exchange for carrying a small package in their luggage. If you are caught, ignorance is no excuse. If the package contains illegal drugs or substances, the fact that you didn't know will not reduce the charges. You could miss your flight, your exams, or several years of your life during a stay behind bars.

Don't import, purchase, use, or have drugs in your possession. Even if you have a doctor's written prescription for medical marijuana in the U.S., it is illegal to travel with any amount of marijuana or marijuana-containing products. Drug charges can carry severe consequences, including imprisonment without bail for up to one year before a case is tried, physical abuse, and sentences ranging from fines and jail time to years of hard labor. Some crimes even carry the penalty of death. Contraband or paraphernalia associated with illegal drug use can also get you in trouble.

Many countries have enacted stringent drug laws with mandatory jail sentences if convicted of possessing even small amounts of illegal substances.

Social Issues: Use vs. Abuse of Alcohol

It will probably be legal for you to purchase and drink alcohol while you are abroad, though you should inquire about the drinking age in each country you visit. Beer and wine may be consumed with meals, and there may be bars in your dormitory or in classroom buildings. In addition to researching the local laws of your host country, you should also research the local cultural norms to understand how the local community interacts with alcohol.

For some students, use of alcohol is minimal or moderate and may not cause them or others significant concern. However, a certain percentage of students go abroad with an existing alcohol or drug abuse problem. A widely agreed-upon definition of alcohol or drug abuse is when a person's use interferes with his or her physical, social, or economic functioning. Alcohol abuse can result in poor grades, social conflicts, accidents and injuries, vandalism, and diminished peer respect.

Keep in mind that beer and wine may be stronger (higher alcohol content) in many other countries, or you may be offered homebrewed or unlabeled alcohol of unknown toxicity. Excessive drinking can leave you vulnerable to crime or assault and reduce acceptance by your host culture.

Practical suggestions for responsible drinking include eating a meal before or along with drinking to slow alcohol's effects, sipping drinks to take in alcohol more slowly, spacing out drinks and limiting the number of drinks you consume. Know your limit, and stick to it. Always use the buddy system while in situations where alcohol may be present so you have a friend to look out for you (and vice versa), and be sure to guard your drink at all times.

Drunk driving, besides the obvious dangers, often carries even heavier penalties outside the U.S. (and remember that university policy prohibits students from operating motor vehicles abroad at any time).

Above all, take personal responsibility for your behavior and its consequences. That said, if you do become a victim of a crime, it is not your fault. If you disclose to your on-site staff or our office, you can get assistance connecting you to resources. If you choose not to formally disclose, we encourage you to seek resources or find the support that is most helpful to you. **For more information on resources, [click here.](#)**

Student Conduct

All participants sign the 'Personal Conduct Agreement' in their CU Boulder Education Abroad registration. Education Abroad participants are still registered students at the University of Colorado Boulder and continue to be subject to university rules and regulations while participating in the education abroad program. The applicable CU Boulder policies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Review the [Honor Code](#)
- Student Conduct [Policies and Procedures](#)

Students in education abroad programs must also comply with all applicable laws and policies of the host institution and the host country. Participating students should also remember that they are viewed as representatives of the U.S. as well as the University of Colorado. Violations of the Student Code of Conduct abroad may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and adjudicated once the student returns home.

Academic Conduct

Each student must abide by the academic policies of the host university and/or education abroad program provider.

Social Conduct

Information regarding standards of acceptable behavior and conduct in the country(ies) of study is discussed at pre-departure and on-site orientations and in written pre-departure materials. Participants are expected to be familiar with, and abide by, standards of acceptable conduct and to understand that social behaviors acceptable in a U.S. academic setting might be highly objectionable abroad. Behavior which violates those standards could harm the university's and/or program provider's relationship with the host country(ies) and institution(s) as well as the participants' own health and personal safety.

Alcohol and Drugs

While studying or interning abroad, participants are expected to adhere to alcohol and drug policies of the host university and/or education abroad program provider, in addition to the laws of the host country. Failure to abide by the conditions or spirit of this agreement may result in dismissal from the program and/or other penalties as outlined above in the CU Boulder Education Abroad *Disciplinary Action While Abroad* section.

Legal Issues

It bears repeating: each year, 2,500 Americans are arrested overseas, one-third on drug-related charges. There is little anyone can do to help if you're caught with drugs. It is your responsibility to know the drug laws in a foreign country before you go.

When you are overseas, you are subject to the laws of that country. U.S. citizenship gives you no immunity from local laws. Make no assumptions about your "rights;" in many countries legal processes are quite different. Examples:

- You may be in a country where the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" is not assumed by the legal system.
- Penalties for crimes can be much more stringent, bail might not be granted when drugs are involved, evidence obtained illegally may be admissible in court, or the prisoner might not be present at the trial.
- You may be exposed to interrogation, delays before trial and lengthy trials, as well as primitive conditions, mistreatment and solitary confinement.

The University of Colorado cannot assume responsibility for any student apprehended for drug offenses. If you are arrested on a drug charge, the U.S. Consular Officer cannot:

- demand your immediate release or get you out of jail or the country
- represent you at trial or give legal counsel
- pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. Government funds

Emergency Procedures

Emergencies While Abroad

CU Boulder Education Abroad staff is concerned about your health, safety and wellbeing. This section provides general suggestions of what steps to take in the event of an emergency. *If your on-site program has an emergency protocol, be sure to follow those procedures first.*

Steps to Take in the Event of an Emergency Abroad

While your instinct may be to call your family first, in an actual emergency, you should follow the general guidelines outlined below. This is because your family may be thousands of miles away and not in an immediate position to do anything for you, other than offer moral support. We suggest following steps 1 to 3 in the event of an emergency or urgent situation abroad in order to get help in the quickest manner. We also recommend that you discuss this emergency protocol with your family before you leave.

1. If it is a true emergency, contact the local police or medical emergency services in your host country (know the equivalent of 911).
2. Contact the on-site program staff. Because they are on-site, they can often best assist in emergencies. Your program handbooks and other post-acceptance materials will contain contact information for local staff of the program organization or host university's international office.
3. Contact CU Boulder Education Abroad at (303) 492-7741. If our office is closed, call the CU Boulder Education Abroad emergency phone at (303) 653-1671.
4. Contact your family.

The on-site staff for your program will be able to provide the best assistance in the event of one of the following **non-emergency difficulties**:

- Petty pick-pocketing or theft (as long as no physical injuries occurred)
- Lost or stolen passport
- Problems with your host family or housing abroad
- Problems with your courses abroad

Please note: The CU Boulder Education Abroad staff is required to report any incident of harassment or discrimination to the Office of Discrimination & Harassment (ODH) on campus. Each incident might be handled differently, but in general the ODH cannot take action unless the allegation is against someone connected to the University of Colorado Boulder. However, the ODH will provide referral information to the alleged victim to other campus offices that can assist him or her (for example, the Office of Victim Assistance, Counseling and Psychological Services, Office of Student Conduct, etc.).

Additional Resources

While you are abroad, you can contact Global Experience staff who can put you in touch with the appropriate resources. You may also contact these on and off campus offices directly:

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (303) 492-6766

Office of Victim Assistance at CU Boulder (303) 492-8855

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) (800) 656-4673

Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA) (866) 879-6636

The Office of International Education's Policy in Case of Political or Social Unrest, Terrorism and the Threat of War

We are often asked about our policy for dealing with emergencies or other events that could jeopardize the security of students on our education abroad programs. We routinely do several things:

First: We tell you how to access official information about the country to which you are traveling. In particular, you have been given the website for the U.S. Department of State's [Bilateral Relations Fact Sheets](#). We urge you to read the [Country Information Sheet](#) for your country of study since it provides basic health and safety information that we want and expect you to know.

Second: We give you the information you need to register with the U.S. State Department so they know where and when you will be studying abroad. Use [the website](#) to register with the embassy in the host country in case it is necessary for a consular officer to contact you in an emergency.

Third: We monitor [U.S. Department of State Travel Warnings](#), which document the potential for unrest or signal imminent or actual problems. When a Warning is issued, the Education Abroad staff will evaluate the advice and communicate it to program contacts on-site. The contacts make sure students are notified and advised so that appropriate action can be taken.

Travel Warnings are also the "trigger" used to cancel a program. If the State Department prohibits travel to a certain country and/or orders U.S.-American government dependents to leave, the Office of International Education will cancel either our program or CU's participation in the program.

If we cancel a program before it begins, we do the following:

1. All funds paid to the University of Colorado Boulder's Education Abroad office will be refunded. Fees paid directly by you to our education abroad partners, deposits made to hold housing, or payments for plane tickets may or may not be returned, depending on each organization's policies.
2. If classes have not begun in Boulder, you will be given information on how to register. Those who wish to take the semester off will be given information about taking a [leave of absence](#) from CU Boulder.
3. If you receive financial aid, steps will be taken to ensure that future aid is not jeopardized.
4. If you wish to secure housing in CU Boulder dorms, Education Abroad will work with the Housing Reservations office to help find space whenever possible.

If we cancel after a program has begun, we do the following:

1. Advise you to immediately leave the country or area. If you choose to remain in unsettled areas, you do so at your own risk.
2. Depending on how much coursework has been completed and where you are in the academic term, facilitate the completion of credit and the registration for the next term at your home campus. *If partial or full credit can be awarded, tuition will not be fully refunded (see #3).*
3. Refund all fees paid to the University of Colorado Boulder's Education Abroad office, unless partial or full credit can be awarded. Fees paid directly by you to our education abroad partners, like deposits made to hold housing, may or may not be refunded, depending on each organization's policies. Payments for plane tickets, visa fees, immunizations, etc. are generally not refundable.

If you or members of your family have additional questions, please contact us. Our overall goal is to ensure that you have a safe, productive experience abroad.

Sustainable Travel

We all know that the CU Boulder community strives to be “green.” Sustainability has long been a top priority on our campus, and our office wants you to take that mindset with you as you travel the world on your study or internship abroad program. You can consult our tips and a list of resources found below.

While you are abroad, you can follow the suggestions below in order to minimize the adverse impact of your presence and maximize its positive impact on your host culture:

- Use water and electricity sparingly
- Bring a reusable water bottle, and drink tap water where it is potable
- Learn about local recycling rules and schedules
- Learn about your travel destination(s) and how it/they might be involved in sustainable practices such as their human rights record, environmental conservation record, commitment to peace, etc.
- Use the local language as much as you can
- Learn about cultural norms by talking with and learning from locals
- Dress appropriately
- See if there are sustainable accommodations and transportation available when you travel
- Don't collect, buy or export endangered natural products
- Choose low-impact recreational activities
- Don't disturb wildlife
- Volunteer or intern with a local school or organization to get a better understanding of your host culture and country, or try to find an organization dedicated to environmental work
- Research local environmental issues and initiatives or write a paper on sustainability for your class abroad
- Try to buy locally produced goods and food
- Try to contribute to the local community by using local services as much as possible
- Always ask people before photographing them; some religions and cultures forbid photography

Sustainable Travel Resources

Carbon Footprint Calculator

Carbon Offsets Programs:

[Climate Trust](#)

[Native Energy](#)

[TerraPass](#)

Information on the Carbon Offsets Debate: [Carbon Responsibility Magazine](#)

[CU Environmental Center](#)

[CU One Million Acts of Green](#)

[Ecological Footprint Quiz](#)

[Ethical Traveler](#)

National Geographic's [Guide to Sustainable Travel](#)

[Responsible Travel Pledge](#)

Daily email tips: [Friends of the Earth \(UK\)](#)

350 Project: an international campaign for worldwide solutions to the climate crisis – find out what the number 350 refers to on their website.

You can find more resources in General Travel Resources at the end of this handbook.

Cultural Adjustment

Cultural Adjustment

The best and fastest way to learn about a language and/or culture is total immersion; however, the fastest way can often be the most painful. "Cultural adjustment" can cause discomfort. Those who stay the longest and engage most fully will experience the most discomfort. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Consider Your Situation

If you're in a country where a different language is spoken, you may, at best, have the communication ability of a two-year-old, depending on how much of the language you've studied and how comfortable you are using it. You'll also be jet-lagged and exhausted at first. You'll be far from your home, family, and familiar surroundings; the food is different, the habits are different, and the rules are different.

The result is known as "culture shock," or more appropriately, "cultural adjustment."

Culture shock is the unpleasant disorientation which afflicts those who enters a strange world. It happens when one's expectations don't coincide with reality or when one is bewildered by things taken for granted by those who've grown up in a certain culture.

It's often true that the more eager you are to enter the host culture, the more severe the adjustment may be. Tourists who come only to gaze, taste, and move on are insulated from much of the shock. If you do not feel any discomfort during the first few weeks of your program, ask yourself if you are really engaging with the culture or simply living your customary life overseas.

Stereotyping is Normal

The human tendency to simplify and organize information into neat categories is quite normal, but the results are damaging if stereotypes become the only definition of what we see and experience.

Stereotyping works both ways. Just as we have simple ideas about people and places we've never seen, others will have the same about us. If all that people know of the U.S. comes from re-runs of unrealistic TV shows or the actions of our government, they will have strange ideas about life in the U.S. You may, for example, be asked by adults whether you know the President personally or if you could call Brad Pitt to say hello.

Stereotypes can be negative or positive. For example, people from the U.S. are often characterized as highly independent, competitive, practical, and generous. These can be viewed as positive traits. However, they can also be viewed negatively: that people from the U.S. are only concerned about themselves or money, are incapable of appreciating the intangibles in life, and are naive.

Gender Roles and Expectations

You might not have the same status or role in your host country as what you experience here. The cultural definitions of harassment may be different or seem nonexistent. You could find yourself in situations that cause feelings of anxiety, confusion, fear, powerlessness or anger. Conversely, you may feel uncomfortable because you enjoy a different status than the local women simply because you are from elsewhere.

Past students have found that many host country nationals have a distorted and stereotyped image of U.S.- American women from ads, TV, and movies. Feel free to discuss these issues with your peers and/or your on-site staff.

Diversity & Inclusion Among Students in Education Abroad

Everyone is going to encounter some challenges while abroad. Students who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented in education abroad (students of color, students with disabilities, religious minorities, LGBTQ students, etc.) might face particular challenges in the host country setting because of assumptions of what a U.S.-American is like. Alternatively, the host country may be more open than the U.S. The good news is you likely already have cross-cultural navigational skills that will be a great asset to you while abroad, and you may be more prepared than you think. We encourage you to talk with your CU Boulder [Education Abroad Program Manager](#) or an [Education Abroad Advisor](#) if there is anything you would like to discuss.

For more resources, visit our [Access & Inclusion](#) webpage. [Diversity Abroad](#) also offers valuable information on their website including their [Diversity Abroad Online Pre-departure Learning Module](#).

Signs of “Culture Shock”

Experiencing the stress of cultural adjustment is a normal part of living in a new environment. The best defense strategy is to recognize the symptoms and find healthy coping mechanisms.

- Be prepared to have a touch of the flu or a miserable cold in the first few weeks; accept it for what it is, the result of a big change in climate, diet, and routine (not to mention international flights with recycled air!).
- Be prepared to have some moments of sadness and disappointment.
- You'll probably miss the oddest things about life at home, like hamburgers or being able to buy a tube of toothpaste at midnight.
- Be prepared for some anxiety as you discover the rules and habits of this new place.
- You may forget you left the U.S. to learn and adapt, which means losing a bit of your cultural identity.

The Cultural Adjustment Cycle

The timing of the cultural adjustment cycle varies by person, the length of time abroad, and how involved you get in the culture. Some never go through the cycle because they don't fully engage in the host culture. The experts say that the same thing happens to everyone: Peace Corps volunteers, diplomats, missionaries, soldiers, and foreign students. It happens because it's never easy to live in a new environment.

- **Keep active:** Resist the temptation to withdraw. Keep regular hours. Always go to class. Plan to eat, sleep, and study at about the same time every day. Physical exercise is often the best medicine for anxiety and will help burn off frustration.
- **Be Aware of Alcohol Abuse:** Sometimes the temptation to use alcohol to cope with sadness, isolation, or shyness while abroad can become a true problem. Seek help from on-site staff if you feel you or a friend may have a problem with alcohol.
- **Explore:** Find a map, strike out on your own, and explore the territory. Observe people closely to pick up subtle nuances about the culture.
- **Visitors from home:** Time learning about your host country will be your most precious possession. If family or friends are planning to visit you, encourage them to wait until a scheduled break or the end of the program.
- **Evaluate your goals:** Remind yourself of the goals you set for the experience. If they were unrealistic, admit it.
- **Hobbies and outside activities:** Engage in hobbies or activities that interest you. Play chess in France, join a rowing team in Italy, play rugby in South Africa, or join a tea ceremony club in Japan.
- **Create Activities to Relax:** Find a place that is comfortable, where you can think and be away from people and culture for an hour or so. Make a cup of tea. Read a chapter of a book. Listen to music. Try to do some things that you enjoy every week.
- **Remember, all this is temporary:** Keep reminding yourself that you will get through this. The satisfaction that you have adjusted to the new culture will be its own reward.
- And above all, **Keep your sense of humor!** This is the most important piece of advice that we can give you. If you can do this, you can handle almost anything.

Keeping a Journal

Think of a journal as a scrapbook: the written and visual record of your experience abroad that you will have for years to come. There are so many ways to keep a journal. Don't worry about your writing. You can start now, before you leave, and continue after your return. No one we know has regretted keeping a journal, but many regret not doing it.

Reasons for Keeping a Journal

- to record your goals and personal agenda for your sojourn abroad
- to keep addresses and references you collect
- as a diary to record travel and daily routines
- as a vehicle for thinking through observation, reflection and analysis
- to vent feelings safely and then reevaluate once the initial anger, sadness, etc. has passed
- to assist in the cultural adaptation process
- to record your feelings when you come home

Hints on Journal Writing

- write as you would in a letter to a close friend
- provide a context for the stories you relate
- use and translate foreign words you learn
- tell stories; quote from the people you meet

Cultural Identity and the Global Citizen

What You Gain

You probably have a variety of expectations about your upcoming education abroad experience. For many, one outcome is knowledge gained about yourself, your cultural identity, and the transformation towards becoming a globalized citizen.

In learning about your host country's customs, worldviews, religions, communication styles, etc., you will also find yourself examining your own beliefs and values. You will begin to see *how you came to be who you are*. As you learn, you will adapt by combining elements of both cultures into your own value set.

The experience you have depends on many factors, including the cultural identity you bring to your experience. The way you look, speak, and dress; your religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, or whether you are physically challenged – all influence how you will approach the experience and how locals will react to you.

Besides getting the opportunity to learn about yourself and your host culture, living in a foreign culture and being an outsider gives you a great opportunity to learn what it's like to be different from the majority culture. If you have never had the experience of being part of a minority, you may gain greater understanding of peoples in the U.S. who are in this situation. These can be very powerful lessons.

We hope you will learn a lot about yourself, your host country and its peoples, and the U.S. in all of its wonderful diversity. We hope, too, that the knowledge you bring home as a world citizen will help you contribute to a country and a world in which we are all free to be different – where others, because they are different, are valued and celebrated.

Cultural Re-Adjustment

Strategies for Coping with Cultural Adjustment during Reentry to the U.S.

Be Reflective.

Give some thought to your return, to the types of intellectual and emotional changes that you have undergone as a result of your time abroad.

Understand the Needs of Others.

Be patient with your friends and family who are trying to understand your experiences. Listen to the changes they underwent while you were away.

Expect to Have Some Negative Feelings about Your "Home" Culture.

You are viewing it, perhaps for the first time, from the perspective of a foreigner. A common tendency is to be highly critical of shortcomings that you did not see before. Remember that there are positive and negative aspects of **all** cultures.

Accentuate the Positive.

Identify what you like about both cultures and try to incorporate the best aspects of these into your life.

Plug in to International Activities.

Find ways to keep the "international" part of you alive. Become involved in clubs or activities on campus or in the community to maintain your language skills, do volunteer work with ethnic or multicultural groups to use your cross-cultural skills, or host a foreign student. Check out the **International Activities in the Denver/Boulder Area** page on our website.

Use Your Skills.

Use the cross-cultural adaptation skills you developed abroad – e.g. keep active, maintain a sense of humor, find a support group, expect differences, allow yourself to make mistakes, and stay flexible during your readjustment home.

Set Goals for Your Development.

Set some long-term goals, which may involve finding ways to return abroad. Both Education Abroad and [Career Services](#) on campus have reference libraries with information on working abroad. Check the [Going Abroad Again](#) page for more information.

[Check Out What's Up with Culture?](#)

This is an interactive program to support and enhance an education abroad student's ability to make successful cultural adjustments. Sections 3 and higher of Module 2 are for returning students. We strongly recommend it.

Money Matters

Checklist of Money Matters

- Familiarize yourself with exchange rates. You can find helpful currency information at sites like <http://www.x-rates.com/>, <http://xe.com>, and <http://oanda.com>.
- Establish a back-up plan for accessing funds if the amount you initially budget is insufficient.
- Plan to have multiple sources of money available while abroad. This ensures that if a problem arises with an account or card, you have access to other funds. Forms of money to consider:
 - **ATM/debit cards:** In most countries, ATM machines are the easiest way to access cash, though they may not always be available or take your card. (Be aware of potential scams around ATM machines in all countries you are visiting.) Exchange rates are generally pretty good, but there may be transaction fees for each use. VISA and MasterCard have good networks overseas. Both companies have ATM locators on their websites: [http://www.visa.com/atmlocator/index.jsp?country=US#\(page:home\)](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator/index.jsp?country=US#(page:home)) <http://www.mastercard.us/cardholder-services/atm-locator.html>
 - **Cash:** Take some of your host country's currency with you (maybe \$100 worth). This way, you will have cash handy when you arrive if paying for entry fees through customs or a taxi from the airport. However, do not exchange most of your money before you leave the U.S.; you usually get the best exchange rates in your host country.
 - **Traveler's checks:** Use of these is much less common. Traveler's checks are safe because they are replaceable if lost or stolen, but they are less convenient because you can only cash them at certain locations. Be sure to check into fees to comparatively shop if you decide to use them.
- Never carry large sums of cash with you or leave cash in an insecure place.
- Call your banks for the credit card and ATM cards you will use while abroad:
 - Give them the dates and general locations for your trip so that the bank will not register charges abroad and freeze your accounts.
 - Be sure to arrange for your monthly bills to be paid.
 - Lastly, inquire about the fees associated with charges and ATM withdrawals abroad, including surcharges for cash advances and purchases. You may find that these fees are substantial, in which case you may want to comparatively shop as some banks offer better rates for international charges than others. Questions you should ask include:
 - Do you need a new PIN? (Ensure you have a four-digit PIN that works overseas.)
 - What is the transaction fee?
 - What is the daily limit for withdrawals?
 - What networks does it have access to?
 - Is there a currency exchange fee? How much is this fee?

Transferring Funds Overseas

Some ways to receive funds from home after you have left:

- Direct deposits into a bank account to which you have access via an ATM card.
- International money orders or international postal money orders. Postal money orders are purchased and cashed at Post Offices and are inexpensive.
- Cashier's checks in the currency of the host country. These can be purchased at many banks, but there is usually a service charge associated with this purchase.
- In case of emergencies, money can be wired to a bank in your host city. This is expensive, for both senders and receivers, but the funds usually arrive in 48 to 72 hours (verify with the bank). The person wiring the funds will need the name and address of the bank you want to use. The money is then wired in your name, and you present your passport to pick it up.
- The State Department will send money to citizens overseas from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. Call (202) 501-4444 or go to: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies/financial-assistance.html>

General Travel Resources

Learning more about your host country before you leave is a great idea, both for your own understanding and to make a good impression on the locals.

Print Resources

- ***The Silent Language, The Hidden Dimension, or Beyond Culture***, three books by Edward T. Hall. These are classic books about cross cultural interactions.
- ***Safety & Security for Women Who Travel***, Sheila Swan and Peter Laufer, Travelers' Tales Guides, Incorporated, 1998
- ***The Lonely Planet and Let's Go travel guides***. These guides have practical information for traveling on a student budget.
- ***The Back Door*** travel guides by [Rick Steves](#). Books on budget travel that provide excellent advice about how you can learn about the places you visit.

Online Resources

- **CU Boulder Libraries - Chinook On-line Catalog**. Norlin Library has resources to help you learn about your host country and city, including magazines and newspapers. Many resources are electronic and you can access them even after leaving Boulder.
- Guides for all countries of the world are now available through the Government Information Library and can be accessed directly from the [Government Information website](#).
- The [U.S. Department of State](#) web site provides information on passports, travel safety, and more.
- [U.S. Study Abroad Office](#) (the U.S. Department of State's study-abroad specific information and resources).
- [U.S. Department of State Students Abroad](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides recommended vaccinations and health precautions for travelers.
- [Overseas Security Advisory Council \(OSAC\)](#) "[Crime & Safety Reports](#)" for each country.
- [The Lonely Planet](#), [Let's Go](#) and [Rough Guides](#) travel guides. These guides have practical information for traveling on a student budget.
- [The Base Trip](#) has a number of helpful travel tips no matter where you are headed.
- [Nomadic Matt](#) is a website with tips on economical travel.
- [Transitions Abroad](#) is a journal with excellent resources and articles on study, work, and educational travel abroad.
- [The University of Michigan Work Abroad](#) page is a good resource if you are preparing to intern abroad.
- [The Electronic Embassy](#) is a frequently updated site that provides direct links to home pages of consulates and embassies. It has information on visa requirements, study, work and travel.
- [Ethical Traveler](#) is a grass-roots alliance with information about being an environmentally conscious traveler, being a good Ambassador abroad, and more.