



## Pre-Departure Orientation Handbook

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### Other Documents Enclosed in the Packet

- Orientation Agenda
- GeoBlue Benefits Pamphlet
- Social Media Information
- Common Student Questions

Office of Education Abroad  
Plaster Student Union, 209  
901 S. National Ave  
Springfield, MO 65897  
(417) 836-6368

[educationabroad@missouristate.edu](mailto:educationabroad@missouristate.edu)

# ACADEMICS: THE IMPORTANT STUFF

## SAP Placeholder Class

Register yourself with the SAP placeholder class according to the instructions sent to you by Morgan Marler. It is important for you to be enrolled in the SAP placeholder course because this verifies with Missouri State that you are a student, which prompts Missouri State to release your financial aid and scholarships to your account, and also enables you to register for upcoming courses.

## Education Abroad Course Credit Transfer

Students on all programs must have their courses approved by the appropriate academic department in order to transfer the course as specific Missouri State University courses.

- Courses without pre-approval will transfer as GEN 000 (general elective credit).
- All courses will transfer as pass/not pass, meaning you will not receive a letter grade for your courses taken abroad (unless you have spoken with us about them transferring differently).
- Your GPA will not be affected by credit taken abroad. It will remain the same as it is prior to going abroad.

### Before You Go and/or After You Arrive:

Submit your Pre-Approval Credit Transfer Requests through your My Missouri State Account. (*Remember: you may register for classes after you arrive and, therefore, may have to make changes.*) To do this, please:

1. Log into your My Missouri State and click on the Request Transfer Credit Pre-Approval Link under the Registration Tab.
2. Follow the instructions for completing a pre-approval request for each course—including copying and pasting course descriptions, syllabi, or URL info of the courses you intend to take.
3. Select the Missouri State course code that you are requesting the course to transfer as.
4. Click SUBMIT to send your request(s) to the appropriate academic department.
5. Check your pre-approvals in your advising notes once the department head confirms your request.

### Before You Return:

1. Make sure arrangements have been made to send your host institution transcript back to the Office of Education Abroad or International Business Programs Office (**DO NOT SEND TO ADMISSIONS**):

#### Missouri State University Office of Education Abroad

Plaster Student Union, 209  
901 S. National Ave  
Springfield, MO 65897 USA

#### International Business Programs

Glass Hall 103  
901 S. National Ave.  
Springfield, MO 65897 USA

2. If you change your classes while abroad to courses that were not pre-approved and you would like them to be approved as specific Missouri State courses, follow the pre-approval steps listed above and notify Education Abroad of any changes you are requesting to your original pre-approvals.

**\*\*\* Always keep your class syllabi, written assignments, exams, notes, textbooks, and documents in case you need to show the work for your classes entailed for post-approval.**

## PASSPORT AND VISA INFORMATION *TAKE CARE OF THIS ASAP!*

If you do not have a passport, you need to get one immediately. Education Abroad must have a copy of your passport on file in the event of an emergency. Passport information can be found on the U.S. Department of State's website:

<http://travel.state.gov/passport>

Be sure to check the expiration date of your passport. Many countries will not allow entry or exit if your passport is within six months of expiration.

Visa applications and requirements are different for each country. A listing of foreign embassies/consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website: <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/>. Make sure that you allow plenty of time to obtain a VISA (if your country requires one) because you will have to send your passport, along with your VISA application, to the Consulate. Although VISA applications vary, they all *generally* require your passport, letter of acceptance from your host university, proof of financial stability, residential address in the host country, proof of insurance, and a processing fee. Two companies that specialize in helping students obtain visas (for a fee) are *PerryVisa* and *TraVisa*. However, some program providers offer visa support. We recommend contacting your program providers at the beginning of your visa process.

Remember, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure your travel documents are up to date and complete prior to leaving. Do not wait until the last minute; many visa applications can take 6+ weeks and may require you to appear in person before the Consulate (often in Chicago).

## PROGRAM FEES

Program fees will be posted on your Missouri State Account.

### ISEP Student Expected Fees

- Exchange fee \$200
- 15 credit hours + Student Service Fees \$4,404
- Housing + Meals \$4,434

### Other Students Expected Fees

- International Programs Academic Program Fee: \$300
- Students will pay other fees to the program provider directly, unless the student has filled out the payment deferral form.

# STAYING HEALTHY WHILE ABROAD

Good health is the prerequisite to an enjoyable stay abroad. You WILL be exposed to unfamiliar climates, unusual foods, different medicines, and unique health care systems. A few preliminary precautions can spare you a good deal of unpleasantness.

## Helpful Hints to Ensure that You Stay Healthy While Abroad

- Monitor your health. Do not run yourself into the ground trying to see and do everything. Catching a common cold can easily ruin a trip!
- Eat a well-balanced diet and watch what you eat when travelling. If you are travelling to countries other than your host country, there might be concerns with the safety of water, fresh fruit, vegetables, etc. Check guidebooks or YouTube channels before you go, but do not let paranoia keep you from sampling amazing local food. Use common sense and pack Imodium & Pepto Bismol just in case!
- Take measures to reduce the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Intimate contact could expose you to different bacteria or viruses that could lead to infection or contraction of STDs, including HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B.
- If you become ill and need medication, talk to a pharmacist. They may not give you what you expect, but it is probably what everyone in that country uses. It is always a good idea to bring someone who can translate your needs to the pharmacist, or use the GeoBlue app.
- Medical and dental checkups prior to your departure are a must! It is a good idea to review your travel plans with your personal physician. *Remember: only your physician knows your personal medical history and can advise you if your situation warrants alteration of the general preventive guidelines outlined here. Sometimes, health statements from your doctor are required to obtain a visa to enter your host country.*

## Vaccinations and Inoculations

Consult your physician to find out about specific inoculations that may be required to enter your host country or countries. You may also consult the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (<http://www.cdc.gov/>) or the World Health Organization (WHO) (<http://www.who.int/>). Students who have paid their health fee in full can also receive the travel consultation at no cost through Magers Health and Wellness Center. Inoculations are also available at Magers, however, they typically come at an additional cost.

## Helpful Websites for Travelers

Center for Disease Control: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

Magers Health and Wellness: <http://health.missouristate.edu/travel.htm>

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind: Medical care abroad could be much different than in the United States! Most pharmacies are NOT open 24 hours a day as they are in the United States.**

# HEALTH INSURANCE: GEOBLUE

Obtaining medical treatment and hospital care abroad can be expensive, and medical evacuation to the U.S. can cost more than \$100,000. Costs for political and/or natural disaster evacuation courtesy of the U.S. Embassy are later billed to you upon your safe return. The following addresses the insurance guidelines and emergency procedures.

## Education Abroad Student Health Insurance

Even though you may carry a personal health insurance plan, Missouri State University requires all students studying abroad be insured through GeoBlue Worldwide Insurance. Even if you are insured by another policy, there are no exceptions and the university will not waive the GeoBlue Education Abroad student insurance requirement.

This insurance has a **\$0 deductible** for in-network providers around the world, and supports political, natural disaster, emergency medical evacuation, and repatriation. You can also choose to enroll your parents so that they may assist you with accessing information in the event of an emergency.

The Office of Education Abroad will enroll you in the service and you will receive an email prompting you to complete your GeoBlue registration online. Your GeoBlue insurance will begin on your official program arrival date and conclude on your final examination day.

If you intend to travel prior to or after your program, Education Abroad will provide you with a special link to extend your coverage. If you need to extend your arrival coverage **and** your departure coverage, you will need to submit two separate extension requests with GeoBlue.

GeoBlue also has a mobile smartphone app which provides:

- Directory of in-network providers in every country
- Appointment Request
- Find your Medication, Find your Pharmacy Directory
- Translation of medical phrases and terminology

If you receive any medical services as a result of becoming ill, having a medical emergency, or sustaining an injury, you need to submit a claim to the GeoBlue in order to get reimbursed for your medical expenses. This document can be found on <http://www.GeoBluestudents.com> and logging in to your benefits portal.

## In Case of Emergency

If you encounter a medical emergency while abroad, please go to the nearest physician and/or hospital and contact GeoBlue's 24-hour Call Center (call collect): +1-610-254-8771

## In Case of a Non-Emergency

If you need to see a doctor or specialist while traveling, contact GeoBlue's Call Center (call collect) to schedule an appointment and arrange payment to the nearest in-network doctor or hospital: +1-610-254-8771

Please refer to the GeoBlue packets included in your Pre-Departure Orientation packet for more information. You may also visit <http://www.GeoBluestudents.com>. Parents can visit <http://www.GeoBlueparents.com> and use their student's enrollment number to access non-HIPAA protected information.

**\*\*\* Know the country or school's policy on health care services. Be aware that some foreign health care providers (doctors and hospitals) may require cash payment prior to providing service. GeoBlue has a list of medical practitioners, clinics, and specialists who are approved to use with a zero deductible.**

## COVID-19 and Education Abroad *Subject to change!!*

COVID is viewed differently in different cultures. We encourage you to be *respectful learners* as you see how other cultures interact with this topic. Remember, you are representing MSU and the United States when you are abroad! Understand that COVID could limit some international travel options due to quarantine. Be sure to research carefully before choosing to travel internationally. Lastly, you are responsible for keeping up to date with the vaccine and travel requirements of your country. See below for further information.

### Do I need to get vaccinated?

#### 1. Missouri State University Vaccination Requirements

Missouri State University does not require students, faculty, or staff to be vaccinated. However, the University strongly recommends that our community members are vaccinated. MSU offers a Student Vaccination Incentive Program and an Employee Vaccination Incentive Program. Magers Health and Wellness Center has vaccination appointments available. The Office of Education Abroad's vaccine policy aligns with MSU's policy.

#### 2. Host Country Vaccination Requirements

If a student wishes to travel without a vaccine, the student needs to confirm the requirements of the country(s) in which they desire to travel. Students should look at the Department of State website, the Center for Disease Control website, as well as the embassy website in their host country in order to determine the vaccination and travel requirements related to COVID-19.

#### 3. U.S. government requirement for re-entry to the United States

All air passengers entering the United States (including U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Residents) must present a negative COVID-19 test, taken no more than one day before departure or proof of recovery from the virus within the last 90 days. Airlines must confirm the negative test result or proof of recovery for all passengers two years of age and over prior to boarding. Airlines must deny boarding of passengers who do not provide documentation of a negative test or recovery. If a student tests positive for COVID, they are responsible for the cost of quarantine and amended travel plans back to the States.

#### 4. Program Requirements

Students traveling with an affiliate or exchange provider must adhere to the rules of the provider. If a student wishes to travel without a COVID vaccination, the student needs to read and understand the policies of the program provider they intend to travel with. Included in this are the requirements for the host institution. Students can either find this information on their program provider website or reach out to the program and ask directly.

#### How can I be safe while traveling during COVID?

GeoBlue does an incredible job partnering with MSU students to provide services. If you would like a little bit of extra information about GeoBlue, specifically relating to their COVID policies, please see their “COVID-19: What to Know Before You Travel” flyer.

#### What if I have more questions?

Please see the “Health and Safety While Abroad” web page for any further questions about MSU’s policies. Elizabeth Strong, the Director of Education Abroad, is also available for questions or conversations about education abroad health and safety protocol.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Education Abroad Emergency Response Plan is a 57 page document that provides guidelines for emergencies abroad and is intended to complement the University’s Emergency Response Plan which is focused on home-based campus emergencies. In the case of an emergency, please contact Education Abroad staff immediately via email, phone, or social media to activate our emergency plan. The health and safety of our students is our number one priority. Education Abroad Staff constantly monitors world events and contacts students during a time of crisis. Students are expected to respond immediately if they receive an email from Education Abroad that has the subject line “URGENT.”

## MEDICATIONS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

#### Medical Records

While abroad, consider keeping personal medical records with you to be used in case of an accident or illness. Carry these documents in a place that is both secure and accessible by you at all times while traveling. A good medical record contains:

- ALL medicines you are taking (for both physical and mental health)
- Identifies any chronic ailments and allergies
- Your immunization history, blood type, eyeglass prescription
- Personal physician and GeoBlue health insurance information

### Medic Alert Emblem

If you have a pre-existing condition, you may choose to wear a Medic Alert emblem (recognized internationally). For more information, contact the MedicAlert Foundation International at 1-800-344-3226 or visit their website: (<http://www.medicalert.org/>).

### Prescription Medicines

If you take medication, ensure that it is available in your host country and bring copies of the prescription for the generic name of the drug. GeoBlue and the CDC website are great resources for finding this information.

In developed countries, you may only need to take an initial supply of medication; in most developing countries; however, you will want to take a supply that will last your entire stay. Your doctor may also recommend medications to bring along if they think you might be susceptible to a recurrence of a recent illness, infection, or allergy.

### Syringes

Syringes can be construed as drug paraphernalia. Bring a doctor's note if it is necessary for you to bring them (i.e. if you are diabetic or require frequent medication by injection, as for allergies).

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind: Any medications being carried overseas should be left in their original, clearly labeled containers. If you have any over-the-counter remedies that you use, consider taking a supply with you in case it is not available in your host country. If you wear eyeglasses or contacts, take an extra pair with you. Pack contacts and extra eyeglasses in your carry-on luggage so they will be available in case your checked luggage is lost. To be extra secure, pack a backup supply of medications and eyewear in your checked luggage.**

**Women: If you are taking an oral contraceptive or using another prescription birth control method, please plan on packing enough supply of the contraceptive to last the entirety of your program.**

**Check with the embassy of the country you are visiting to make sure the medications you intend to bring are not considered to be illegal narcotics!**

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

The Office of Education Abroad and Missouri State University do NOT endorse the use of illegal drugs and alcohol. Nevertheless, we are aware that students may choose to participate in these activities, whether they are illegal or not in your host country. Should you choose to use alcohol or drugs, please abide by these tips:

- **Know the laws.** Know what is legal, illegal, decriminalized, banned; and know what these terms mean. Be aware of age limits and requirements. Ignorance of the law will NOT excuse you from facing serious legal action in your host country.
- **Know your rights.** As an American citizen, you need to know your rights in other countries. Being an American does NOT give you any sort of immunity from enforcement if you break the law in another country. Know who you can call (embassies, lawyers, parents) in case of an arrest.
- **Be safe.** Safety should be the number-one concern of all students at all times.
- **Know your limits.** It is unwise to drink or take drugs in high quantities while out in an unfamiliar place. Know your limits and do not cross them, no matter what.



- **Keep your inhibitions.** Remember, these substances will lower your inhibitions. Do not do anything you may regret once you sober up.
- **Look out for your friends.** Just as you expect them to look out after you, it is important to look out for your friends.
- **Be prepared.** Understand that there are consequences for every action you take, and that you could end up in trouble or come home with a substance use problem. Drugs will stay in your system for an extended period of time, so be aware of how this may affect your eligibility for a job, playing sports, etc.
- **Know the customs.** Even if you are being safe with your habits, consider the culture of your host country. The saying goes, *“Europeans drink to socialize, Americans drink to get drunk.”* Know how to conduct yourself without causing a scene.
- **Know what you can and cannot bring back to the U.S.** Obviously, you will not be able to bring back illegal substances to the United States, but be aware that if you are not of drinking age in the U.S., you cannot bring back alcohol as a souvenir. Know how much you are allowed to bring back, and make sure you are not bringing back anything that is not legal (i.e. absinthe).
- **Always use common sense!**

### Buying Prescription Drugs Abroad

Some travelers may be interested in buying cheap prescription drugs while abroad. Know U.S. FDA requirements on all drugs and understand that there are certain drugs you can buy abroad but are illegal in the United States. Be leery of buying prescription drugs or medications abroad!

## DIETARY PREFERENCES

If you need to adhere to a particular dietary lifestyle, it does not have to get in the way of having an enjoyable experience abroad! Make sure you know what will be available to you in your host country, and if you have concerns about food availability, pack extra snacks while you are travelling.

- You may find that maintaining a vegetarian diet abroad can be challenging if meat products are a staple of the local cuisine. Research the foods offered in your host country and be prepared to address these challenges with an open mind.
- You may wish to bring protein powder, vitamins, and other dietary supplements with you to ensure good nutrition while abroad.
- Talk to other students who have studied abroad and check out online resources. For example: If you are a vegetarian headed to Europe, check Rick Steve’s Graffiti Wall for information on traveling as a vegetarian in Europe.
- After you arrive at your host institution, ask your host coordinator or on-site staff if they have suggestions to help you maintain your dietary preference.
- You may need to find a tactful way to deal with social situations in which you are offered specially prepared meals that include meat. For example: Do you know how to say the word, “allergy” in your host country’s language?

- Make sure you know where to get sources of protein and learn to say those terms in your host language (tofu, beans, soy, nuts, etc.) as well.
- Know what kind of ethnic food you can eat—just like the United States, there are ethnic restaurants all over the world.
- If you follow a vegan diet, be aware that it may be more difficult to find enough “safe” food to eat. Be prepared to do most of your own cooking and learn ahead of time how to translate the difficult words in ingredient lists into the host language.

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind: If you are staying with a host family, be sure to indicate your dietary preferences ahead of time. It is better that your family understands your preferences before they go through the effort of preparing you meals that you cannot eat. This will ensure that you receive adequate meals and your host family's feelings do not get hurt!**

## SAFE TRAVEL ABROAD

It is your responsibility to know what to expect and behave safely so that your program or extra trips are not ruined by one bad decision. Be aware: Missouri State University students have computers, cameras, passports, and a number of other belongings stolen while abroad every semester. As an American traveler, you make an easy target, so use common sense.

### Money, Passport, and Personal Belongings

- Do not carry large amounts of cash around with you. Keep your passport and money in a wallet/pouch that can be worn *underneath your clothing*. Wearing a bag on the outside highlights where you keep money and valuables, which can easily be cut or ripped from your shoulder.
- Develop a plan for receiving emergency money abroad. For example, if your wallet (with your debit card) is stolen, how will your family wire you money.
- Your passport and other important documents should be guarded carefully at all times. Do not leave them in the outer flaps of your bags. Before leaving, make copies of the identification page of your passport. Keep this copy separate from your passport and carry it with you at all times. **If local law does not require you to keep your passport with you, carry only the photocopy of your passport when you are out and about and leave your passport in a secure place in your room.**
- Do not take valuable items on your program. Leave expensive jewelry and irreplaceable keepsakes at home with someone you trust.
- Always lock your windows and doors if you leave your apartment/room, even if you remain in the building.

### Know What to Do If You Lose Your Passport

You must report it immediately! If you are abroad, you will need to contact your onsite program coordinator and then go to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are in the United States or need help finding the nearest consulate abroad, call **1-877-4-USA-PPT** (1-877-487-2778) TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793 Passport Information is available **24 hours, 7**

**days a week.** Speak with a representative **Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., EST**, excluding federal holidays. *Once you report your passport as lost or stolen, it cannot be used, even if you find it later!*

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind: The same common sense you use at home applies while you are abroad. Be aware of your surroundings and keep your valuables concealed. Many foreign travelers fall victim to crimes simply because it is assumed they are carrying cash. Listen to the safety advice of your program coordinator and local residents. They will know the area better than any other source. If you should fall victim to crime, remember that your embassy is there to help you. Every embassy and consulate and a duty officer on-call around the clock to assist in an emergency.**

### **When Traveling**

- Make sure someone else knows your itinerary and contact information.
- Keep your eyes and hands on your bags at all times. Do not leave your bags unattended, even if you are just on the phone, reading a sign, or checking a train schedule.
- Be especially alert in crowds at train stations, crowded shopping areas, and tourist spots. Any place with a crowd is likely to be a place for thieves, pickpockets, and muggers.
- Lower the volume or remove your ear buds, so you can hear what is happening around you.
- When you stay at a hotel, make use of the safety deposit boxes that many hotels have. Leave your passport and any money you do not expect to need that day safely locked away.

### **Going Out at Night**

We often let our guard down when we are with people we know. Unfortunately, most sexual assaults or petty crimes involve people who “know” each other.

- Stay alert and trust your intuition. Avoid secluded or unknown places.
- Learn how to shout for help in your host country’s language (i.e. “Help, I’m being attacked! Call 911!”) Do not be afraid to use it. Learn the emergency services number of your host country.
- Be aware of the effects of alcohol and drugs. Alcohol and drugs impair judgment and increase violent behavior and also make you a target for predators.
- Do not go off alone with someone you do not know well or who makes you feel uncomfortable. Suggest staying with a group or going to a public place. Similarly, do not leave friends alone at parties, bars, or clubs by themselves.
- Always bring money for a taxi fare in case you need to get out of an uncomfortable situation and to a safer place.
- Be aware of what you are drinking and how much you are drinking. Never leave your drink unattended. Be supportive of other people's limits.
- Be aware that signals may not be interpreted clearly across cultures. Communicate your limits clearly. If someone is pressuring you to participate in sexual activities when you do not want to, be direct in saying NO.

### At Your Residence

- Be sensitive to bringing strangers into your host family's home or your apartment. If your roommates bring people over who make you uncomfortable, do not hesitate to talk to your resident director or program coordinator.
- If you observe a suspicious person or suspicious behavior, notify your resident director or the police immediately.
- Be cautious about posting personal contact information and your local resident address online.

### \*\*\* Keep in Mind:

***While it is alluring to want to see what all the noise is about down the street, avoid local demonstrations at all costs. These situations can become violent and dangerous. Sometimes, anti-American sentiments may be expressed, at which time you could become a visible target to an unruly mob.***

## Emergency Plans and U.S. Department of State Registration

Education Abroad ***strongly encourages*** all students traveling abroad to register themselves with the U.S. State Department. The U.S. State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is free and will be beneficial in the event of a crisis at home or abroad. Registering for the STEP program is very quick and easy, and can be done at [step.state.gov](http://step.state.gov).

In addition, it is important to review the information that appears on the Department of State's website about safe travel in your host country. You must consider the following:

- Plan how you will contact your family and how they will contact you if there is an emergency. Physically write down phone numbers and email addresses in case you become separated from your phone.
- Once abroad, give your on-site staff or program director your emergency contact number(s) so they can contact your family if there is an emergency.
- *Stay in touch with your family, Education Abroad staff, and/or on site staff on a regular basis.* The university or your family needs to know where you are going if/when you travel in case there is an emergency.
- Download the GeoBlue's mobile app or GeoBlue's website <http://www.GeoBluestudents.com>, before there is a medical emergency. Know how to contact local emergency services in your host country and in the countries to which you wish to travel.

## TITLE IX AND EDUCATION ABROAD

The Missouri State Title IX Office is available to you as a student, whether you are on the Missouri State campus or away. Should you have a question or concern about a Title IX situation, please contact Melissa Berry at [MBerry@MissouriState.edu](mailto:MBerry@MissouriState.edu). You are welcome to disclose as little, or as much, as you would like, and Title IX will offer assistance. The information you share is confidential and Title IX will offer support and resources, answer questions, and provide options for how to proceed.

## TRAVEL TIPS AND INFORMATION

Traveling is one of the greatest benefits of studying abroad—once you are at your destination, traveling to nearby countries or cities will be more accessible and less expensive. When you plan your trips, be sure to research the location and always find an in-depth map. Here are some helpful tips to follow while traveling abroad:

- Consider COVID. Some regions of the world will be much more open intercountry travel than others. Make sure you are researching the entry and travel requirements for COVID for each travel destination prior to leaving. It would be horrible to show up and not be able to leave the airport.
- Always, always, always check multiple websites. Do not skip over the airline or hotel’s site either—sometimes they have the best prices because they are competing with Internet travel sites.
- Talk to other people who have traveled where you will be going. Usually former Education Abroad participants or other students at your host institution can give you excellent advice.
- Take trains, they rock. Overnight trains are a good way to travel long distances and save time and money.
- Do not be afraid of hostels. If you plan to stay at them often, you may want to invest in a Hostel International membership.
- Buy a good guidebook. Make sure it has up to date maps and lots of tips on finding affordable accommodation. A good guidebook will list important places to see, things to do, and good places to stay. It should also include hours of operation, contact information, and costs.
  - If you are headed to Europe, Rick Steves’ website and guidebooks are unbeatable!
- Look for student discounts everywhere. It never hurts to ask, “Do you give a student discount?”
- Get a back-packing bag. It is easier to run for a train or a flight with a backpack than a rolling suitcase.
- Try not to eat around tourist areas. Franchise restaurants may be familiar (like Starbucks, McDonald’s, etc.) but the local cuisine can be much more delicious and inexpensive.
- When traveling, always pack light snacks—such as crackers or fruit—to help save money.
- Take a water bottle with you, but do not forget to empty it before you go through airport security.
- ALWAYS go through security before you eat, go to the bathroom, shop, or do anything else. Lines can be long and people often miss flights because they were hung up at a security checkpoint.
- Do not be afraid to get off the beaten path. (Just do not get lost or end up somewhere dangerous!) It is usually more interesting to see something other than key landmarks. Basically, live like a local.
- Try to visit a few art galleries and museums, but make time for other cultural experiences as well. Sometimes, eating cheese fondue with Swiss army guys can be much more rewarding and insightful than a history museum.

### Helpful Websites for Affordable Travel

- Google Flights // [www.google.com/flights](http://www.google.com/flights)
- Student Universe // [www.studentuniverse.com](http://www.studentuniverse.com)
- STA Travel // [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)
- Eurail (train pass) // [www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com)
- Rick Steves // [www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com)
- Lonely Planet // [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)
- Kayak // [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)
- Matador Network // [www.matadornetwork.com](http://www.matadornetwork.com)

- Cheap Flights // [www.cheapflights.com](http://www.cheapflights.com)
- Ryan Air (based in UK/Europe) // [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)
- Easy Jet (based in UK/Europe) // [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)
- Hopper (app that tracks flight prices) // [www.hopper.com](http://www.hopper.com)

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind: If you are looking for a place to eat, drink, or dance, ask a local your age. Most young people speak some English, and they will have a better idea of where the best food, music, or club scene is than a guidebook written by someone much older than you**

**Always let friends and family at home and in your host country know when you are traveling. Give them an itinerary and the contact information of where you will be staying. If there is an emergency, it will be easier for them to contact you. While you are traveling, use café or accommodation internet access to keep in touch with your friends and family. Also be sure to log any international travel with the STEP program.**

**When you get back to your host country, make sure to let your family know immediately so they know you are safe.**

**Make sure that you have kept up with your school work.**

### **Tips from Alumni**

We want you to have the time of your life while abroad. Here are some suggestions from our past alumni on how to make your experience great:

- *“Learn how to call the United States from the country to which you are going. A good source for this? [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com). Learn how to use your phone card from an overseas pay phone, cell phone, and landline. It may have different requirements for each.”*
- *“Research the local food and be sure to try something that is traditional in your host country. It is a great way to experience the culture. If a local offers to cook for you or to teach you how to make something, do your best to accept their offer.”*
- *“If someone you trust invites you home with them for a holiday or a weekend, it could be one of the most insightful experiences you will have in your host country. As long as it feels safe, we encourage you to go.”*
- *“Lock everything. Be a bit obsessive-compulsive about keeping your stuff safe. Computers, cameras, wallets, and passports are stolen daily. Do not get paranoid, but do be very careful!”*
- *“Know visa and passport requirements before you try to go to another country. For example, did you know that you have to have a visa to travel to Russia? Find out requirements at the U.S. Department of State website.”*
- *“Take a package of noodles or something like Ramen with you in your carry-on bag. When you finally get settled into your destination, it will be nice to have the option of eating something quick that you can make. Otherwise, you might be struggling to find your way around a new place to buy groceries or just find a restaurant.”*
- *“Know at least some of the language of the country you will live in/countries you will travel to. Even just asking someone in their native tongue if they speak English is more polite than assuming they understand English. (Knowing Thank you, Excuse me, Hello, and Goodbye is a good place to start.)”*

- *“Dating abroad is really fun, but stay safe and remember you do have to come home sometime!”*
- *“Pack as little as possible!”*

## COMMUNICATION WHILE ABROAD

When you are studying abroad, keeping in touch with family and friends will be different. With today’s technology, communicating is easier than ever! Here are some guidelines for staying in touch internationally:

There are some great and emerging internet-based phone and messaging services that are available for free. If you have a computer or smart phone and access to Wi-Fi, these are easy and cheap ways to communicate. You may have to teach your parents to use some of these, but it is worth it!

### **Recommended Applications:**

- WhatsApp (Most countries use this), WeChat (China), KaKao Talk (Korea)
- Facebook Messenger
- iMessage and Facetime (if all parties own Apple products)
- Zoom
- Social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter

Note: Some of these applications may need verification before you go abroad, so download and set them up before going abroad.

The Office of Education Abroad does not endorse any of these services specifically. These examples are for informational purposes only.

### **Follow Education Abroad Social Media (#GlobalBears)**

- Instagram: @mostate\_eduabroad
- Facebook: Missouri State University Office of Education Abroad
- Twitter: @educationabroadmsu

### **Cell Phones**

Your nationwide data may not be available or feasible abroad. If left on, you can rack up enormous roaming charges, so turn off your data! You can get an international plan in the U.S. and use it abroad, although it can be the most expensive communication option. Check with your cell phone provider before you leave to see what their options are, or you can purchase a plan from a different provider.

It may be easier to wait and buy a phone in your host country, especially since it will come with a charger compatible to the electrical power outlets in the host country. Avoid buying a phone that requires you to sign a contract. Pre-paid or “pay as you go” cell phones can be less hassle. Most overseas providers will require you to present your passport when purchasing a phone, so have it with you.

### International SIM Cards

If you want to just use your personal smart phone and it is SIM card compatible, purchasing a SIM card in your host country may be a better option. **This is usually more affordable than buying an international plan**, especially if you make friends in your host country and they want to call/text you. Cell phone providers, convenience stores, and supermarkets may sell SIM cards. Again, try to avoid signing a contract—using a refillable SIM card will ensure that you do not pay for more than you need.

If you choose to buy a SIM card, you will need a phone that works on the frequency of your host country. To find out if your current cell phone works, check the following: what frequency is used (GSM or CDMA), if your phone works on that frequency, *and if it is unlocked. If your phone will work and it is not unlocked, your provider might be willing to unlock it for you. Some providers will give you an unlock code for free, you just need to find the number to call.*

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind:**

***Wi-Fi is occasionally not as available abroad as it is in the U.S., so plan accordingly.***

***Try to limit yourself to only spending one hour a day communicating with your friends and family back home.***

## MONEY AND BUDGETING

The best things in life are free, but travel does not come cheap! It is advisable to follow these tips to make the most out of your money:

- **DO** plan a budget around the amount of money you are going to have. You may need to re-think this appropriately after a few weeks of living abroad.
- **DO** notify your bank and card companies that you will be abroad before you leave—tell them how long you are going to be gone and where you will be. Call your bank as soon as possible if cards are lost or stolen.
- **DO** expect to spend more money when you first arrive than at any other time. You will not know where to find bargains and you may need to stock up on toiletries, school supplies, groceries, etc.
- **DO** check the exchange rate often, as it may fluctuate.
- **DO** learn the currency, especially the coins, as quickly as you can. One easy way to spot a tourist or foreigner is if they know the money system. You will be less likely to be taken advantage of if you can learn it quickly.
- **DO** find out your bank's policy on international card use, whether it is in ATMs or in stores and restaurants.
- **DO** withdraw cash from ATMs for the most current exchange rate; however, only do this periodically (i.e. once a week or less) as you may be charged for international card use. ATMs can often be found at train stations and airports, and at most local banks.
- **DO** learn the name for "ATM" in your host country or host language as soon as you arrive.
- **DO** carry a driver's license for identification. Keep your student ID with you in case venues give student discounts.
- **DO** remember that Visa really is the most accepted credit card. Master Card, American Express, and Discover may not be as widely accepted. Consider bringing an emergency credit card with you.



- **DO NOT** carry large amounts of cash. Do not carry it with you and do not leave it in your room. Split your money up into multiple locations in case you are pick pocketed or one stash is stolen.
- **DO NOT** take all cards with you at all times. Keep one on you and one in your apartment if possible. Leave a copy of credit card numbers at home with a family member.
- **DO NOT** keep money and valuables in plain sight. Always keep these items in a locked suitcase or drawer when you are not in your apartment.
- **DO NOT** count money in public. Be as discreet as possible about the money you have with you.
- **DO NOT** forget to record your expenses. You do not want to be overdrawn abroad. Keep track of your accounts through online banking, but do not forget to log out so no one else sees your information.
- **DO NOT** take large amounts of money or other valuables out if you will be consuming alcohol or drugs. Make sure you ALWAYS bring some form of identification.

#### Helpful Exchange and Currency Sites:

- [www.exchangerate.com](http://www.exchangerate.com)
- [www.xe.com/](http://www.xe.com/)

## PACKING

When packing for your semester or year abroad, **PACK AS LIGHT POSSIBLE**. With luggage weight limits and fees, it is cumbersome to pack enough for 4+ months abroad. Here are a few tips to help minimize your packing. Much of this comes from our own study abroad experience.

#### Weight

- The lighter, the better. You never know where you are going to have to carry your luggage, and if you end up having to run through a crowded airport or a busy train station, you will be glad your suitcase is not too heavy.
- Whatever you take with you, you will have more than double coming back! Know the weight limits for your airline carrier and pack accordingly.
- Once packed, weigh your luggage to make sure it meets the limit. There is nothing more frustrating than sorting through your luggage in the middle of a busy airport trying to decide what to throw out.

#### Documents

- Make sure all important documents are with you in your carry-on luggage and put copies in your checked baggage. Have copies of your passport, visa/residence permit, program coordinator contact information, certification of acceptance, and emergency contact information with you.
- Make sure you leave copies of this information, plus credit cards and serial numbers (for MP3 players, laptops, cameras, etc.) with a trusted friend or family member at home.

## Clothing

- Lay out everything you think you need, and then remove half of it! You will NOT need everything you pack, and you do not want to take something you will only use once or twice. Plan on hand-washing small items like socks and underwear often.
- You do not need to wash all clothes after every wear. Get creative and layer clothing. Bring fewer pairs of pants; these can be worn several days in a row.
- You will probably want to buy clothes in your host country. It will help you fit in and makes a good souvenir when you return home. Consider taking only a few essential items and buying other items like accessories, hats, scarves, and even toiletries as you need them.

## Seasons

- Consider the seasons while you are gone. In the southern hemisphere, seasons are the opposite of what they are here. If you are going in the summer, only bring one sweatshirt or coat in case of cooler weather. You will not need to use it much and these items take up a lot of space.
- Search the web to find out about the weather in the region you will be traveling to.

## Dressing up

- Consider taking one “dressy” outfit, but chances are you will not need to wear it that often.
- For those participating in an internship, consider bringing more business wear. If possible, find out what the appropriate dress is for the company you will be working for.

## Shoes

- Shoes take up a lot of space and you will not need as many pairs as you think.
- We recommend taking a comfortable pair of walking shoes, a pair of sandals (for walking around the residence halls, etc.) and one nice pair of shoes. All shoes should be comfortable, as most of you will be doing quite a bit of walking during your time abroad.
- Flip flops are not as popular in Europe as they are in the U.S. Avoid wearing them in public.

## Electronics

- Other countries use different voltages and outlet prongs, so be sure to research the type(s) of both a **CONVERTER** (for voltage) and an **ADAPTER** (for outlet prongs) you will need for the countries you will visit.
- Bringing a laptop can be beneficial, but also a burden. Do not pack a laptop, expensive camera, or expensive electronics in your checked luggage. They could get lost, confiscated, broken, or stolen during flight. It is best to carry these items with you as you travel.
- If you travel during your semester with your expensive gadgets, you risk breaking, losing, or having them stolen. Always keep track of their whereabouts. Electronics are easy targets for petty theft.

## Extras

- Think in terms of what you can do *without*. Things like heavy coats and extra blankets may not be entirely necessary. Consider buying these items after you have gotten to your destination to see what you may

necessitate while you are there. The same goes for items such as hair dryers and curling irons, which will require different prongs for the outlet anyway.

- Remember, you cannot pack for every occasion! Only bring the must-haves (medicines, your favorite pair of jeans, your most comfortable shoes, etc). Try your best to live without all the unnecessary stuff.
- Do not worry about trying to pack enough school supplies to last you the semester. Most universities have a bookstore where you can purchase essentials like extra pens, paper, etc.

### Souvenirs

- Most of you will have souvenirs to bring home! Leave space in your luggage when you pack and expect to NOT bring certain items home. Many students will donate clothing they do not want anymore.
- Oftentimes student travelers will take one suitcase with them and purchase an additional “cheap” suitcase for souvenirs for the return flight home.

Recommended items for carry on	Recommended items for checked bag	Recommended items to leave
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID vaccination card</li> <li>• Passport/Visa</li> <li>• Admission Documents</li> <li>• Plane Tickets</li> <li>• Medication (in its original, labeled packaging)</li> <li>• Wallet</li> <li>• Travel Toiletries</li> <li>• Change of clothes</li> <li>• Adaptor/Converter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Durable outerwear (location dependent)</li> <li>• Clothing basics</li> <li>• Comfortable shoes</li> <li>• Small bag or backpack</li> <li>• Swimsuit</li> <li>• One formal outfit</li> <li>• Anything you cannot buy in host country</li> <li>• Gift(s) for your host family/friends abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally distinctive Gear (Fraternity/ Sorority)</li> <li>• Clothing requiring special care</li> <li>• Bulky Bedding</li> <li>• Irreplaceable items</li> <li>• Full size toiletries</li> </ul>

**\*\*\* Keep in Mind: Packing is not a one-day exploit. Be sure to give yourself a few weeks to set out items you may want to take and repack as many times as you need to. Some clothing sizes can vary in sizes and availability in other countries. We understand that it is difficult to pack for the unknown, but do not overburden yourself with creature comforts. You will be amazed with what you can live without when you are busy making new friends and traveling.**

**Remember, studying abroad is not a fashion statement. You will be amongst other international travelers, and no one will care about name brands. Besides, most fashion-conscious students enjoy purchasing essentials in their host country so that they can better assimilate into the culture.**

## Difference in Academics

Students should anticipate that the culture will influence the academic experience. Many students might be in classes with Americans, especially if the class is in English. However, the systems and expectations may still be rather different. A few things to keep in mind:

- Attendance— many institutions abroad take the stance that it is your responsibility to learn, therefore attendance is not mandatory
- Classroom Etiquette— Observe your peers or ask their insight into acceptable classroom behavior
- Grading— A variety of factors influence grades at MSU. This might not be the case at your institution. It not uncommon for grades to be based on just one or two exams or a final project

## CULTURE SHOCK – WHAT IS IT?

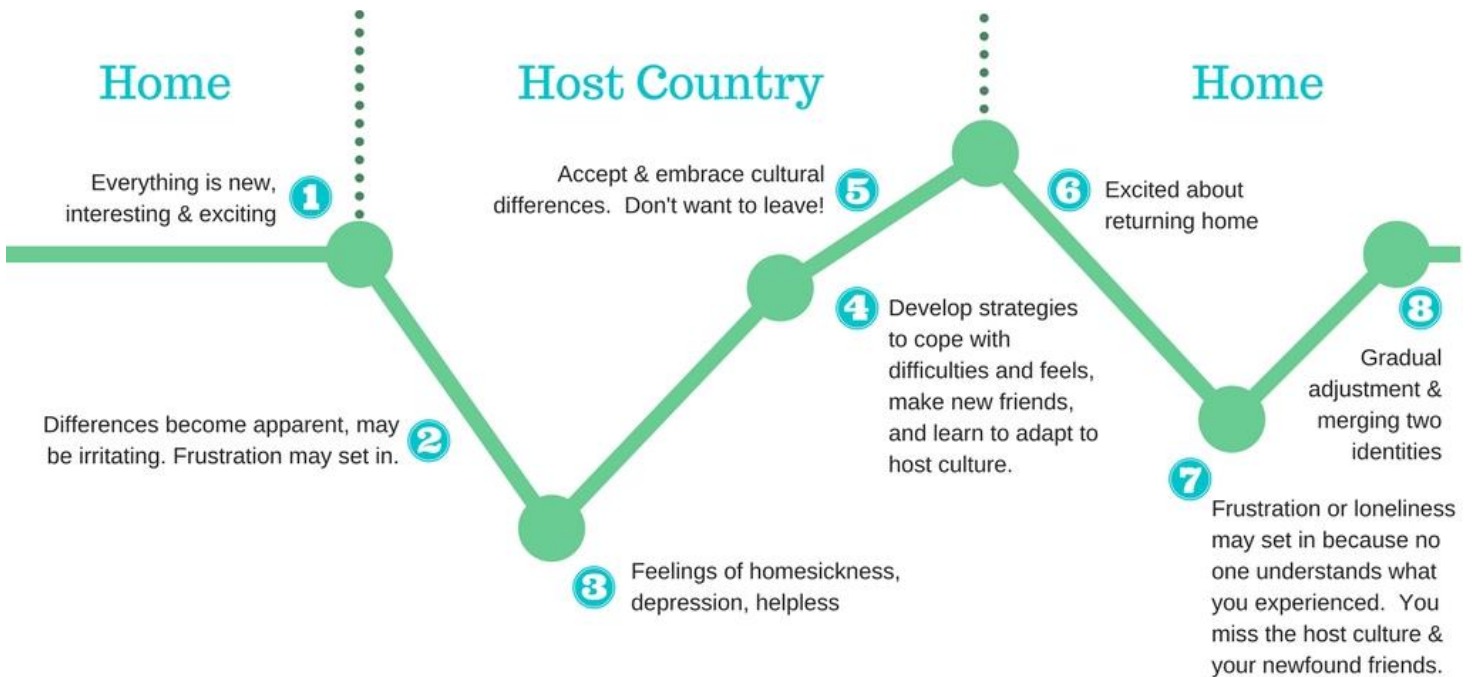
When we are faced with a way of living that we are not used to, frustrations begin to mount. Culture shock comes from trying to deal with those realities when you are not comfortable with the new environment you are living in. Do not worry, it happens to everyone.

**Define CULTURE. What does culture mean to you?**

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### The Culture Shock “W” – A Common Cycle for People Who Live Abroad



Be aware of religious beliefs, political beliefs, moral issues, gender issues, and racial concerns. The people you meet will have differing opinions than you, but respect them and listen to them anyway. As an international student living in another country, you may face discrimination through many forms. Discrimination based upon race, religion, sexual

orientation, etc. is still very apparent in some countries. As you make friends, they will be more eager to learn about these differences. This will help you cope with your new culture.

### Seeing the World through a New Lens

It is common for all people to believe that their way of doing things—or their way of seeing the world—is THE RIGHT way to do or see things. If we did not, then we would not do what we do, right? However, this leads us to being *ethnocentric* or believing that your way of doing things is better than everyone else's. For example, "Why do the British drive on the WRONG side of the road?" That is an ethnocentric belief because we are taught to believe there is a wrong side and right side to drive on! When in reality, there is no wrong side to the road, it is just a different way.

Try to pull away from your ethnocentric tendencies when observing a different culture. Do your best NOT to compare your new culture to your own. You will often hear students say, "In America, WE do it this way..." Making such comparisons will cause you to validate why your way is better. But doing so is not always positive. After all, you decided to go abroad because you wanted a different experience, right? So take things for what they are...just different.

The goal is to find a relativistic frame of mind. *Ethnorelative* means that "every culture explains itself." In other words, there is no wrong or right way to do things, everyone has a reason for doing what they do. It is not that the Japanese read "backwards;" their way works for them, so try it out!

### Expectations vs. Realities

Having expectations that exceed reality will NOT help you deal with cultural differences. In fact, this will make your adjustment to your host country more difficult. Try to shed the stereotypes you have of your host country before you go. For example, do all Australians like to surf and hang out on sunny beaches? Know what to truly expect over having an unrealistic idea of your host country and its people. Before you go, research the other culture to help you minimize any surprises. Read guidebooks, use online resources, talk to people who have lived there before.

### Coming Home

Another common affliction that you may encounter when you return home from studying abroad is **reverse culture shock**. Re-entry into America can leave you feeling depressed, disconnected, and disoriented. While you may feel as though you have missed out a lot, take time to reconnect with friends and family, sharing stories, and get involved with others who studied abroad. They will want to hear what you have experienced, but keep in mind that they may lose interest at times. Make scrapbooks or continue blogging about your experience. It will take time to get used to the idea of living at home again. Try to keep in touch with friends you have made abroad, and certainly consider going back to visit.

At Missouri State, you can also get involved with Education Abroad! We host Re-Entry Receptions to give you an opportunity to meet others who studied abroad and provide opportunities for you to share your experiences on campus! It is a great way to make friends who have had similar experiences to yours as well as an excellent mechanism for involving yourself with the international community on campus.

*\*Missouri State University, the Office of Education Abroad, and our affiliate programs do not tolerate discrimination. Consult MSU's Non-Discrimination Policy Statement, found at <[http://www.missouristate.edu/equity/nondiscrimination\\_statement.htm](http://www.missouristate.edu/equity/nondiscrimination_statement.htm)>.*



# IMPORTANT NUMBERS AND INFORMATION

Keep a record of all your important documents and numbers you might need to know. We have provided this list to get you started; if you travel away from your host school, keep a copy hidden in your bags or somewhere else safe.

## Office of Education Abroad Phone Numbers

Phone number: +1-417-836-6368

Fax: +1-417-836-6146

E-mail: [educationabroad@missouristate.edu](mailto:educationabroad@missouristate.edu)

Elizabeth Strong: [ElizabethStrong@missouristate.edu](mailto:ElizabethStrong@missouristate.edu)

Amy Huff: [AmyHuff@Missouristate.edu](mailto:AmyHuff@Missouristate.edu)

Cell Phone (for emergencies): +1-417-225-8430

## State Department Telephone Numbers

Overseas Citizen’s Services: +1-888-407-4747

Overseas Emergency: +1-202-501-4444

After Hours Duty Officer: +1-202-647-1512

## Missouri State University Numbers

Missouri State University Switchboard: +1-417-836-5000

Financial Aid Office: +1-417-836-5262

Emergency Dispatch: +1-417-836-5509

## GeoBlue Worldwide Insurance

Global Health and Safety Call Center: +1-610-254-8771

Toll free inside the U.S.: +1-800-257-4823

E-mail: [globalhealth@GeoBlueworldwide.com](mailto:globalhealth@GeoBlueworldwide.com)

***Fill out the following information to help keep you organized and prepared. Leave a copy with a trusted friend or family member back home.***

## Passport Information

Name as it appears on passport \_\_\_\_\_

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

Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Passport Number \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Issue \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Issue \_\_\_\_\_

**GeoBlue Worldwide Health Insurance Information**

Identification number \_\_\_\_\_

**Credit Card Information**

Type of Card \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Number on back \_\_\_\_\_

Number to call if lost/stolen \_\_\_\_\_

**Debit/Credit Card Information**

Type of Card \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Number on back \_\_\_\_\_

Number to call if lost/stolen \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Information**

Name of Education Abroad Program \_\_\_\_\_

Program/Host Site Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers/contact info \_\_\_\_\_

Host Institution Address \_\_\_\_\_

***Give a trusted friend or family member a copy of your flight itinerary and a photocopy of your passport. Notify a trusted friend or family member if you are making side trip before, during, or after your semester abroad. Someone needs to know where you are going, how long you will be gone, and when you will return.***





# Final Preparation Checklist



**Before you depart, MAKE SURE you take care of responsibilities listed on this checklist.**

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Education Abroad at (417) 836-6368 or email [EducationAbroad@MissouriState.edu](mailto:EducationAbroad@MissouriState.edu)

- I Submitted all sections of my online Education Abroad application, as well as any applications/supporting documents from program providers/host institutions
- I logged into my Education Abroad application and confirmed that my status is at "Ready for Departure"
- I attended the Pre-Departure Orientation with Education Abroad.
- I received my passport and visa insert/stamp (if needed) back from the embassy or consulate.
- I registered myself with the U.S. Department of State at <https://step.state.gov>
- I purchased and received confirmation of my airline ticket(s).
- I completed [Transfer Credit Preapprovals](#) for the courses I plan to take abroad
- I reviewed my GeoBlue insurance information and downloaded the GeoBlue app to my phone. (You will receive log in information for GeoBlue after your orientation)
- I provided a trusted friend or family member with my Important Numbers and Contact Information worksheet, arrival itinerary, copy of my passport, and copy of my visa, as well as any other information I think relevant.
- I have spoken to the [Financial Aid Office](#) and understand arrangements that I must make prior to departure, as well as how to pay my fees while abroad.
- I registered in the SAP placeholder class. (You will receive an email with the course code after orientation)
- I have contacted my phone provider and unlocked my phone for an international SIM card or found alternative phone plan options abroad.
- I met with my family doctor or a healthcare provider at Magers regarding prescription medications, inoculations, and any other issues of concern.
- I notified my landlord or ResLife of my education abroad plans, made arrangements to cancel my lease, break my ResLife Housing contract, or find alternative leasing arrangements.
- I notified my bank/credit card company that I am leaving the country, and have worked out the payment of my other financial obligations while I'm gone (rent, cell phone bill, utilities, etc.)
- I finalized my study abroad plans with my employer (if employed here in the U.S.)
- I made arrangements to leave my vehicle and other important belongings in a secure location, or with a trusted friend or family member
- I arranged for airport drop off and pick-up when I leave the U.S. and upon arrival to my host country (if necessary)
- I know the [Education Abroad website address](#) and my online login information so that I can easily refer to my application materials and important info while I'm abroad.

**Congratulations! If you have completed all the items on this sheet, you are ready to go!**

Remember to follow us on social media and watch out for a request to do an Insta takeover.