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PREPARING TO LEARN ABROAD!

EXPLORE – ENGAGE – DISCOVER!

Studying abroad is one of the most challenging, exciting, and rewarding experiences that a student can have during their college career. An international experience requires planning and preparation. CSU Education Abroad professionals will help students prepare for their experience abroad, but ultimately, pre-departure preparation requires significant initiative on the part of the education abroad participant.

Take time during your pre-departure planning to learn about your host country, including reading this pre-departure guide. Preparation is the key to a successful experience abroad.

Things to do before you leave

☐ Read this pre-departure guide.

☐ Complete the CSU requirements for the host program and Education Abroad, including registration in SA 482/SA 682 or the appropriate CSU courses.

☐ Education Abroad encourages students to meet with Office of Financial Aid (OFA) to ensure scholarships, loans, and grants are secured for your term abroad.

☐ If needed, meet with a travel clinic nurse from the CSU Health Network. Make sure you have all of the necessary immunizations for healthy travel to your host country.

☐ Photocopy important documents such as your passport, credit cards, insurance cards, etc. in case you lose these items and need to reorder them. Take one copy in your carry-on luggage and leave one copy with a trusted individual at home.

☐ Contact your bank and credit card companies to let them know you will be traveling abroad. Ask about exchange rates and transaction fees for international use of your cards.

☐ Learn the details of your international health insurance coverage and how to access it abroad. All students registering travel through CSU Education Abroad will be enrolled in international travel health insurance, whether from their program or CSU.

☐ Set up a communication plan with family and friends. Think about how and how often to be in touch. Establish a secondary plan in the event of an emergency.

☐ Develop an arrival plan so you know how to get from the airport to your new home.

☐ Learn as much as you can about the culture, history, language or traditions of the country in which you will be studying.
ADJUSTING TO AND UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

What is Culture?

In its simplest form, culture is the unique characteristics that unify a society. It is important to think about what influences a culture. How do politics, history, language, religion, and economics, for example, shape a country’s values? Furthermore, it is important to recognize that within a country’s borders, cultural differences exist.

Culture often manifests in two ways. The first is visible, apparent, or objective like art, music, popular culture, literature, food, and fashion. The second is often the hidden dimensions of culture that influence daily life like communication (verbal and nonverbal), values, and etiquette.

What one cannot see or understand is typically much greater than what can be seen. One is often unaware of the way things, such as religion, history, educational systems, and family dynamics affect the core attitudes and beliefs held by an individual or society.

To prepare for an education abroad experience, take the time to learn about the host culture and try to understand what cultural characteristics and influences remain hidden beneath the surface. Also, consider your own core values and beliefs and your home country’s culture. How do you expect these to influence your opinions and interactions while abroad?

Stages of Cultural Adjustment

Students will experience emotional and intellectual ups and downs as they adjust to a different culture. It is important to understand that this process is real, normal, and an important part of the education abroad experience. Culture adaptation can occur through the gradual accumulation of anxiety, frustration, and confusion that students experience with exposure to a new culture.

There are five phases of the cultural adjustment process represented in a W-Curve. The impact of each adjustment phase varies based on the individual.

Stage 1: Initial Euphoria
The first stage of the cultural adaptation cycle is the excitement or “honeymoon” stage. Upon arrival, the language is different, the food is interesting, the buildings are charming, and everything is wonderful and exciting.

Stage 2: Irritability and frustration or “Culture Shock”
After some time, the initial euphoria wears off. It could be that the language is a challenge and translation is tiring. Perhaps one longs for home, familiar foods, and the conveniences of life in the U.S. or is having difficulty accepting cultural differences. This “culture shock” may stem from the following circumstances and others:

- Being cut off from the cultural cues and patterns with which you are familiar;
- Living or studying over an extended period of time in a situation that is ambiguous;
- Questioning one’s own values
**Stage 3: Cultural Adjustment**
Most students move beyond culture shock to cultural adjustment. Within this stage, one’s perspective changes over time and one begins to adapt to the culture of the host country. Students are becoming more comfortable and confident with their interactions with host nationals.

**Stage 4: Adaptation**
Individuals may bounce between stages 2 and 3 for a while, but hopefully they are gradually moving towards adaptation. In adaptation, students develop confidence in their ability to communicate and interact with host nationals. They are open to learning and able to ascribe meaning to experiences.

**Stage 5: Returning home**
It is common for students to experience similar highs and lows as described above as they transition back to the U.S. Be aware that this may happen and seek resources and connections to support you through the transition home.
Below are some proven techniques to help one through culture shock and the adjustment process into cultural adaptation and enjoyment:

- Relax and be flexible.
- Acknowledge that culture shock is normal and will get easier.
- Reflect on your experiences through journaling, blogging, or talking with supportive friends.
- Set realistic goals.
- Resist withdrawing into yourself or surrounding yourself with only students from home.
- Stay open and inquisitive to your host culture. Focus on the positive side of diversity and difference.
- Keep your sense of humor and surround yourself with positive people.
- Keep setbacks in perspective and acknowledge your growth.
- Remember that you are the visitor. You are there to learn about a new culture.

Diverse Identities Abroad

The CSU Education Abroad website has great resources available for diverse identities. Visit www.educationabroad.colostate.edu for more information.

A student’s identity is central to the Education Abroad experience. CSU is an active member of the Diversity Abroad Network, a professional consortium of organizations dedicated to increasing access and inclusion in education abroad. CSU Education Abroad can download and share information from the Country Diversity Climate Notes on the Diversity Abroad Website if students are interested in some perspectives about diversity issues in their host country. Please note that these perspectives are meant to open up a dialogue and to bring some awareness to potential cultural differences. They cannot fully represent the complex and diverse societies and people you may encounter.
HEALTH AND MEDICAL MATTERS OVERSEAS

Maintaining Better Health Abroad

QUICK TIPS
Register your trip with the U. S. Department of State “Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)” www.travel.state.gov to receive regional updates and helpful travel tips.

HEALTH INSURANCE
CSU-sponsored, affiliated, and unaffiliated programs require students to have extra international health insurance. Many programs include the cost of insurance in the program fees. Consult an education abroad coordinator if you are not certain about what additional insurance you have. Students should also maintain their U.S. insurance while abroad.

THE CSU HEALTH NETWORK TRAVEL CLINIC
The CSU Health Network provides a comprehensive advisory consultation to assist international travelers in their preparation for healthy and safe experiences abroad. This includes any necessary or recommended immunizations and medicines for the location(s) you will travel to.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS
Students should try to bring enough prescriptions for the duration of their program abroad as not all medications are available internationally. Medications should be in their original packaging with the prescription label clearly visible. In many cases, it is illegal to mail drugs internationally, even if prescribed, and they may be confiscated. If a student has any doubt about the legality of carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the CSU Health Network Travel Clinic staff or the embassy/consulate of the destination country prior to departure. It is also advisable to have prescriptions and written instructions from your physician in the event of an emergency.

PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS
If you have a pre-existing medical or mental health condition, consult your regular doctor to discuss how to manage your condition or symptoms abroad. You may want to inform program leadership, in case you have difficulties abroad, so they may assist you from a more informed standpoint. You may also want to work with the insurance your program provides to ensure that you can access what you need abroad or so you can make plans if the insurance will not work for your condition abroad.
STAYING SAFER ABROAD
Maintaining student safety are top priorities for Education Abroad at Colorado State University. The following guidelines will help ensure students remain safer abroad:

- Take responsibility for all the preparatory elements necessary for the program. This includes participating fully in CSU pre-departure and on-site orientations.
- Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the education abroad program that relate to the safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the chosen host country.
- Conduct personal research on the country(ies) you plan to visit with particular emphasis on health and safety concerns, as well as the social, cultural, and political situations.
- Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the participating program.
- Inform parents/guardians/families about your whereabouts and activities while abroad, including plans for personal travel.
- Transportation choices can greatly affect your safety; know the safer options for your location, and use them.
- Obey host-country laws and understand these may vary significantly from the U.S.
- Never use illegal drugs and avoid excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol. Students are subject to the laws of the host country. If they disobey the laws, there is little CSU or the U.S. Embassy can do to help detained citizens abroad.
- Never travel internationally with any amount of medical or recreational marijuana even though it is legal in Colorado. Because marijuana is illegal federally and in many countries, students can be arrested, prosecuted, and deported, if in possession. U.S. airports and airplanes are federal jurisdictions and also do not allow marijuana.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and legal services in the host county.
- Always act as an ambassador for both Colorado State University and the United States.
GENERAL SAFETY TIPS WHILE ABROAD

- Travel in pairs whenever possible.
- Always let people know where you are going and how to reach you.
- Keep all important documents such as passport, money or credit cards in a safe and secure place.
- Dress in accordance with local norms to blend in and not attract unwanted attention.
- Find out which areas are less safe than others. Avoid being alone in unfamiliar neighborhoods.
- Do not hitchhike, ride on motorcycles, or in the back of trucks, even if it is common there.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is difficult to anticipate, and each person should evaluate their own risk tolerance when selecting a program and country. For concerns related to terrorism, the U.S. Department of State recommends that students avoid large public gatherings and use caution in and around popular tourist destinations. In all circumstances, it is important to be vigilant and report any suspicious behavior to authorities.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Check with your on-site program coordinator or international office to determine what safety procedures should be followed in case of natural disaster, and if there are any advance warning signals of which you should be aware.

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Do not attend protests and public demonstrations. Public protests can turn dangerous, and the protester and police responses could vary greatly by country. In the event of an emergency or potential emergency, please heed advice from local government and program leadership regarding safe behaviors and emergency response.

SITE EMERGENCIES

Travel to another country is not inherently dangerous, but there are risks in all countries and traveling itself brings some different risks than life in your home country.

LOCAL CONCERNS OR RISKS

Every country in the world has unique risks. This may be ocean safety, dangerous animals, or unsafe areas for travel. Research the locations you will travel, learn about the risks you may encounter, and how to mitigate those risks. In the event of a crisis or emergency, please contact loved ones, the on-site program coordinator or international office, and CSU Education Abroad for assistance and assurance of your whereabouts.

ALCOHOL SAFETY

If you choose to consume alcohol, you can reduce risks and harm to self by:

- Being mindful that excessive alcohol consumption lowers inhibitions and often can put one at risk.
- Going out and staying out with friends to help everyone come home safer.
- Not accepting drinks (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) from strangers or new acquaintances. Also by watching the drink being poured and not leaving it unattended.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

In the event of sexual assault while abroad, seek immediate medical attention if necessary. Anyone, who experiences sexual assault or sexual misconduct, should notify their local program leader or CSU for emotional support and/or assistance with navigating local resources.

Confidential Emotional Support: CSU Women and Gender Advocacy Center (WGAC) at www.wgac.colostate.edu. 970-492-4242

Assistance with Local Resources or Reporting Options:
International Programs Emergency number 970-491-6425.

For helpful travel information, visit TRAVELSTATE.GOV
Staying registered as a full-time CSU student while abroad provides many benefits, including:

1. Use of institutional, state, and federal financial aid
2. Waiver of an AUCC Requirement (pending successful completion of at least 3 credits abroad)
3. Continuous registration at CSU
4. Emergency support services while abroad

A. Enrollment in CSU Courses
Students who participate in a CSU faculty-led program or Semester at Sea will have their credit and grades calculate into their CSU GPA.

B. Enrollment in SA 482/SA 682 for Credit Transfer
Students participating in CSU-sponsored exchange programs, CSU-affiliated programs, unaffiliated CSU programs, or direct enrollment at a foreign institution will register at CSU in SA 482 (SA 682 for graduate students) for the term(s) they are abroad. Coursework completed abroad is eligible for transfer to CSU provided the grade earned is equivalent to "C-" or higher. Coursework taken on a pass/fail basis abroad will not transfer. CSU does not calculate grades earned at the foreign or domestic institutions into the CSU GPA.

REGISTRATION FOR SA 482/SA 682
Students will register for SA 482/SA 682 through RamWeb using the five-digit course registration number (CRN) provided below:

CRN for undergraduate students (SA 482):
Fall: SA 482 - 65406
Spring: SA 482 - 11530
Summer: SA 482 – 51391

CRN for graduate students (SA 682):
Fall: SA 682 - 65823
Spring: SA 682 - 15549
Summer: SA 682 - 51393

All students must complete the Transfer Credit Form to be able to register in SA 482. Failure to register in SA 482/SA 682 will result in the deactivation of a student's CSU enrollment, which requires reapplying for admission to Colorado State University upon return. Financial aid will also not disburse until a student registers.
ACADEMICS, FINANCES, & COMMUNICATION

Enrollment, Scholarships & Financial Aid, Visa information & What To Do in case of Lost Documents

ENROLLMENT AT YOUR HOST INSTITUTION ABROAD
While abroad, for financial aid and immigration reasons, students need to take a full course load that is the equivalent to a minimum of 12 credits at Colorado State University during the semester (9 credits for graduate students). For federal financial aid, 6 credits are required during the summer (5 credits for graduate students).

REMEMBER TO SAVE YOUR COURSE MATERIALS
Bring back your course syllabi, reading lists, and copies of papers, exams, etc. This will facilitate the transfer of credit should there be any questions about the content of your courses once you return to CSU.

GOING ABROAD THE FINAL SEMESTER PRIOR TO GRADUATION
If students go abroad in their final semester, there may be delay in their graduation date by a semester so the Registrar can receive and process transcripts from overseas institutions.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EDUCATION ABROAD
- To be eligible to utilize financial aid for study abroad, students must be enrolled at CSU in a degree-seeking program and be participating in a University-approved education abroad program.
- Students must complete the Financial Aid/Education Abroad Certification in their myEdAbroad account and register in SA 482/SA 682 (or coursework through CSU Online) in order to receive financial aid.
- Disbursement of financial aid for Education Abroad participants is at the same time as for on-campus CSU students (typically mid-August for fall semester, mid-January for spring semester, and mid-May for summer semester).

BE AWARE OF YOUR WITHDRAWAL TIMELINES
- Most programs require deposits and are paying expenses on a student’s behalf long before going abroad.
- Before withdrawing from a program, be sure to notify CSU Education Abroad and your program provider to inquire about potential financial implications.

VISAS AND IMPORTANT PREPARATIONS – PRIOR TO DEPARTURE
- Check with the program sponsor to see if a visa is required.
- Depending on the country, the visa application process can take up to three months. The application process can be unpredictable so it is a good idea to start the process early.
- You MUST have a passport before you can apply for a visa.
- Travel to other countries outside the host country may also require a student or long-term visa. One can find information on visa requirements on the U.S. Department of State’s country travel advice at www.travel.state.gov.

LOSS OR THEFT OF A VALID UNITED STATES PASSPORT SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY BY PHONE OR IN WRITING TO:
United States Department of State
Passport Service travel.state.gov/passports
Within the United States: 1 (877) 487-2778
Outside the United States: Contact the nearest United States Embassy or Consulate
ATM CARDS
Students often rely more upon cash transactions while abroad. The primary source of cash overseas will be ATMs. ATM machines will allow one to withdraw local currency, although generally there is a transaction fee. Education Abroad encourages students to research the most favorable fees on debit and credit cards before departure.

CREDIT CARDS
Most student travelers should carry a minimum of one debit card and one credit card. Visa and MasterCard are generally widely accepted around the world. Be sure to inform the bank and credit card company of international travels to prevent security holds. Use ATMs in well-lit, well-travelled locations and go during the day or with someone else to reduce risks. ATMs in airports, banks, and hotels are often safer options.

Obtain the numbers for the global customer assistance offices for each credit/debit cards and financial institutions. Know exactly how to report a damaged, lost, or stolen debit or credit card and how to replace them if needed.

LOCAL CURRENCY
If desired, students can order small amounts of foreign currency from local banks prior to leaving the United States (allow a several days processing) or can obtain foreign currency at an exchange booth or ATM in the airport.

Communication While Abroad

Cell phones are a great way to keep in touch with local friends. Many students choose to purchase an international SIM card for their cell phones. This can be done in the U.S. or in the host country upon arrival. Others may choose to purchase an inexpensive mobile phone while abroad. Pay-as-you-go phones typically do not require contracts or minimum usage agreements.

FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, etc. are apps that offer free or inexpensive ways to communicate internationally. Education Abroad encourages students to speak with others who have recently been abroad in the host country to determine the most efficient way to communicate.
ADVICE ON PACKING

Students returning from education abroad usually say that they took too much. Pack at least one week before departure. Several days later, go back remove half of what was packed. Moreover, remember, there may not be convenient transportation, elevators, escalators, etc. abroad, so be prepared to carry everything independently over various terrain.

- Choose luggage carefully, keeping in mind cost, durability, capacity, and ease of carrying/toting without assistance. Consider airline limits (and extra costs) regarding weight, size, and number of pieces for checkable and carry-on items.
- Check with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) about carry-on restrictions for liquids and other articles.
- Typically travelers can check 2 large suitcases on most international airlines.
- Take clothing that is lightweight and layerable; low maintenance and easily cleaned; and flexible in terms of fashion, occasion, and weather.
- Include footwear that is durable, suitable for wet weather, comfortable for long walks, and flexible in terms of fashion and social occasion.
- Include a scarf, tie, or similar to dress up a bit when appropriate.
- Minimize the packing of toiletry items. Plan to purchase these abroad.
- Avoid electric items that require power conversion, especially hair dryers and flat irons. These items are easy to purchase abroad.
- A portable phone charger and electrical adapters are helpful purchases prior to departure.
- Do not take a lot of bedding and towels, even if they are needed. Buy them upon arrival.
- For many climates, take an inexpensive travel umbrella or buy one upon arrival.
- Below is an example of a checklist you might create for yourself, depending on where you are going, what you will be doing, how long you will be gone, etc.
PREPARING TO DEPART AND RETURN
Packing Advice and Suggestions

CLOTHING
(PACKED IN CHECKED LUGGAGE)
☐ 2 pair of walking shoes (broken in)
☐ 1 pair shower shoes
☐ 3-5 pairs of socks
☐ 5-7 pairs of underwear
☐ 1-2 pairs of shorts
☐ 2 pairs of pants or skirt
☐ 2 shirts/blouses
☐ 1 sweater/sweatshirt
☐ 1 poncho or rain jacket
☐ 1 jacket (the weight depends on the climate)
☐ 1 bathing suit
☐ More formal attire—dress, tie, etc.

MEDICINE
(PACKED IN CARRY-ON LUGGAGE)
☐ Prescription medicine, including contraceptives (Keep it in the original bottle and carry a copy of the prescription).
☐ Eyeglasses and contacts and prescription
☐ Aspirin/Tylenol/Advil
☐ Any other over-the-counter medications you use (keep in original packaging)

MISCELLANEOUS
(CONSIDER "TRAVEL SIZED" OPTIONS)
☐ Toothbrush and toothpaste
☐ Soap and shampoo
☐ Sunscreen, moisturizer, cosmetics
☐ Deodorant
☐ Tissue
☐ Feminine products
☐ Razor
☐ Sunglasses
☐ Brush or comb
☐ Camera
☐ Books, guides, and maps
☐ Small amount of laundry soap
☐ Stuff bag/plastic storage bag for wet clothes
☐ Umbrella
☐ Luggage locks and tags

DOCUMENTS
☐ Passport
☐ Tickets and rail passes
☐ Student ID card
☐ Cash, debit card, and credit card
RETURNING HOME

Preparing for Reentry

RETURNEE RECEPTION & WORKSHOP

Share your experiences and discuss reactions upon return, get career/resume/interview tips, learn how to:

- Make a wish list of all the things to do and accomplish before departure.
- Communicate with friends and family about what to expect as one goes through cultural adjustment upon return. Be conscious of making judgments and being overly critical of home.
- Take pictures of your favorite people, places, foods, etc. CSU Education Abroad has a photo contest students can enter upon return.
- Set aside time to say good-bye to friends, on-site support, host school and city. This may help you process your experience.
- Register for your returning semester to CSU. Stay in touch with your ASC or advisor for advising codes and important dates.
- Close your on-site bank account and settle any financial matters abroad. This includes checking in with CSU Office of Financial Aid to make sure you have completed everything to receive financial aid the following semester.
- Depending upon the program, request an official transcript be sent to CSU Education Abroad if one will not be sent automatically.
- Confirm move-out date with host country accommodations. Confirm housing for return to Fort Collins.
- Confirm return flight. Check with the airline regarding weight/size regulations and the costs for overweight or additional bags.

REENTRY

Re-entry may be the most challenging part of education abroad. Most students find their experience abroad life changing. These changes can be hard to process and communicate with others. Students may find themselves feeling isolated because few can truly identify what it is like to live in another culture and how that affects personal development and one's worldview. This is why it is important to reach out to others, who have experience with education abroad. They can identify with this process and provide support and encouragement. While some may long to return to their host country for quite some time after return to the U.S., eventually these students find equilibrium and develop a holistic perspective on their education abroad experience. Patience with oneself is critical in this process.

Check out Returning to CSU on the CSU Education Abroad website for ideas about getting involved at CSU and working through cultural adjustment upon your return.

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#RamsAbroad