



PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

A Guide for Muskingum's Study
Abroad Students

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Things to remember:

- The Registrar's Office will contact you about class scheduling for the next semester.
- Student Life will contact you about room scheduling for the next year.
- Request your transcripts from your international institution before you return to Muskingum.
- Don't be afraid to contact me if you have any problems or questions.
- Make sure you register with the consulate when you arrive at your destination.



Travel Preparations

Transportation to Airport of Departure:

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. Due to increased security at most airports, please read “Security Tips for Air Travelers” prior to arriving at the airport (enclosed).

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 are going.

Here are some suggestions (depending upon climate):

- use a 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

Skill to Help Ease your Adjustment

- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Low goal/task orientation
- Open-mindedness
- Non-judgmentalness
- Empathy
- Communicativeness
- Flexibility; adaptability
- Curiosity
- Sense of humor
- Warmth in human relationships
- Motivation
- Self-reliance
- Strong sense of self
- Tolerance for differences
- Perceptiveness
- Ability to fail

Most Important Skills:

- **Sense of humor**
- **Low Goal/Task Orientation**
- **Ability to Fail**

The Four Stages:

1. Initial Euphoria
2. Irritability and Hostility
3. Gradual Adjustment
4. Adaptation or Biculturalism

Common Causes of Frustration:

1. The ambiguity of a particular situation
2. The actual situation not matching preconceived ideas of what it would be like
3. Unrealistic goals
4. Not being able to see results
5. Using wrong methods to achieve objectives

Symptoms of Culture Shock

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating or drinking
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Stereotyping of host nationals
- Hostility toward host nationals
- Unexplainable fits of weeping
- Physical ailments (psychosomatic illness)

- 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 University 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 light-

- South Africa
- The military build-up in Japan
- Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika
- The People's Republic of China
- A Palestinian homeland

What are your views on the role of the CIA and the FBI? How do they differ? Don't they compete, or overlap or even conflict with one another?

What is the American policy regarding the 1992 Unification of Europe?

What is the American policy regarding massive oil spills, like the Exxon accident in Alaska in 1989? What would the policy be for similar problems in foreign lands?

What is the American solution to the Iran problem? To world-wide terrorism? To the reduction of human rights in so many other nations?

Cultural Adjustment

Culture Shock

A term used to describe the more pronounced psychological disorientation most persons experience when they are immersed in another culture for more than a four month period.

It does not result from an event or a series of events. Instead, it results from the difference between the way you perceive things and the way things are perceived in your host culture.

This is a cumulative process! It does not occur suddenly or have one single cause.

What is the U.S. government doing about all the corporate buyouts and mergers? There seems to be a frenzy of corporate raids and what you call leveraged buyouts. Isn't that weakening your system?

While your recent administrations seem to favor freer trade, you still have strong pockets and waves of protectionism in America. Don't those people understand the economic inter-dependence that exists around the world today?

You say you don't like socialism. What is so wrong with it? Why wouldn't it be good for America?

Americans in the World Economy

America seems to use such a huge amount of energy supplies-big cars, comparatively low gasoline prices, and an endless stream of appliances. That forces prices up for countries like mine. Why can't America conserve more energy?

Your huge multinational companies seem to have created problems around the world- AT&T in Chile, Exxon in Alaska, Union Carbide in India. What is being done to control them?

I don't understand how you can have poverty and hunger and homelessness in the midst of such wealth. Why is this the case in America?

American Foreign Policy

1. Explain the sometimes controversial American position on the following issues:

- Nicaragua
- Panama
- The Middle East

weight, 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.

Hints About Shipping Luggage:

Should you decide to mail anything to yourself (such as winter clothing), be sure to indicate on the package that the contents are "USED CLOTHING FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY" in order to avoid custom's duty. Contact the U.S. Postal Service (or an international shipping service, such as UPS) about their shipping rates. The cheapest way to send anything is usually by sea, but that can take six to eight weeks.

NOTE: It is not advisable to ship large suitcases or trunks or even large boxes- check with the delivery service. And make sure that what you are shipping does not get there before you do!

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.

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.

Why is there this apparent hatred toward minorities: Hispanics, Indians (Native Americans), blacks, Asians? This is difficult for us to understand when we read history and learn that American was founded by dozens and dozens of different "minorities".

Americans seem to know very little about world geography-names, places, locations. Why is this?

Your newspapers do not carry much international news. How well-informed is the average American about international politics and current events?

I am thinking of sending my children to school in America but several things worry me: class demands seem geared to the "average" student; students seem to have so much freedom and independence; alcohol and drugs and sexual permissiveness seem so prevalent. What do you think?

American Government

I have difficulty understanding the differences between your Democrat and Republican political parties. What are the basic differences?

Your Congress and your President always seem to be squabbling and disagreeing with each other. And it seems to take so long to get things done. Why is that?

Your media reports on the power of the military-industrial complex. Does that exist even greater today? Is it a problem in your government?

The media in America seems to play a strong role in the conduct of your government. I appreciate that the media helped uncover the Watergate scandal, but now it seems to be trying to constantly searching for more and more scandal. Is that true? Is that good?

and results, invention, innovations, and flexibility; “now” oriented.

Independent and Different

Individually feeling not to “fit others’ mold”, but fiercely defensive if encroached upon as an “American.”

Questions Most Asked About America

taken from *Do’s and Taboos of Hosting International Visitors* by Roger E. Axtell

American Culture and Society

The American wife/mother seems, from the outside looking in, to run the family. Is that true? Why?

Over half of American mothers work outside the home; doesn’t this threaten the unity and well-being of the family?

American women are known for being “liberated.” Liberated from what? It seems to us she has more freedom than women in any other society.

The American society does not seem to have the respect for the elderly held by most other cultures. This is evidenced by the number of nursing homes for the aged. Is this correct? Why?

Why does there appear to be so much violence, so many cults and gang wars in America? What is there about your society that causes these to develop?

What about the demand for drugs in your society? You blame other parts of the world-with some justification-for supplying the drugs, but the supply would dry up if the demand stopped. What is the United States doing to fight your drug problem?

- 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/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.

STEREOTYPES ABOUT AMERICANS

taken from *Do's and Taboos of Hosting International Visitors* by Roger E. Axtell

Careless

With dress, possessions, time, money, rules, manners, ceremonies, nature, relationships, politics, and more.

Generous/Hospitable

As victors in war, as neighbors, as U.N. benefactors.

Self-indulgent

Pursuing material things.

Sentimental/Romantic

Prone to extremes in emotional expression; open.

Materialistic

Usually honest; ambition and success are paramount; vastness.

Confident and Self-Confident

Even brash, yet demand almost too much of self.

Complacent yet Arrogant

Ethnocentric, embarrassingly so; misunderstand honor.

Colonistic

Ethnocentrically imperialistic; disregard for other systems; overly proud of own systems.

Competitive yet Egalitarian

A paradox to most in children-to-adult varieties; class and rank may be temporary; no real aristocracy.

Resourceful

Combining all of the above; lovers of common sense

2. Read the Consular Information Sheets (and Public Announcements or Travel Warnings, if applicable) for the countries you plan to visit.
3. Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends at home, so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Keep your host program informed of your whereabouts.
4. Make sure you have insurance that will cover your emergency medical needs (including medical evacuation) while you are overseas.
5. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws!
6. Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas and never accept packages from strangers.
7. While abroad, avoid using illicit drugs or drinking excessive amounts of alcoholic beverages, and associating with people who do.
8. Do not become a target for thieves by wearing conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of cash or unnecessary credit cards.
9. Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money to avoid violating local laws.
10. When overseas, avoid demonstrations and other situations that may become unruly or where anti-American sentiments may be expressed.

- 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 from 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.

International Student ID Card:

All students studying abroad are required to purchase the ISIC Student ID card before leaving.

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_selectcountry.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).

Spending Money/Budgeting:

As a general guideline, you should plan on a minimum of \$2,500 for personal expenses for an academic year. Of course, this amount depends on your lifestyle and spending habits. Learn to budget your money wisely. Remember that you will probably have additional expenses at the beginning (e.g., room deposit). You will also want to have enough money for vacation travel.

Before committing yourself or your finances, find out about the organization and what it offers. The majority of private programs for vacation, study or work abroad are reputable and financially sound. However, some charge exorbitant fees, use deliberately false "educational" claims, and provide working conditions far different from those advertised. Even programs of legitimate organizations can be poorly administered.

How to Access Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, and Public Announcements

There are four ways to obtain *Consular Information Sheets* , *Travel Warnings* , and *Public Announcements* :

- **Internet:** <http://travel.state.gov>
- **Telephone:** Dial the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 202-647-5225.
- **Mail:** Send a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope to: Overseas Citizens Services, Room 4811, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4818. On the outside envelope, write the name of the country or countries needed in the lower left corner.
- Also available at <http://travel.state.gov>: [passport applications](#) and [procedures](#) , [foreign](#) and [U.S. visa information](#) , [travel publications](#) (including the pamphlet [Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad](#)) , and [links to several U.S. embassy and consulate web sites worldwide](#) .

Top Ten Travel Tips for Students

1. Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport!

Check for Travel Warnings and Public Announcements. Travel Warnings recommend U.S. citizens defer travel to a country because of dangerous conditions. Public Announcements provide fast-breaking information about relatively short-term conditions that may pose risks to the security of travelers.

Register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate Register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's [travel registration website](#). Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency. **In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts may not be released without your express authorization. Remember to leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.** (U.S. embassy and consulate locations can be found in the country's Consular Information Sheet.) If your family needs to reach you because of an emergency, they can pass a message to you through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 202-647-5225. This office will contact the embassy or consulate in the country where you are traveling and pass a message from your family to you. Remember consular officers cannot cash checks, lend money or serve as your attorney. They can, however, if the need arises, assist you in obtaining emergency funds from your family, help you find an attorney, help you find medical assistance, and replace your lost or stolen passport.

Find out what information your school offers. Find out whether your school offers additional information for students who are planning to study, travel, or work abroad. Many student advisors can provide you with information about studying or working abroad. They may also be able to provide you with information on any travel benefits for students (e.g. how to save money on transportation and accommodations, and other resources.)

Health Issues

Medical/Dental/Eye Check-up:

Before departure, it is a good idea to have a dental and eye-care check-up in addition 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.

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.



Travel Tips for Students

(Dept. of State publication)

Preparing for Your Trip Abroad

Apply early for your passport and, if necessary, any visas: Passports are required to enter and/or depart most countries around the world. Apply for a passport as soon as possible. Some countries also require U.S. citizens to obtain visas before entering. Most countries require visitors who are planning to study or work abroad to obtain visas before entering. Check with the embassy of the foreign country that you are planning to visit for up-to-date visa and other entry requirements. (Passport and visa information is available on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>.)

Learn about the countries that you plan to visit.

Before departing, take the time to do some research about the people and their culture, and any problems that the country is experiencing that may affect your travel plans. The Department of State publishes [Background Notes](#) on about 170 countries. These brief, factual pamphlets contain information on each country's culture, history, geography, economy, government, and current political situation. [Background Notes](#) are available at www.state.gov.

Read the Consular Information Sheet . Consular Information Sheets provide up-to-date travel information on any country in the world that you plan to visit. They cover topics such as entry regulations, the crime and security situation, drug penalties, road conditions, and the location of the U.S. embassy, consulates, and consular agencies.

become understandable when placed beside other seemingly ordinary activities. Writing down these incidents, thoughts, questions, ideas, and reflections will help to put them into context and will give you a sense of perspective.

The most important thing to remember is that you are studying over seas to learn about a different culture and have a good time!



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:

In most cases, someone will meet you at the airport from your study-abroad program; especially in you have traveled with a group. Then you will be transported to your new place of residence, sometimes by your host family. Some study-abroad programs will have a short, cultural program before you arrive at your

place of residence-this program usually serves, among other things, to offset the effects of jet lag.

Legal Issues

Registering with Authorities and/or U.S. Embassy:

In some countries you will have to register with the local authorities-your program will inform you of that fact. Most study-abroad programs will also register you with the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate in the host country.

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. Should you find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a Consular Office immediately.

Racial Issues:

What it means to be a member of a minority group can also differ from one country to another. Even though, as a U.S. student participating in a study-abroad program (even as a minority student), you may not personally be part of any act of discrimination, you may witness such discrimination by local citizens against their minority population. With increased migration due to economic hardship and political unrest in certain parts of the world, incidents of discrimination have increased. It is best not to get involved without knowing the consequences of your actions.

Sexuality Issues:

Gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual students often feel freer while studying overseas. However, even if the country in which you are studying seems more tolerant than the U.S. in matters of sexuality, it is still important to be aware of the local laws pertaining to countries to which you plan to travel. A good resource is to find out whether the host institution (or host city) has any clubs or organizations especially for gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual students.

Keeping a Journal:

There are a number of things which you, as a foreigner, will experience in the course of your studies and travels which may not seem important or may appear to be of only passing interest to you at the time. Initial impressions, your attitude towards people and customs, your views of yourself and your understanding of your new surroundings will be undergoing subtle changes-changes that you may not be fully aware of on a daily basis. One of the most effective tools for dealing with these changes is by keeping a journal. It is here that you can reflect on the new experiences, dealing with people and observing events, which will be occurring in your life that may or may not be fully making sense. A new custom, for example, of which you have been made aware that does not really make sense, may suddenly

If you are traveling and have an emergency, contact your program immediately! The loss or theft of your passport should also be reported to the local police, if possible, but especially to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

If someone in your family needs to contact you while you are traveling, especially before your program begins or after the program is completed, emergency assistance is available through the Citizens' Emergency Center of the Office of Overseas Citizen's Services (OCS) operated by the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. The office number is 202-647-5225 for normal business hours (including Saturdays); for after hours, Sundays, and holidays: 202-647-1512. It is always in your best interest to leave a basic itinerary with your family when you are on your own and to call home from time to time.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Miscellaneous Information

Non-Verbal Communication:

Body language, such as hand gestures and facial expressions, can mean different things in different countries. Try to acquaint yourself with the differences to avoid an embarrassing situation. Similarly, the amount of personal space that people require can vary from culture to culture.

Gender Issues:

In some countries, U.S. women have difficulty adjusting to the unwanted attention they receive from host-country males. Until you are totally familiar with the cultural norms, it is best to ignore the attention. You can often be giving the wrong sign by what you are wearing or even by eye contact or a casual smile.

THE PROGRAM

Academic Culture

Academic Environment:

In some ways, the academic environment you will experience while studying overseas will be similar to that at Muskingum; in other ways, it will be very different. In reality, there may be three types of academic environments for you to experience. Depending on the type of program in which you are participating, you may take many classes with only other students in your study-abroad program. A second type consists of enrolling in classes primarily for international students. The third type involves full immersion into the academic culture of the host country; you will attend the same classes as the local students. There may also be an opportunity to mix and match the three types of academic environments.

Living Accommodations:

Housing assignments may vary from one program to another and within the same program. You could live with a host family, in a residence hall with mostly international students and some host country students, or in an apartment with other U.S. students, with international students, or with host-country students. In general, remember to be an observer of cultural differences and respect the customs and traditions of those around you, and use your best judgment to avoid any unpleasant occurrences.

Mail/Telephone/E-Mail

Mail:

Be sure that all correspondence between you and your family and friends is sent via air-mail in both directions, and make sure the envelope is marked for air-

delivery. As an example, it takes about 5-7 days for first-class mail to reach Europe from the East Coast of the U.S.

Telephone:

You may not have a telephone in your room, but if you do, you still need to inquire about making and paying for calls. In general, it is much cheaper to call from the U.S. than from overseas-there are also quite a few calling plans or special dialing numbers that can save on international calls. The least expensive way to make calls to the U.S. is to use a calling card.

E-Mail:

You most likely will not have e-mail capabilities at your place of residence. Therefore, you must plan to make use of e-mail during regular hours either through your program or in some cases at the host university (there may or may not be a fee). Many cities also have Cyber-Cafes in which, for a fee, you can make use of internet connections.

Vacation Travel

Traveling:

You will have plenty of opportunity to travel during vacation periods. Unlike program-related excursions that are usually included in the comprehensive fee, vacation travel is a personal expense that is not covered. If you will be traveling to other countries during your vacation time, prepare yourself for that travel as well. For more information, consult www.travel.state.gov/.

Rail Passes:

Most countries have an extensive network of railroads as well as reliable bus transportation. The type of traveling you do will dictate what kind of travel pass you will want to buy. In some countries, you can also purchase airline passes valid for a set number of flights. It is best to wait, however, until you are overseas, before

you decide which type of pass to purchase. Rail passes should be purchased in the U.S. before you leave, but someone can also purchase one for you and mail it to you.

CAUTION: If you plan to travel long distances and/or overnight on public transportation, be sure to guard your valuables if you plan to sleep. Also make sure that the rail car you are in is traveling to the same destination you are-there are signs in each car.

Travel Guides:

Some of the more popular travel guides include: *Let's Go: Budget Guide to Europe* (St. Martin's Press)-also has country specific guides; *Frommer's* guides; the *Lonely Planet* guides; the *Rough Guide* series; the *Insight Guides* series, and the like.

Health and Safety

Personal Care/Health Culture:

Once more, the location and type of study-abroad program you participate in will dictate what type of health care you will receive. Specific details will be provided on site. You should be aware that treatment of illness or injury may be very different from what you are used to, so try to be flexible. There may also not be the same formalities as to modesty issues. It is also a good idea to put together a personal medical kit.

Personal Security/Emergencies:

Check the country-specific information given to you by your study-abroad program in regard to crime and other such warnings. It is also a good idea to check the U.S. State Department Consular Information Sheet for the country in which you will study; but also for the countries to which you will travel ([Http://travel.state.gov/travel/warnings_current.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/warnings_current.html)).