



Study Abroad

HANDBOOK

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WELCOME !



Congratulations on your decision to study abroad through Metropolitan State College of Denver! The experience of living abroad for several months in a foreign country, as opposed to that of being a simple tourist, will be of tremendous value to you from every point of view. Culturally, linguistically, personally, intellectually, spiritually, you will grow. You will have the chance to go beyond sightseeing, and become acquainted with another country, another culture, and another fascinating people.

You will be a foreigner, and thus a minority, perhaps for the first time in your life. You will have to deal with that condition and all the good and bad it entails. Your experience will be more enriching, however, if you are well prepared before encountering your new host country. All of your previous experience and academic preparation will feed into your time spent studying abroad. The more knowledge you gain of a particular country's language and culture through formal study or otherwise, the easier it will be able to fit in and fathom the new surroundings. Books, newspapers, magazines, web sites, television, and videos are all resources that will help you prepare for your journey overseas and invite you into your host country's unique social realm. The best way to get candid information about your host country is to talk

to people. Most people love to share their experiences, and will be delighted to talk with you. Returned study abroad students, faculty and staff who have lived or worked in your host country, as well as natives from the country are all excellent resources for information and advice.

You may never again have the opportunity to live outside of the United States for an extended period of time. Whether you are pushing your way through crowds at a large art exposition, or you become suddenly tongue-tied for fear of making mistakes in your host country's language, remember that you are lucky to be experiencing something new and unusual. Don't dwell on the days where the problems seem so enormous and the rewards insignificant. Misfortunes may arise no matter where your destination. Rather, cherish those days where you encounter a new friend, someone you would never have a chance to meet at home, or when the rich history and culture of the city overwhelm you and you find yourself gazing at magnificent landscapes that you never dreamed existed.

We hope that the following pages will help you adapt more quickly to life abroad. These pages are full of details, some of which you will need to know at the outset, and others we hope you will use to enrich your experience in your particular host country. Once you arrive, you will have many questions. We may not have all the answers, but we assure you that we will do what we can to help you find them. Meanwhile, this handbook should serve as a personal reference tool during your stay.

Preparing for your time abroad

Passports

All citizens traveling from one country to another will need a passport. A passport is an official government-issued document identifying you as a citizen of the United States. **It is your responsibility to ensure that you have a passport and a valid visa (if necessary).** If you do not have a passport, you must apply for one immediately. In order to learn more about the passport application process please visit <http://travel.state.gov>. If you have not previously had a passport, you **MUST** apply for your

passport in person and you can do this at the United States Postal Service Office. The cost of a new passport is \$100 (\$75 application fee and \$25 execution fee). A passport renewal costs \$75.

Your passport is an important document and we strongly encourage you to keep it in a safe place. It is advisable to make three photocopies of the picture page of your passport once you receive it. You must provide our office with one copy, leave one copy at home, and keep the last copy in a separate place in your luggage. In the unfortunate event that your passport is lost or stolen, having this information will expedite its replacement. If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the nearest consulate or embassy. You can find additional information at http://travel.state.gov/passport/lost/lost_849.html.

Visas

A visa is a stamp or attachment in your passport that allows you to enter a specific country for a certain period of time. It may be necessary to obtain a visa to study abroad depending on the country and the proposed length of stay. Your program will assist you in obtaining a visa, as each country has particular requirements for application materials and visa processing. Through your program provider, you can obtain visa applications for the majority of countries. However, you are solely responsible for obtaining a visa for your program.

You will be issued either a multiple entry visa or a single entry visa. A multiple entry visa allows you to leave and enter a specific country as many times as you wish during your stay, whereas a single entry visa allows you to enter a country during a certain period of time and then return to the US. Most students prefer a multiple entry visa as it allows them to travel. You will need to contact the Resident Director if you have a single entry visa, prior to traveling outside your host country.

Most visas require an additional fee that is not always included in the cost of the program. **Please do not wait until the last minute to obtain a visa. You will not be able to board your plane unless the visa is in your hands!**

Making Travel Arrangements

Airline Tickets

Airfare is sometimes, though not always included in the study abroad program charges. If it is not included, you will need to purchase your own plane ticket in order to arrive on the date designated by your program. The beginning and ending dates listed in brochure for your program are the dates your housing will become available. When researching airfare, keep in mind that it is not acceptable to arrive after your program start date as a means of trying to save money on airline tickets. Any expenses you incur because of early arrival are your own responsibility. Also, you **MUST** purchase a return ticket as you may not be allowed to enter the country without proof of your plans to exit. Other options for purchasing airline tickets would be to contact a local travel agency, research the web, or contact the airlines directly. When you contact a travel agent, you should ask the following:

- Do they offer student discounts?
- Do they offer open-ended tickets?
- What is the policy for changing dates?
- What are the restrictions on your ticket?

Two great resources for finding flights are listed below:

STA Travel: www.statravel.com

STA Travel specializes in student travel options. They are very familiar with the needs of students and offer student discounts on airfare. STA also offers the International Student Identification Card (ISIC)

Kayak: www.kayak.com

Kayak is a search engine that looks at the websites of all major airlines for the lowest fare.

Once you have made a flight reservation, send a copy of your itinerary to your program provider.

International Student Identification Card (ISIC)

The International Student ID Card is sufficient for identification purposes to obtain admission into museums, theaters, cinemas, expositions, and many other attractions. Students may use this card to obtain discounts on airfare, trains, and ships as well as a document providing for very basic medical insurance coverage. The ISIC, with its many advantages, is included in many study abroad programs. Be sure to check with your program provider. The ISIC Card will provide you with internationally recognized proof of your student status. Furthermore, the card provides discounts on travel, entertainment, restaurants, hotels, and 24-hour emergency assistance. Some program providers include an ISIC card in the program price. For more information see: www.isic.org

Packing Tips

Though you may feel compelled to pack as much as possible, remember: You will need to carry everything you pack! As such, it is recommended to pack as much as you can carry and then empty your suitcase and get rid of half the items as bags tend to get heavier as time goes by. If you don't use it almost every day, don't bring it!

You also will need to be aware of different dress codes in other countries and be sure to pack clothes that will not offend local cultural customs.

General Packing Tips

Make copies of the photo page of your passport. Keep one copy in your checked baggage and leave one at home with your family. Some students also scan a copy and email it to themselves—a great way to access your information from anywhere in the world.

- Label all luggage with your name and destination and be sure to use TSA approved locks.
- Pack all prescription medication on your carry-on. Be sure that all bottles are clearly labeled and include a copy of your prescription in order to avoid any problems at customs.
- Do the same with debit and credit cards. Be sure to bring contact information for your bank should you need to contact them to cancel cards.
- Bring clothes that are lightweight, washable and interchangeable. Dark colors tend to be more versatile and don't show dirt as much.
- Bring clothes that you can easily layer—this will add versatility to your wardrobe without creating a lot of additional weight.
- Use a money belt for cash, plane tickets, passports, etc.
- Do NOT take anything that you cannot afford to lose: Leave sentimental objects at home.

- Take small gifts for host families and friends-items from Colorado are especially appreciated.
- If you bring expensive items such as a laptop, video camera, or digital camera consider insuring them before you leave. Every year students report these items stolen.
- Bring an open mind. This is the most important thing you can bring with you abroad as you will be embarking on the adventure of a lifetime. Though you will surely encounter challenges, each situation is an opportunity to learn and grow.

Baggage Allowance

All airlines have guidelines on the weight and size of baggage allowed. In general, passengers are allowed two pieces of checked baggage not to exceed 50lbs. Baggage may not be larger than 62 inches (length-width-height). If you exceed these limits you will have to pay an additional fee, which can often exceed \$100. Contact your airline directly to learn their restrictions and pack lightly!

Traveler's Packing List

Basics:

- Passport (with visa) (Don't forget to make copies)
- Insurance Information
- Credit Cards with PIN Numbers kept separately
- Currency of host country (about \$100 to start-you can access this at the airport or at your bank before you leave)
- U.S. Cash (dollars in small denominations will be useful in some locations)
- Plane Tickets (be sure to take in your carry-on)
- Health documentation
- International Student ID card
- Emergency Info (medical, itinerary, relatives)
- Alarm clock (battery operated)
- Ziplock bags (extremely useful and difficult to find in some locations)

Health Care Needs:

- Prescriptions/Birth Control (bring in your carry-on)
- First-Aid Kit
- Sunscreen
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Tampons/Sanitary Napkins

Remember that in most locations you can find everything you will need especially basic toiletries. However, women should recognize that tampons may be less easily available in some countries. If you have country-specific questions, you should contact your program provider.

Electrical Equipment

Because electrical systems around the world are different than the United States, you will need to bring a converter in order to plug in any American equipment (ie. laptops) with you. This is crucial so that you

do not ruin your electrical equipment! To find out what type of voltage your host country has check out the following website: www.kropla.com/electric2.htm. Remember that batteries are very expensive abroad (and not very sustainable)!

Travel Accessories

If you plan on traveling at all within the host country or neighboring countries, guidebooks like Lonely Planet, The Rough Guide, or Moon Handbooks are valuable resources. You might want to purchase a money belt or hidden pocket for money and important documents. The best bet for extensive travel is a backpack. Don't skimp or you'll regret it when it rips or breaks later. Internal frames for backpacks are good. Make sure to buy the size you'll need and the size you can carry, but no larger (www.identityabroad.com/gear). If you plan on camping your way around Europe, you'll obviously need a larger bag than someone who will stay in hostels.

Bring Gifts

If you are staying in a homestay, it is thoughtful to bring a small gift for your host family. You may also choose to bring small things for the friends you'll make. Suggested gifts would include something representative of you, your school, or state. Your study abroad advisor can provide you with a list of good gift ideas upon inquiry.

Keep a Journal

This is something to seriously consider. Writing down your thoughts and feelings about this exciting time will prove invaluable to you later as you look back upon how much you have grown and changed. Try to move beyond just writing about what you did and saw, and describe how you were impacted or impressed by what you experienced. Try to write in your journal on a daily basis so that you may identify with your feelings regularly. It's a good idea to make notations in your journal of what pictures you took while overseas. This will provide for a most memorable experience.

Academics

While you are abroad, you should strive for academic excellence just as you would while on campus. To be sure, you will be participating in a STUDY abroad experience, and not merely traveling out of country.

It is important to keep in mind that academic methods vary by culture and you may encounter the following:

- University students in other countries receive very little faculty support and guidance
- University professors in other countries most often do not offer office hours
- Students overseas tend to be much more autonomous and proactive about their learning
- Many foreign universities use the lecture method for class instruction and discussion seminars are not very common
- Exams may include short essay questions or oral exams. Multiple choice and short answers are not very common
- Independent research is more commonly required than in the United States
- Universities abroad tend to offer fewer student services

Despite these challenges, most programs offer academic support and guidance to help you with the transition to a new academic system. We also encourage you to connect with local classmates to help with academics.

Grades and Credit

Grades for approved off-campus programs will be recorded on your transcript as study abroad grades and credits. The grades are not computed into any major, minor, or program GPA, as well as the overall GPA. Pass/Fail grades are permitted only in accordance with the regulations published in Metropolitan State College of Denver catalogue.

Classes

The essence of study abroad is an extensive education within and out of the classroom. Formal classes should take precedence during your overseas experience. Though the classroom is a structured setting, the methods of teaching and ideas presented in a foreign system can be valuable educational tools. Generally speaking, overseas curriculums entail more student initiative than those in the US. Homework per se is limited; therefore, you must keep up with the material covered by the professor. For programs where English is not the primary language your classes may be taught in the native language. Placement into language classes is usually determined by a placement test.

Course Load

A normal class load is about 15-18 semester credits. In language programs, six or nine of these credits are usually made up of language courses, with the remainder being semester courses (literature, art, etc). The Resident Director or academic advisor must approve under or overloads. Many students planning to spend the year overseas prefer to take a slightly reduced load their first semester in order to leave more time for adaptation to their surroundings. Students contemplating taking less than a full load should consider the implications for any financial aid they may be using.

Books

On the first day of classes, the professors will inform you of any required textbooks, although it is possible that none may be required. Be prepared that you may have to spend up to \$50 - \$90 for textbooks and supplies.

Class Attendance

You are required to attend class. Expect your final grade to decrease in proportion to the number of times you miss class. Three or more unexcused absences per month will result in a lowering of your grade. Remember, you will be participating in a "study" abroad program. Written work is required. MSCD's academic goals are to provide the student with many excellent options. It is the responsibility of the student to determine which of these options he/she would like to select. We encourage you to have time to also profit from your host country as an experiential classroom, but not at the expense of attending class. Many courses involve fieldwork will involve such as touring the museums or investigating various aspects of the city, practicing your language, and experiencing the culture. The Resident Director will help you to plan a class schedule that is best suited to your needs.

Cultural Program

The cultural program constitutes an essential part of each student's learning experience. Students can take advantage of the activities and trips that are offered as part of the program fee. Note that excursions vary by program and the semester of enrollment.

ON CAMPUS *Before you leave...*

Course Approval Forms

Course Approval forms are available at the Office of International Studies for those programs that require approval. You may also refer to the “Enrollment Process” for more information on course transfer of particular programs. **YOU MUST GET INDIVIDUAL COURSES APPROVED BEFORE YOU LEAVE.** It is important to obtain permission for any class you may possibly take because you cannot assume a department will accept any course upon your return. Most professors will require a written course description or even a syllabus in order to confer an approval. It is a good idea to take a few blank course approval forms with you overseas. If you find that while abroad you have not had a course approved, you will need to contact the department chair responsible for accepting your credits.

Financial Aid

You will officially be enrolled as a student at MSCD in order to avoid having loans go into repayment. If, for any reason, you receive loan repayments from your lenders while abroad, contact our office. You will need a verification of enrollment, which can then be sent to the lender.

If you have any questions or issues regarding financial aid you can contact Brian Hultgren.

Brian Hultgren

Assistant Director of Financial Aid-Loans

hultgren@mscd.edu

303-556-4511

Transcripts

In order to ensure that your transcript is sent to the proper person, be sure to provide your program with contact information for Cristina Martinez who is in charge of Transcript Evaluations Admissions.

Cristina Martinez

Transcript Evaluations Admissions

Metropolitan State College of Denver

CB 16, P.O. Box 173362

Denver, CO 80217-3362

martinec@mscd.edu

303-556-3984

Staying in Touch from Abroad

Due to technology it is extremely easy to keep in touch with friends and family while abroad. While these new tools make it easy to communicate with people at home, some of them can be a bit confusing for first-time users. Also, though it is very easy and inexpensive to stay in touch, be sure to remember to enjoy your experience while you are there. You don't want to miss out on all the wonders of your host country because you are spending every free minute communicating with someone from home.

Parental Access to your Academic Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) protects your educational records. It limits the information that can be discussed with anyone, including your parents, unless you specifically allow them to access your information. In order to allow parents or anyone else to access your records, you will need to express written consent to our office and the Office of Academic Affairs.

Communicating via Telephone

Your family may be expecting a phone call when you first arrive to tell them that you are safe. However, it may not be possible for you to access a telephone immediately and you should warn your family that it may take you a day before you can contact them. Make arrangements with family and friends to contact them by a certain time and then stick to it!

Using a foreign telephone to call the United States

Calling in most countries is more expensive than in the United States. In many countries the easiest way to call home is to purchase an international calling card to be used at payphones. You can purchase these cards at newspaper stands, small corner shops, the supermarket, or pharmacies. Some international calling cards will also allow you to use them on your home phone, though you will need to check to see if there is an additional charge. Your program provider can give you country-specific advice.

In most cases it will be cheaper for people to call you than it will be for you to call them. Your family can contact their phone service provider to access different international calling plans. Some companies offer discounts to specific countries.

Don't forget the time difference between countries! If you are unsure what the time difference is between your host country and home you can check this website: <http://www.timezoneconverter.com>

Using a cell phone abroad

Most cell phones produced in the United States will not work in foreign countries because they use a different bandwidth. For those that do work, the costs of using that phone abroad can be extremely expensive. For that reason, it is recommendable to get a local cell phone and your program may provide you with one. Cell phones can be bought cheaply and a local phone will be useful when connecting with those in your host country. Generally, to use a cell phone abroad you will need to purchase prepaid phone cards which will give you a certain number of minutes. Be aware that calling in other countries is generally much more expensive than calling in the United States! As such, you may find that text messaging is the best tool to keep in touch with local friends.

Skype

Skype is a service that allows you to make phone calls using the internet. You can download it onto your computer at www.skype.com. Once you have an account, you will be able to buy credit in \$10 increments. Skype allows you to make free calls to other Skype users and you can also call telephones in the United States for about \$0.02/minute. Skype also allows you to chat and send files via their service. You will need a microphone or headset to make calls.

Email

While you are abroad be sure to check your MSCD email account as you may receive important information in that account. Many web-based emails such as Yahoo or Gmail will allow you to access your MSCD email from that account as well. **Any information from our office will be sent to your MSCD account unless you have notified us otherwise!**

Money Matters

The range of expenses can vary depending on the time of overseas study, institutional policy, and program selection. Once a program is selected, there are things you can do to limit additional costs and maintain a realistic overseas budget.

Overseas costs can be estimated by keeping track of the U.S. dollar against foreign currencies. You can convert currency online at www.xe.com. Verify what expenses are included in your program fee and then determine the amount of funds you will need to cover all other expenses. The amount of money you bring overseas is also determinant upon your frugal, or perhaps, lavish lifestyle. Consider these costs when planning your budget for study abroad:

- Transportation
- Personal Expenses
- Meals
- Gifts and Souvenirs
- Communication
- Books
- Entertainment
- Miscellaneous Daily Expenses
- Additional Fees for Accommodation

ADD LINKS

(for more information)

- Safe ways to protect your money
- How to give tips to people for services

Managing your finances responsibly is an important and challenging aspect of a successful and enjoyable academic experience abroad. Be wise and always keep a list of your expenses.

Traveler's Checks

Obtaining Traveler's Checks is the safest way to carry your money, as they are reimbursable if lost or stolen, and can be cashed in any bank or currency exchange. They are available in a variety of denominations from most banks. A good rule of thumb is to buy US \$50 and/or US \$100. You probably will not want to exchange amounts less than that because of transaction fees and commissions.

ATM Cards

You can access money in your savings account in the US by using a bank card that is on systems such as *Cirrus* or *Plus*. Local currency is withdrawn from your US account. Before you leave, visit your bank to make sure your card and PIN number can be used to withdraw money abroad. You might want to tell your bank the dates you will be overseas. (It has not been unknown for smaller banks to cancel a card when overseas withdrawals have been made.) ATM machines can be found in almost every country. Most banks charge a US\$1-2 fee per withdrawal, but you can get a good exchange and you do not have to pay commission. If you happen to run out of money, it is easy for someone to put more in your account in the U.S. It is important to keep track of what you're spending. If your card is lost or stolen,

you may have to apply for a new one by contacting your bank at home. Also, there may be some quirks when you first try to use an ATM card, depending on your situation. Know your Pin # by the number itself and not alphabetically. You may find that other countries do not put the alphabet on their keypads. You should also determine from your bank whether the funds that you withdraw overseas will be taken from your checking or your savings account. Be sure to have other means of obtaining cash available.

Credit Cards

Even if you don't plan on using them, it's nice to have one in case of an emergency.

Many medical facilities will require you to pay for medical expenses (doctor, hospitalization, etc.) with a credit card and you are responsible for getting reimbursement from your insurance company.

Credit cards are convenient for larger transactions and purchases but they do require that you have someone at home pay your monthly bill. For this reason, our office strongly recommends using an on-line banking system to manage your finances while abroad. Some credit cards can be used as a good way to receive cash advances from home. These advances are often considered a loan and you can get the advance only up to your line of credit. There will also be a higher interest rate involved. The card must be in your name (not your parents) and the advance will be in local currency, not dollars. Please note: In some countries credit cards are not very common and you may be charged additional fees to use a credit card.

Transfer of Money

The transfer of money from a domestic account to an affiliate bank abroad is a time consuming and costly tactic. Try to budget your money accurately so that you will not expel yourself from sufficient funds. If you are staying overseas for an entire academic year, you may consider opening a bank account. You can obtain a list of correspondent banks in your host city from your on-site director. Give the bank, of which you are a member, the names of those authorized to send wire transfers to you.

American Express offices will cash personal checks from a U.S. account at no charge. Money can also be cabled from home through American Express or Western Union; this type of transfer will take two to five days and the charge varies according to how much money is sent. Another relatively easy way to receive money from home is through the American Express Money Order, which American Express offices will cash at your disposition. Alternatively, you can notify your home bank and request that a bank draft in your name be mailed to you, via registered mail.

Parents or friends may also send you an International Postal Money Order, which may be cashed at American Express and is available in most U.S. post offices.

Guarding Your Valuables

Foreigners are especially vulnerable to theft as their attention is diverted elsewhere by exploring temptations. Money belts and ID holders are recommended to safeguard any valuables you carry during travel. Many travel stores can offer you nifty devices that combine safekeeping and carrying convenience. In the case of loss or theft, make sure to have your account numbers and phone numbers recorded in an accessible place to make any emergency calls. (Note: Your insurance may be medical only, so losses of money, tickets and other valuables may not be covered.)

Power of Attorney

When you give someone the authority to act on your behalf, you are granting them power of attorney. It is highly advisable to designate an individual, usually a parent, to take care of legal or financial matters on your behalf while you are abroad. You do not have to choose a lawyer to be your agent, but it is

important to select someone you trust. You need to choose someone who won't abuse the powers you grant to them and will look out for your best interests.

A Power of Attorney may be granted for a fixed term, or it can be left open-ended. To grant a Power of Attorney, the principal must be at least 19 years of age, of sound mind, and must grant the power voluntarily.

A general power of attorney is very broad and provides extensive powers to the person or organization you appoint as your agent. Powers that affect students studying abroad may include:

- Handling banking transactions
- Entering into contracts
- Entering safety deposit boxes
- Exercising stock rights
- Handling transactions involving U.S. securities
- Filing tax returns
- Settling Claims
- Handling matters involving government benefits

You may also have the option to grant additional power to your agent such as making gifts or making transfers to revocable ("living") trusts. Whether a power of attorney is durable or not, you have the right to terminate or revoke it at any time as long as you are still competent. The person who holds your power of attorney must be told of your decision to terminate it. You can do this orally, but as with most things of legal significance, it's best to put it in writing.

Taxes

You may need to arrange to have tax forms sent to you (they are also usually available at a U.S. consulate or embassy) or have taxes paid for you by your power of attorney while you are out of the country. It is also possible to ask for an extension. Be sure to know what your tax responsibilities are and how to comply before you leave. The IRS web site may be a helpful resource. You can reach this web site at www.irs.com.

Health and Safety

Living and learning in a different physical and social environment places additional demands on one's mind and body. The emotional effects of confronting a new lifestyle can arouse anxiousness, bewilderment, and discouragement. As a result, you may experience a fluster of mood swings that can be very stressful. If you take proper care of yourself through rest, relaxation, and activities such as reading and exercise, you will be more capable of healthily adjusting to your surroundings.

Be clear about your health status when applying for a study abroad program and particular housing arrangements. Describe allergies, disabilities, psychological treatments, dietary requirements, and medical needs so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you have a medical condition that is not easily identified (diabetes, epilepsy), you are advised to wear a medic alert bracelet while you are abroad. You should also inform the study abroad program staff and travel companions so that they can be prepared in case of an emergency. If you have a medical problem that could be aggravated by conditions abroad (e.g. asthma in dusty Cairo), consider carefully how you will deal with the problem overseas and discuss it with your doctor.

Make appointments for medical examinations well in advance to ensure that you are in good health before you leave and to complete all necessary immunizations. Request copies of important records: x-

rays, and prescriptions in generic form to go with you. Update your health records as well, including eyeglass prescriptions and regular medications. You may want to take an extra pair of glasses with you. If you expect to need regular medical care abroad, take an informant letter from your physician at home, providing details of your medical conditions, care, and specific needs. If you self-inject prescribed medication, you may need to carry needles and syringes with you. You'll need a physician's prescription for medication and medical supplies to pass through customs. It is also important to keep medications in their original containers.

To check which vaccinations are required for your host country, visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>. They also have an International Traveler's Hotline (404) 332-4559, where you can access additional information. Make sure your tetanus shot is current, and you should seriously consider a vaccination for Hepatitis A, a serious illness usually contracted through improper hygiene.

Medical Kit

It is important to bring a medical kit so that you have access to supplies that you may need suddenly. Here is a list of items you should include in your kit:

- *Band-Aids, antiseptic
- *Constipation remedy (natural bran or bran tablets)
- *Cold/cough/allergy symptom relief (such as antihistamines, lozenges)
- *Diarrhea treatment (Imodium A-D)
- *Motion sickness medication
- *Pain/fever relief (aspirin, acetaminophen)
- *Pepto Bismol tablets
- *Sunscreen

Medical Care Abroad

At some point during your time abroad, it is likely you will become ill. It will probably be something simple, without complications and due to changes in food and water, insufficient sleep, or stress of travel. At any rate, it is essential that you give yourself time to adapt. Jet lag, a new language, exotic foods, registration, beginning classes, and even changes in the weather can take their toll. Use the same stress-relief techniques you use at home—exercise, meditation, reading, etc. Prolonged periods of stress can be quite harmful and hinder your adjustment and health.

Learn how to get medical help, whether routine or emergency, before the need arises. The on-site coordinator will help students contact an appropriate physician or other services when attention is required.

Further, it is wise to immediately inquire about personal security issues when you go abroad. Lifestyles may be very different from home. This is true even in cultures that seem relatively similar to the United States. Ask about safety issues such as local transportation, traffic patterns, swimming practices at regional beaches, and use of electrical appliances. Ask about security issues such as neighborhood or building security, personal security during evenings or other outings, and culture-specific behavior or security concerns related to gender. You cannot assume that the experiences and practices you took for granted at home will be accepted in your host country. If you are not sure about something, whether it is a simple question about where a service can be found, or a more complex matter, such as expectations about friendship and dating, ask someone you trust.

AIDS and other STD's

The AIDS epidemic is a case of its own and merits special treatment because its reach is worldwide. Sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) such as gonorrhea, syphilis, and herpes also continue to pose health risks for travelers in any country. Knowing this and taking precautions, such as refraining from unprotected sex and other practices that carry the risk of infection, is the only way to ensure protection. The World Health Organization states: AIDS is not spread by daily and routine activities such as sitting next to someone or shaking hands or working with people. Nor is it spread by insects or insect bites. AIDS is not spread by swimming pools, public transportation, food, cups, glasses, plates, toilets, water, air, touching or hugging, coughing or sneezing. This is true abroad as it is at home.

Sanitation

If you will be living in a rural area, where sanitation systems are less developed, some caution is advised. Avoid untreated water, fruits that are not peeled, raw vegetables and dairy products. If mosquito-borne illnesses are an issue in your host country, take the appropriate preventative medication or apply bug repellent regularly.

Medical Care

Psychological Counseling

The overwhelming majority of MSCD students find study abroad a period of tremendous personal growth in such areas as self-esteem, and independence. Very few experience serious personal problems beyond the usual cultural adjustment and some homesickness. Typically one or two students each year experience serious difficulties. These are usually students who have brought ongoing emotional or mental health issues with them, from home.

If you are currently using professional help to deal with emotional or mental health problems, talk over your plans for study abroad carefully with a psychologist or psychiatrist before making the final decision to go. The challenges of adjusting to a new environment coupled with the absence of a familiar support system may exacerbate extant problems. Going to another country will not solve personal problems and may make them worse. Above all, if you think you are in trouble, let your family, friends, Resident Director and the Office of International Studies know.

Should you need professional services abroad, contact your program staff for a referral. With your authorization, a licensed psychologist abroad can request in writing any records that may be on file at your college or university. In case of an emergency, records can be requested by fax at <Fax Number>, but the therapist must follow up with a letter.

Doctors and Clinics

Selected doctors will provide bilingual medical care in your particular host country. They offer full medical checkups, complete laboratory service and house calls, and will make arrangements for hospitalization if necessary. You will receive a list of doctors from the On-site director at orientation.

Pharmacies

If you need to purchase a prescription, pharmacies are abundant and easily accessible. If possible, try to bring an adequate supply of any prescribed drug you will need during your stay, as not all medicines will be available. Bring prescription drugs in their original containers. It may also be helpful to bring along an additional prescription written in the host country's native language should you lose your medicine and

need to replace it. It is simplest to bring your own emergency medicines for headaches, colds, coughs, stomach aches, hay fever, diarrhea, and so on. You will find pharmacies open at various hours for your convenience.

Dental Care

Your Resident Director can recommend good English-speaking dentists.

A Few additional Notes

In the unlikely but possible cases of rape, pregnancy, venereal disease or other delicate problems, please remember that the Resident Director is prepared to deal with these situations and will offer you the appropriate care.

Legal Matters

Students abroad are subject to the laws of the country in which they study and the rules of the institution in which they are enrolled, as well as those of MSCD. Students who violate the law may have to face legal proceedings in the local judicial system, which may not provide the same safeguards for those accused of crime in the U.S. system. If convicted of a crime, a student will face punishment according to local practices. Many countries have laws regarding the use and distribution of illegal drugs, which are more severe than in the U.S. For their own protection, all students are cautioned to obey the laws of the country in which they study. In particular, any student who expects to use illegal drugs should seriously reconsider the decision to study abroad.

While abroad, students are subject to the disciplinary regulations of their host university or program and bear responsibility, as well, to the MSCD Code of Conduct. In general, disciplinary action under the Campus Code of Conduct may be taken for one year after the alleged misconduct occurs. Records of any disciplinary actions overseas become a part of a student's file at MSCD and are communicated to the Judicial Administrator.

All students are expected to respect national and local ordinances, even though these may sometimes be very different from those in the U.S. The program does not tolerate abuse of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, or other behaviors disruptive to the wellbeing of others.

Students who do not adhere to appropriate standards of conduct may be dismissed by the program. No fees will be refunded under such circumstances.

Students studying abroad are guests of a foreign government. Students may be (and some have been) expelled from the country as undesirable, even when no legal proof exists that they have broken a law. Students who are jailed will receive the following assistance from the Program Director and the United

States Government:

1. Your family will be advised of your situation.
2. You will be assisted in getting a lawyer at your own or your family's expense.

We cannot get you out of jail or provide you with bail money. **You need to avoid illegal activity at all times.**

Living Arrangements

All programs include lodging, which may consist of home-stays, living in apartments, independent housing or residence halls. Some programs include a certain number of meals per day if the student lives with a host family. Other programs are “self-catered.” Refer to the housing request form for more specific information on options available for each program.

Homestays

A very large part of the adventure upon which you are about to embark is your stay with a host family. Living and building a relationship with your host family is an important part of your study abroad experience. Hosts may be a family, a widow, or a couple. Though some families may take in students as a means of augmenting their income, they are all experienced in receiving international students and are expected to provide a good environment for students to enjoy and profit from their stay. They provide you with an opportunity to see daily life close up and increase your foreign language skills through daily conversations.

Your host family’s apartment or house may be very different than what you are accustomed to in the U.S. For instance, the home may have only one bathroom shared by all family members, rooms may be smaller and fewer, and hot water may be carefully rationed. Try not to form preconceived notions about what to expect and be open to the situation in which you are placed.

Your program will do their best to place students in their requested housing arrangements. Generally, the hosts are of middle-class, situated in various locations of the city and provide for a relatively comfortable standard of living. You may be taken in as part of the family or regarded as a paying guest. However, in either case, you will have to respect your host’s rules and be courteous to their requests. You may not live luxuriously, but your host families will provide you with adequate accommodations for students, including a private bedroom with study facilities, heating, bed linens, and meals where appropriate.

Homestay with Meals

Most students are paying guests, sharing some or all meals with their host family. No refunds can be given for meals not taken or while travelling. Details of the number of meals included in a homestay are included in the program description.

Homestay - No Meals

Students may choose a living arrangement in a home without sharing daily meals with the family. This option provides for more independence rather than being tied to a family’s time schedule. It is also a good choice for students with dietary restrictions that might cause conflict with the average family’s eating habits. Students who choose the homestay without meals option will be given a monthly food allowance (to cover breakfast and dinner) from the Resident Director that is sufficient for proper nourishment. As food can be very expensive, the allowance will certainly not permit the students to eat regularly in restaurants. Students who choose private rooms should be prepared for independent living with minimal or no contact with the owners.

Host Families

Host families are personally interviewed and students are assigned to their homes, taking into consideration the various preferences stated by the students, within the limits of the kind of families available. Roommates can be arranged, but students from the same country and perhaps the same school must keep in mind that the purpose of living and studying in a foreign country is to be immersed

in as much of the culture as possible and to build communication skills in the language. To accomplish this goal, the student must discipline him/herself to practice the foreign language even when in the same home with other English speakers.

Try to reach an early understanding with your hosts regarding the rules and customs of their home, especially in regards to such things as the use of hot water, helping with meals, and inviting guests. It is important to be conscious of the culture gap that exists. A gracious attitude toward your hosts will go a long way in overcoming the cultural misunderstandings that inevitably arise. Having thoughtfulness, tact, and grace will help make your homestay a positive experience and will enhance your academic work and leisure time. A little gift at the beginning of your stay is a kind way to ease any awkwardness. Pictures of your American family and school life are also good icebreakers and help your hosts to know you better.

It is impossible to generalize about homestays as each situation is quite unique, not only in terms of the composition of the family, its personality, and the physical aspects of the household, but also in the response of each student to the new environment. Others have probably been there before you and left their impressions, both good and bad.

In the unlikely, but possible situation where your health and safety are threatened, remove yourself from the situation immediately. Contact the resident director and/or the MSCD Office of International Studies immediately regardless of the time of day or night. You will be removed from the situation as quickly as possible and placed in a different setting.

Host Family Hints

Telephones

Phone service can be very expensive outside of the United States, thus international and local telephone calls may not be made from the home without the prior permission of the host each and every time a call is made. Inquire whether you may receive phone calls at your residence. Some host families may provide a separate phone line for students; however, this is rare. Some students have found it economical and convenient to purchase cell phones while overseas for purpose of any emergencies that may arise or for arranging meetings with friends while on the move.

Water and Electricity

Water and electricity are also extremely expensive abroad; therefore, people in other countries tend to use much less than do people in the U.S. Your homestay may make considerate efforts to conserve energy by limiting showers or baths to a specific time period. Be aware of what may be excessive usage to your hosts to keep good relations.

Food

Students with particular eating habits (for example, vegetarian or kosher) may prefer a housing option with independent cooking arrangements, although some families may offer an appropriate meal situation. The local program staff will, with sufficient notice, try to accommodate such students in the homestay situation they prefer, though such placements are not guaranteed.

Laundry

In a homestay, ask your host about how to do your laundry and the procedures to follow. You may be allowed to do your laundry in your house but you may be limited to one load per week. In some areas, you may have to wash your clothes at a local laundromat.

Absences (overnight or mealtime)

Courtesy requires that you notify your host, the resident director and your family in the U.S. if you plan to be absent from your place of residence for a lengthy period of time. Tell your host in advance if you are not planning to be at the evening meal.

Key Deposit

Some students will be required to pay a key deposit to their landlord. This deposit is, of course, refunded when you turn in your keys at the end of your stay. Many apartments use special security locks that cost as much as \$250 to replace. Students are responsible for keys issued to them until they have been returned to their landlord.

The same basic standards of courtesy apply in a foreign country as they do in the U.S. You are renting from a local landlord, and thus, are expected to abide by the apartment complex rules. If you choose this housing option, you will be responsible for the preparation of meals and a supplemental fee.

Independent Housing

Some students choose to provide their own housing while overseas, usually because they already have relatives or friends living in their host country. If you plan to do so, you must notify your program of your intentions no later than 1 month before your scheduled program starts so that no housing contract will be made on your behalf. Please remember that making these arrangements is very difficult and expensive, and that last-minute switches to program housing can be complicated.

Residence Halls

Depending on the program, students may have the options of living in catered or self-catered residence halls. This allows ample opportunity for students to interact with the natives of the host country and also may be a more practical living arrangement, as you will be living closer to campus.

STUDENT HOUSING AGREEMENT

All students participating in the program must accept responsibility for any damage or debts they may incur during their stay. Students must make an effort to adjust to the customs of the host family and agree to try to cooperatively resolve any conflicts that may arise on their own. MSCD and the on-site director will not accept responsibility for personal matters that may arise between the student and the host with whom he or she is placed. Additionally, the student must agree to give a one-month notice to the site director before any change in lodging arrangements can be made. Disregarding any of these conditions may result in dismissal from the program.

Students can request a change in housing if they are dissatisfied with their current living situation. However, housing types cannot be changed. This means that a student cannot request to be changed from a host family to an apartment. Changes to housing must be made to the same housing type, i.e. from apartment to apartment or from host family to host family.

Traveling

Traveling is encouraged and has proved to be an essential part of a student's time spent overseas. You will frequently be using public transportation such as buses, trains, metros, and taxis, all of which are rather practical and inexpensive modes of traveling. Keep in mind, however, that there are various safety issues that you should be aware of.

First of all, be careful not to display money, jewelry, or other valuable items while traveling. It is wise to wear a money belt if you are carrying a wallet or purse, and keep it close where you can see it at all times in order to avoid pickpockets.

During travel, choose a train or metro car in which others are riding. Locate the emergency equipment, and if someone is bothering you, inform the train operator. Try to stay awake and alert during your travels so you do not miss your destination and avoid unwanted attention and confrontations.

Be sure to notify the Resident Director and your host family when you will be traveling and when you will be returning. You may also want to inform your family at home to avoid any unwanted worries. To make the best of your time abroad (and to avoid problems with your professors), restrict long traveling to the vacation periods. You will make some weekend trips, but if you do this too frequently you will never have the chance to get to know your host city or to make close friends among the many people you will meet. You have to be in the host city to join the social clubs or to become involved in those activities that lead to real contacts with the natives.

Independent Travel

Travel on weekends should not interfere with regular attendance of classes. It is recommended that you focus your travel during the term/semester to nearby locations. When travelling to faraway destinations, the majority of your time is spent on the train and searching for lodging with little time left to see the sights. Save your more distant sightseeing trips for before or after the program or during vacations. This is also a much better time to travel with visiting family and friends.

Holiday Travel

Be careful when planning vacations over holidays. Check the countries' holiday calendar from a tourist agency if at all possible. Most, if not all, monuments and places of interest are closed on holidays such as Easter and Christmas.

Hitchhiking

Hitchhiking is most strongly discouraged. If you do hitch, take precautions and use common sense. NEVER hitch alone. Real tragedies have taken place involving hitchhiking students.

Storage of Belongings

Because of very limited space and problems in the past, the program cannot be responsible for the storage of luggage for those students arriving early nor for those students who are traveling after the program ends. Housing provided by the program begins on the first day of the student's period of enrollment and ends on the student's last day of enrollment precisely. You may find places for storage at various train stations if you plan to travel outside of the program dates.

Car Rentals

The highest cause of death among students studying abroad is caused by auto accidents. You are strongly discouraged to operate in a motor vehicle while abroad. In general, many places stipulate a 23 year old age limit or higher for car rental. In any case, car or van rentals are very expensive and you will

need a major credit card. Check the telephone book in your host country or contact the train station or airport for a large listing of car rental companies.

Emergencies

The best advice for emergencies is to use your best judgment. In an emergency, you will first want to contact the Resident Director, then decide from there if you feel that the MSCD Office of International Studies should be contacted (remember the time differences; however, in a true emergency know that you may call at any hour). For instance, if your wallet gets stolen, you should IMMEDIATELY cancel your credit cards and file a report with the local police if possible. Then work on getting your documents replaced. For medical situations, you will have been informed about local clinics and doctors during orientation. You may also ask your host family for any suggestions as they may have dealt with a similar situation with a previous student.

The Auraria Campus Police Office remains available to you in an emergency 24 hours a day. They can be reached by calling 001-303-556-5000 and listening to the options.

Culture Shock

What is Culture Shock?

Experiencing culture shock is normal and individuals differ greatly in the degree to which culture affects them.

In addition to living in a physical environment (like an apartment), every individual lives in a cultural environment. This consists of man-made physical objects and social institutions.

Culture shock is brought on by the anxiety that results from losing familiar signs and symbols. These signs or cues include the hundreds of ways in which we orient ourselves to daily life. This can include when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to order in a restaurant, when to take statements seriously and when not to.

These cues may be words, gestures, facial expressions – all customs or norms which we learn in the course of growing up, and are as much a part of our culture as the languages we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend on these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware, for peace of mind and efficiency.

In an unfamiliar culture, no matter how intelligent, broad-minded, or full of goodwill a visitor may be, a series of props have been knocked out from under him or her. This is followed by a feeling of frustration and anxiety. All people react to these feelings frustration in much the same way but in varying degrees.

Some symptoms of culture shock are:

- excessive concern over-cleanliness;

- the feeling that what is new and strange is 'dirty';
- a feeling of helplessness and a desire for one's own nationality; for a U.S. citizen, for example, everything from the U.S. becomes irrationally glorified;
- irritation over delays and other minor frustrations, out of proportion to their causes;
- reluctance and outright refusal to learn the language;
- excessive fear of being cheated, robbed or injured;
- great concern over minor pains;
- a strong longing to be back home in familiar surroundings, to talk to people who 'make sense', and to be able to use 'real' money.

The Phases of Culture Shock

Honeymoon phase: During the first days most individuals are fascinated by the new culture. But the 'tourist' mentality does not normally last and the foreign visitor has to cope with conditions of real daily life.

Hostile Phase: It is then that the second stage begins, characterized by a hostile and aggressive attitude towards the host country. This second phase of culture shock is a crisis. The hostility grows out of the genuine difficulty which the visitor experiences in the process of adjustment. There seems to be mail trouble, language trouble, housing trouble, transportation trouble, shopping trouble.

People of the host country are largely indifferent to all these troubles. They try to help, but they just don't understand your concern over these difficulties. Therefore they may seem insensitive and unsympathetic to you and your worries.

The result? "I just don't like them." You may become aggressive, join with others from your home country and criticize the host country, its ways and its people. This criticism is not objective, but derogatory. Instead of trying to explain conditions and the historical circumstances which have created them, you talk as if the difficulties you experience are more or less created by the people of the host country for your special discomfort.

Grin and Bear It Phase: As the visitor succeeds in getting some knowledge of the language and begins to get around alone, the beginning of his or her adjustment to the new cultural environment is taking place. He or she may still have difficulties but usually in this stage the visitor begins to become interested in the people of the host country. The sense of humor returns and instead of criticizing, jokes about difficulties. The visitor is now on the road to recovery!

Effective Adjustment Phase (Last Phase): In the final stage of adjustment, the visitor accepts the customs of the country as just another way of living. He or she can operate within the new environment without feeling anxiety, although there are moments of strain. For a long time the visitor will understand what a host national is saying, but is not always sure what is meant! With a complete adjustment, he or she accepts the food, drink,

habits, and customs, and actually begins to enjoy them! When the visitor leaves the country he or she genuinely misses it and its people.

Traits that Contribute to Successful Adjustment

1. **Ability to fail.** Many consider this to be one of the most important traits for adjustment. Everyone makes mistakes in a new cultural environment and the visitor who is tolerant of them and tries to learn from them (rather than worrying about them) has more potential for rapid and effective adjustment.
2. **Tolerance for ambiguity.** A visitor with little tolerance for ambiguity insists upon clear definitions, precision, predictability, satisfied expectations, and, above all, knowing with certainty what is about to happen. This will all be absent in a new culture and that visitor's adjustment will be very difficult.
3. **Being non-judgmental.** This has to do with a visitor's ability to "roll with the punches" without making early and prejudicial evaluations of people and situations. A visitor who has a high tolerance level for differences encountered will obviously function better in a new and different culture.
4. **Flexibility, adaptability.** This is the ability to make basic changes in thought patterns, experience new ways of feeling, and adopt behavioral changes.
5. **Communicativeness.** This has to do with verbal and non-verbal aptitudes – listening, observing and responding. A perceptive, insightful visitor will generally adjust to a new culture more quickly.
6. **Self-reliance.** The visitor with positive self-concept, integrity and courage will adapt most easily to the challenge of living in a new culture. Don't wait for others to solve your problems.
7. **Curiosity.** The more actively one seeks out and participates in a new culture, the more quickly he/she generally adapts to it.
8. **Sense of humor.** This goes along with the ability to fail. A person who can look with humor on difficult situations will have an easier time adapting.

Additional Tips

1. Learn about the country you plan to visit and its culture. The U.S. Department of State publishes Background Notes on most countries. www.state.gov.
2. Talk to your Resident Director or your study abroad advisor. We have all experienced cultural shock and we are here to help you.

References

1. <http://travel.state.gov>
2. Hess, J. Daniel. *Studying Abroad, Learning Abroad*. 1997.
3. Kohls, L. Robert. *Survival Kit for Overseas Living: for Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad*, 3rd Ed. Intercultural Press, Inc., 1996. Chapter 18.
4. Paige, Cohen, et al. *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student's Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisitions, University of Minnesota.

Metric Systems and Sizes

Length (approximate equivalents)

1 foot = 30 cm.	39 inches = 1meter(m)
1 inch = 2.5 centimeter (cm)	1 mile = 1.6 kilometer(km)
1 km = 0.6 mile	

Important Contact Information

Auraria Campus Police Department
303-556-5000

Carrie Bennett
Study Abroad Advisor
303-352-7001
cbenne32@mscd.edu

Angela Yang
Administrative Assistant
303-352-7003
lyang3@mscd.edu

Dr. Thobhani
Executive Director, Office of International Studies
303-556-2543
thobhana@mscd.edu

Brian Hultgren
Office of Financial Aid
303-556-4511
hultgren@mscd.edu

Office of International Studies Website
www.mscd.edu/internationalstudies

Appendix-Websites

Traveler's Packing List:

http://www.cil.com/checklist_ptr.htm

Single Serving: Free basic language guides in many different languages

<http://www.single-serving.com/>

Measurement Conversion Website:

<http://www.convert-me.com/en/>

U.S. Department of State "Tips for Travelling Abroad"

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html

International Lesbian and Gay Association

<http://www.ilga.org/>

Gay and Lesbian Travel & Resource Guide

<http://www.gaymart.com/5persorg/6city/targ.html>

World Clock-Time Zones

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>

Country Codes for International Calling

<http://www.countrycodes.com/>

Currency Exchange

www.xe.com

Skype-Free International Phone Calls via the Internet

www.skype.com

International Student Identification (ISIC)

www.isic.org

World Electric Power Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm>

Journey Woman

<http://www.journeywoman.com/>

What's Up With Culture? Online Cultural Training Resource for Study Abroad

<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

World Travel Destinations, Culture and History Guide

<http://www.geographia.com/>

Mobility International

<http://www.miusa.org/>

OSAC Risk Analysts

<http://www.osac.gov/>