TIPS FOR STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS

Based on feedback from SHSU students who have studied abroad, below are some helpful things you may want to know before your trip, while abroad, and upon returning.

Before departure:

- **Obtain or update your passport.** $135 for first-time applicants; $110 for renewal (lasts 10 years). You can go to your local post office to apply.

- If you need a visa, you cannot apply for a visa until after you have been accepted by the abroad university/program. They will typically send you an acceptance letter and an information packet explaining how to apply for your visa. Typically you will need to set up an appointment at the nearest Consulate, then appear with the required documents. There are usually charges associated with this process, and vary between countries. Click [here](#) for visa requirements per country.

- Looking for cheap flights, hotels/hostels, car rentals, and rail passes? Check out STA Travel and [Student Universe](#).

- Need more financial aid? Check out our website [HERE](#) for more information on funding your study abroad program.

- Know your destination country's [monetary exchange rate](#) and call your bank and credit card companies so you are aware of any international fees when using your debit/credit cards abroad.

- Get in touch with your cell phone company to see about an international plan or if you’ll need to purchase a phone at your destination. Another option is to download an app ([Viber](#)) that allows you to call, text and share photos where there is Wi-Fi.

- You must have health insurance coverage while abroad. Call your insurance company beforehand to inquire about international coverage. Unless your study abroad program is providing health insurance for you, check out some other insurance companies for study abroad students. [CISI](#), [HTH Worldwide](#), and STA Travel.

- Doing a semester or year-long abroad? Consider getting the [ISIC](#) International Student Identity Card. Good for a year, you can get insurance coverage for $25 or more. The card can also be used as a debit card and gets you access to over 42,000 student benefits and discounts in more than 130 countries.

- Register in the [STEP Traveler Program](#) with the US Department of State in case of an emergency and to help you locate the nearest Embassy while abroad (helpful in case you lose your passport). This will also help you keep abreast of current events/safety [alerts](#) in the region to which you’ll be traveling.

- Pack lightly! On most flight you are only allowed one bag to check (50 pounds or lighter), one carry-on and one personal item. For more information on air travel tips, click [here](#).
Be familiar with the climate in your destination country. If it rains quite a bit, be prepared when deciding what to pack. Go here to look up the average temperature and rainfall in your destination country.

Give your family/friends contact information of the university where you will be studying, your lodging, and the name of your faculty or group leader. Also keep them informed of your whereabouts if you are traveling on weekends.

**While abroad:**

- Put your passport in a hotel safe or with your host family. Always carry a copy of your passport with you.
- Though it is important to keep in touch with family and friends back home, limit your calls and internet time. Immerse yourself in the culture and get to know the locals!
- Be aware of pick-pocketing. Don’t take any valuable items like jewelry. Be careful in buses, trains and subways. Don’t have anything in the front pocket of purses or backpacks.
- Blog (ex: Tumblr or Wordpress) or keep a personal journal. Try to write a little everyday and take pictures.
- Working while abroad is very dependent on the country and the type of visa that you get. It is not recommended that you depend on working while abroad to support yourself. You are in the country to study. However, if you are studying in Australia, Japan and South Korea, those countries are notable exceptions.
- When you are leaving your host country and returning to the States, be aware that you may have to pay exit fees. Set aside approximately $25 in the event you need to pay this fee.

**After Returning:**

- Help encourage others to attend study abroad programs by volunteering to present or chat with prospective students at SHSU Study Abroad Fairs & Info. Sessions. Contact Malin Hilmersson, the Study Abroad Coordinator, to get involved (malin@shsu.edu).
- Keep syllabi, assignments & tests from your course(s) abroad. You never know when you might need them!
- For students on exchange & independent programs, make sure your transcript from your university abroad is sent to Malin Hilmersson, the Study Abroad Coordinator so your grades can be entered. For exchange programs, “CR” for credit or “NC” for no credit will be entered. For independent programs, your grades will be coming in as transfer credit and the letter grade you earned abroad.