PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

A Guide for Muskingum’s Faculty-led Programs
Travel Preparations

Transportation to Airport of Departure:
For students on faculty-led programs, your faculty leader may arrange transportation to the airport of departure. Otherwise, it is your responsibility to arrange transportation to the airport of departure for the international flight.

NOTE: You should plan to arrive at the international terminal at least two (2) hours, if not more, before your flight departs. Have in hand your passport and other pertinent documents.

Packing Tips:
A wise person once said: “There is no such thing as taking too little– only taking too much!” The best advice is to travel light; most students admit they took too much when they went overseas. Bring extra money in order to buy clothes overseas. In general, your clothing should be comfortable and warm without being cumbersome– layers are the key to comfort. The type of clothing you pack depends on where you go are going.

Here are some suggestions (depending upon climate):
- basic scheme of coordinated colors to minimize number of clothes
- wash and wear shirts or blouses
- sweater(s)/sweatshirts
- 1-2 outfits for special events
- lined raincoats or other warm, waterproof coat
- warm scarf, hat, and gloves
- a strong, collapsible umbrella
- sturdy, comfortable pair of walking shoes that have been WELL BROKEN IN
- flip-flops for the shower
- sufficient underwear and socks (6-8 of each)
- swim suit
- pair of sweats for studying in your room and sleeping
- jeans (a student uniform in most countries just as they are here); corduroy and khaki pants are also recommended.
Other useful suggestions:

- A walkman with AM/FM or portable CD player. Take extra tapes/CDs that can be given away as gifts. Take a lot of batteries (they are usually expensive elsewhere).
- DO NOT TAKE VIDEOTAPES- the system will not be compatible to play them.
- A few of your favorite photos of your family and friends.
- An alarm clock (wind-up or battery-operated)
- A small pocket calculator for currency conversion, especially useful when traveling.
- A few small mementos for token gifts: something typically American or representative of the College or of the area in which you live in the U.S.
- A bar of soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, and a washcloth for the first few days.
- A few small Ziploc bags to store wet items (e.g., washcloth, slimy bar of soap)
- American cookbook, measuring cup
- Small flashlight
- Sewing kit
- Laundry soap, clothesline
- Small address book
- Padlock for locking luggage to overhead rack on trains

**CAUTION:** Do not take expensive jewelry or luxury items which would mark you as a worthwhile target for a casual thief or pickpocket. In fact, do not take anything that has sentimental value or that cannot be replaced!

**NOTE:** If you take any electrical devices (hair dryer, shaver, curling iron, contact lens disinfecting unit, etc.) they must be either dual-voltage (110 and 220 volts) or you will have to take along a voltage converter with adapter plugs (available in most large department stores). If you take a converter, make sure it is large enough to handle the wattage of the device you will use. [If you use a disinfecting unit for contact lenses, the conversion usually nullifies the shut-off timer; you may have to unplug the unit by hand.]

**Carry-on versus Checked luggage:**

Be sure to check with your travel agent or directly with the airline in order to determine any restrictions on baggage for an overseas flight. On the transatlantic flight, you will usually be allowed to check, free of charge, two pieces of luggage. Restrictions usually include overall size and/or weight of luggage. If you are taking a backpack with a frame, it might have to be checked as one of your hold luggage. The same may be true for a larger musical instrument.

**BEWARE:** The cost of checking excess baggage can get very expensive!

**NOTE:** Make a list of all that you pack- keep a copy at home. Do not forget to label each piece of luggage in and out.
**HINT:** You should pack a change of clothes and other daily-use items in your carry-on bag, in case your luggage is delayed for a day or so.

You will be allowed one piece of carry-on luggage. It will not be weighed, but it must fit under the seat in front of you or in an overhead storage bin. Also usually allowed on carry-on are: coat, briefcase or purse, camera, and reading material. If you need to buy new luggage, you should consider something that is lightweight, durable, and easy to handle— you will have to carry all of your luggage by yourself at times. It is usually better to take two pieces of luggage rather than a very large one.

**Custom’s Certificate of Registration:**
If you are taking any valuable items with you that are foreign-made and worth $400 or more (e.g., camera and accessories, watch/jewelry, etc) and you do not have a proof of purchase receipt, you should plan to register them with the U.S. Customs Office at the airport before you leave the country, in order to avoid having to pay duty on them when you return to the U.S. If you want to know more, consult “Know Before You Go” (http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel)

**A Word About Laptops:**
If you decide to take a laptop computer, you should inquire whether your computer can be converted for use in the country in question. You will need to guard very closely against theft, especially in airports— the best advice is to take your laptop in your carry-on luggage. Never leave your laptop, or any luggage, unattended!

**CAUTION:** If you plan to use your laptop on the plane, make sure that the tray table is not magnetized—that could destroy memory. It is also highly recommended that you insure your computer before you take it overseas.

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**TRAVELING SAFELY**

I want each of you to enjoy your study experience abroad to the maximum extent possible. Normal common sense should allow you to be able to travel safely with a minimum of unpleasantness; indeed, the odds are very much in your favor for an incident-free trip. Here are some suggestions for safety while living and traveling abroad:
• Carry passport, travelers' checks, money, and other important papers in a pouch around your neck or waist.
• Don't travel in any obvious groups; you will find it easier to meet local people and to organize trips and sightseeing in smaller gatherings.
• Always carry some local cash. Keep the equivalent of at least $50 cash in reserve while traveling.
• Travel by bus, train, local transportation, or car (but DO NOT HITCHHIKE).
• Travel with at least one other person. Leave the following with a Program Director: names of travelers, itinerary (with contact points and phone numbers), mode of travel, dates of departure and return.
• Don't leave money, tickets, passport, and other valuables in a hotel room while you are out.
• Keep a low profile in demeanor and dress. Try to dress similarly to those around you; avoid clothes that obviously call attention to yourself. Keep jewelry concealed—it's best to wear little or none.
• Do not be free with information about other students. Do not give out your or anyone else's address or telephone number to strangers. Don't give away your class or field trip schedule.
• Women should carry purses in a secure manner to prevent snatch-and-run type thievery. To guard against thieves on motorcycles, walk on the inside of sidewalks and carry your purse on the side away from the street.
• Be especially careful to be polite, low-key, and sensitive to local customs; always observe signs and regulations in public places.
• Speak the local language whenever possible.
• Whether you are seeking or trying to avoid other Americans, the student guidebooks are generally a good source of information.

Avoid the following:

• Controversial discussions/situations in public places such as pubs
• Street gatherings, demonstrations, picketers, etc.
• Dangerous areas, shortcuts, narrow alleys, or poorly lit streets
• Walking around in a large group speaking English
• Rock concerts and public events characterized by crowd excitement

At times of heightened political, religious, or ethnic tensions, be particularly careful in:

• Identifiable American institutions such as Embassies, American Express, McDonald's, Hard Rock Cafes, discotheques, and other places such as bars and restaurants identified with Americans or where Americans usually gather
• Military and diplomatic installations; war memorials
• Highly visible/popularly frequented synagogues
• Train stations and airports; do not hang around ticket offices or airline counters—go quickly to your train or the lounges beyond the passport controls.

Some advice concerning terrorism:

Be especially careful to help maintain security both at your study site and while traveling. Because terrorist actions are usually preceded by a surveillance period, the U.S. State Department asks all American citizens “to be alert to anyone who might appear to be following them, or anyone whom they notice in the same place repeatedly, or anything unusual near their vehicles, workplaces, or locations frequented by Americans. Any unusual activity of this sort should be reported to local police.”

Remember that terrorist attacks are usually planned months in advance. They often involve innocent accomplices. Students in foreign countries are considered easy to recruit. Be cautious when you meet new people; do not readily give your address, your telephone number, or those of your study site.

Further recommendations when traveling:

• Do not accept to carry, look after, or store any package, parcel, or suitcase for anyone.
• Do not borrow suitcases; make sure that nobody has put anything in your luggage. (Remember that a few years ago, a bomb found at Heathrow Airport in England had been planted in the bag of a young woman by her Arab boyfriend whom she had known for over a year.)
• Never accept to drive a car for someone else, especially across national borders.
• In public places remain alert; look around; get away from any package or bag which appears abandoned, and mention it to the employees or policemen.
• Do not leave your own bags unattended; not only may they be stolen, but also in some places they may be blown up by the police.
Personal Documents

Passport Information:
It is a good idea to make two copies of your passport. Give one to your family and carry the other with you. It's also a good idea to carry additional passport photos with you. Having a copy of your passport will help speed up the process of getting a new passport if yours should be lost or stolen. However, the best idea is to prevent losing your passport! Always be aware of where it is. Some travelers buy neck pouches that go around their necks. They can store their passports and money here.

ID Card:
Even though your school identification card will not be valid, it is a good idea to take it along to serve as a picture ID. The same can be said for a driver’s license.

Money Matters

Immediate Cash/Travel Funds:
You will probably need some ready cash before you arrive at your program. It is recommended that you have approximately $50 in cash and some in traveler’s checks. If you have a chance, it is also a good idea to purchase around $20 worth of local currency at your airport of departure in case you arrive when banks are closed.

Credit Cards/ATM Cards:
It is also a good idea to have a credit card (VISA and MasterCard are the most widely accepted) for larger purchases or for emergency funds while traveling- the credit card has to be in your own name.

HINT: If you use your credit card for cash advances, prepay the amount in the U.S. to avoid finance charges- consult the issuing bank for fees and restrictions.

NOTE: ATM's overseas will accept only cards that access checking accounts in the U.S. Check with your bank before you leave about transaction procedures and fees. [For the location of an ATM where you will study, check the ATM Locator: Http://www.visa.com/globalgateway/gg_selectcountrys.html]
Sending Money Overseas:
It is not always a good idea to send/wire money overseas; in some countries a percentage of each transaction is assessed. In addition, a charge will be assessed to convert the U.S. dollars to the local currency. Before you send money by wire transfer or bank draft in foreign currency, ask about the fees involved. Sometimes a personal check will work the best and be the cheapest. In most countries, however, it is still best to use an ATM card or, in certain instances to use a Visa or MasterCard to get a cash advance. See “Money Tips” (enclosed).

Health Issues

Medical/Dental/Eye Check-up:
Before departure, it is a good idea to have a dental and eye-care check-up in additional to the required medical exam. You do not want to start out with problems, and the care overseas will most likely be different than you are used to. Also read “Eight Tips to Stay Healthy Abroad” (enclosed).

Medical Records:
If you have a pre-existing condition, it might be a good idea to take along a copy of your medical records-check with your family physician.

Immunizations/Inoculations:
Even if the host country may not require immunizations, it is strongly recommended that you consult with the campus Health Center and/or your personal physician to make sure that all of your routine inoculations are up-to-date. You may also want to check the web site of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in regard to other types of inoculations or medicines that are advisable (www.cdc.gov/travel/).

Prescription Drugs:
If you need to take prescription (or even non-prescription) drugs/antibiotics with you, make sure they are in the original containers labeled with your physician name and your name. If you carry narcotics or syringes, you should have a copy of the prescription as well as a statement from the prescribing physician explaining the need for the medication. If you have allergies, take your medication with you (preferably enough for the entire stay). You might also want to take along some cold medicines, anti-diarrhea and anti-fungal medicine, or others that you use for colds and flu. Women should also take a supply of medication, if they are prone to gynecological infections.
AIDS and International Travel:
Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a consequence of infection by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Currently, there is no vaccine to protect against infection with HIV, and there is no cure for AIDS. AIDS has been reported worldwide.

However, because HIV infection and AIDS are globally distributed, the risk to international travelers is determined less by their geographic destination than by their individual behavior. See “Aids and International Travel” (enclosed).

Health and Safety in Flight:
For safety and comfort, wear loose-fitting, natural-fiber clothing during flight. Do not wear snug-fitting or heeled footwear! It is helpful to do seat exercises, such as tapping your toes, or to walk in the aisles in order to maintain good circulation.

It is always advisable to sleep during long flights; you should also avoid alcoholic beverages in flight because they cause dehydration. Recycled air also has a drying effect, so you should drink non-alcoholic, bottled beverages regularly. If you require a special diet, be sure to notify the travel agency (or airline) at least 24 hours before departure.

Motion Sickness/Jet Lag:
If you suffer the effects of motion sickness or jet lag, inquire about methods to combat this problem—there are remedies in pill form or patches. Be sure to have with you any medicines you might need during the flight.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Arrival Procedures

Clearing Immigration:
Generally, upon arrival in another country, you will go through an immigration checkpoint and have your passport (with an enclosed visa stamp, where applicable) checked and stamped. Depending on the agreement that country and the U.S. have, you may also have to show other documents, such as “proof of study”, “acceptance letter”, and the like. In some cases, you may have to show “proof of finances” or even have to submit to an on-the-spot physical exam. Your study-abroad program will should provide you with the details before hand.

NOTE: Be very courteous when dealing with immigration officials; answer questions politely and seriously.
Clearing customs:
If you had to fill out a “Customs Declaration” form before landing, you will need to turn it in once you have cleared immigration. Upon exiting the customs area, you will usually need to choose between two routes: One for those with nothing to declare (green) and one for those who have items that need to be declared (red). Even if you had no goods to declare, you may have to declare how much money you are taking into the country. Be aware that you cannot be met by anyone until you have cleared customs.

Travel Connections from the Airport:
Your faculty leader will arrange travel connections from the airport. Please pay close attention to your itinerary so that you do not get left behind!

Legal Issues

The Law Overseas:
While you are overseas, you are subject to the laws of the country you are in. Legal protection and personal rights that you take for granted are often left behind when you leave the U.S. Furthermore, U.S. Embassies and Consulates are very limited in assistance they can provide overseas. Keep in mind as well that bail provisions are rare in other countries; in fact, pre-trial detention without bail is quite common. Moreover, prison conditions can often be deplorable in comparison to those in the U.S. Finally, the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” is not necessarily a tenet of legal systems worldwide. If you should find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a Consular Office immediately.