Education Abroad Pandemic Travel Preparation – issued August 17, 2021

This guidance is available to students in their TerraDotta registration. It applicable to CSU staff- and faculty-led programs, unaffiliated programs, and affiliated programs beginning in Winter Break, Spring Break, Spring, and Summer 2022.

CSU Education Abroad is working with our partners to create impactful international experiences that have adapted to the ongoing pandemic, reduce your risk of exposure to COVID-19 to the greatest extent possible, and account for travel risks that are in addition to but separate from contracting the virus. Travel has always required your detailed planning and understanding of the risks involved; this is especially true today. It also requires that you take steps to foster your own safety and help to support the safety of others. With this in mind, we have created this guidance to help you and your emergency contacts think critically about international travel and to prepare for circumstances that are both within and beyond an individual’s control.

This guidance includes important prompts and proactive planning questions, but it cannot be exhaustive; it also includes websites and resources that are continuously updated and should be consulted throughout your experience. We encourage you to ask questions, speak to your support network and to assess your own risk tolerance throughout the planning process. Your well-being is important to CSU. While our goal is for you to have an education abroad experience, we need to remain flexible in this evolving situation.

If you have questions or do not understand the prompts in this form, you are asked to contact CSU’s International Risk Manager at derek.smallwood@colostate.edu.

1. Vaccination Policy

Review CSU’s vaccination policy. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 helps to protect both you and the communities you interact with abroad, many of which have not yet seen widespread administration of vaccines. In certain countries, documentation of vaccination eases entry requirements and permits access to large-group activities. We can anticipate that this trend will continue. Some of CSU’s affiliated programs are requiring that all participants are vaccinated; it is possible that some countries or foreign universities will adopt similar policies.

2. CSU Travel Policy

At this time, CSU maintains a restriction on non-essential international travel. You are advised to think critically about if now is the best time for you to go abroad. If you can defer without disruption to your degree plan, it is advisable to do so. Depending on your program model, if this restriction remains in place, you may be asked to complete a petition for a travel exemption.

3. Pre-Existing Conditions

Consider how certain pre-existing conditions present a higher risk and may impact your personal health and safety while abroad. This is also applicable to the friends and family you may live with when you return. You are advised to consult with a medical professional before departure.
4. Travel Exposure

International travel puts you at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19. Review measures to prevent yourself from getting sick. You are encouraged to ask questions about what your program provider, host organization, or host institution (which, for some programs, may be CSU) are doing to reduce exposure to program participants.

5. Positive Test

The science around COVID-19 is new and ever-developing, especially as we respond to emerging variants. No vaccine is 100% effective. It is important that you consider what will happen if you test positive for COVID-19, and the ramifications for housing, academic coursework, and other important considerations, specifically in a foreign environment.

6. CDC Travel Guidance

Review the CDC guidance for international travel. This website includes links to critical information including the requirements for re-entry to the US, safer travel tips, and information specific to your destination.

7. Entry/Exit Requirements

You are required to understand the entry/exit procedures for your host country as well as transit countries. Know that this information is subject to change at any time and it is vital that you continuously monitor the appropriate resources. You can find entry/exit information by searching for "US Embassy [your host country]" and navigating to their COVID-19 information page. If you do not carry a US passport, the Embassy of the country that issued your passport should have similar information available.

8. Daily Life Abroad

Each country has responded to the pandemic within its unique structural and cultural context. Your lived experiences with the pandemic in the US may be different from the lived experiences of the host country you will be visiting, some of which have been slow to re-open. You must be flexible to changing itineraries based on local social norms, restrictions on travel and businesses, reduced free time activities, and creative new ways of engaging with local culture. It is important that you set realistic expectations for your time abroad and be ready to adapt if and when country conditions change.

9. Potential for Mobility Restrictions

While you are abroad, you are subject to the rules of that country. This could result in mobility restrictions (e.g. curfew, limited transportation options, etc.). In an extreme case, a 'lockdown' could impede your ability to travel or return home until restrictions are lifted.

10. US Government Advisories

Review the advisories from the Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention specific to your destination. What risks do these advisories list? Which of these risks can you control (e.g. getting vaccinated against COVID-19)? As the world re-opens, some of these risks may shift (e.g.
crime, or social unrest). It is important that you keep yourself informed of these known risks and mitigation practices.

11. International Insurance

Education Abroad students are required to have international health insurance. These plans are not trip insurance or "cancel for any reason" (CFAR) insurance which can be purchased separately. (Note: CFAR insurance may not be available for CSU faculty-led programs). Many insurance plans have exclusions related to pandemics. Be sure to read the fine print so that you understand any insurance limitations.

12. Emergency Plan

Consider how you might navigate a non-COVID emergency. It is important to identify your support networks in-country, how to contact them 24/7, and how to respond to an emergency within the possible limitations presented by the pandemic (e.g. restricted availability of hospitals, symptom checking or testing before you can receive care, etc.).

13. Financial Commitments

Carefully review the withdrawal timelines, financial commitments, and any refund policies related to both CSU and your program provider. Wait to purchase airfare or only purchase airfare that has minimal cancellation or change fees. Note that if you can earn academic credit, even if the teaching environment looks much different then you anticipated (e.g. online, change in itinerary, etc.) applicable tuition fees will not be refunded.

14. Additional Costs

These could include, but are not limited to, last minute cancellation or alteration to your program (including while you are abroad); cost for COVID-19 testing; costs incurred from needing to quarantine or isolate; and additional costs for being required to remain in-country beyond your program dates. Ensure that you account for the potential of additional expenses.

15. Back-Up Plan

You are advised to have an alternative plan to account for the possibility that your participation in this program cannot go as planned. This could be due to events both within and beyond your control (e.g. program cancelation, increase in cases, testing positive for COVID-19 before departure, etc.). A back-up plan could include another international destination or coursework here at CSU. Consult with your Education Abroad Coordinator and Academic Advisor for support.

16. Program Model

Each Education Abroad program model is different. If you are at a host university you will need to follow their institutional policies; if you are on a CSU faculty-led program, or in a homestay, consider how your actions could affect others; if you are doing field research you should consider how to conduct your work in a safe way, especially in countries with lower levels of vaccination. Speak to your program coordinator or host organization about how you can be the safest possible traveler within the context of your unique experience.
17. Support Systems

Know that you have layers of support when you travel abroad as a CSU student. You are asked to speak to your Education Abroad Coordinator about the support offered by your host organization/institution and CSU. Also consider how you maintain your personal support structures while abroad for both new and pre-existing needs (physical and mental health, academic needs, etc.).

18. Responsible Travel

Remember, we each have an important role in reducing the spread of the virus. If you can travel abroad, you will need to do so in a healthy and responsible way to reduce exposure for both yourself and others. This may mean restricting travel outside of your host country. Instead, your study abroad experience could be a unique and valuable opportunity to immerse yourself in your host country. It is important to assess your interest in a more limited or structured experience, or one with less free time available to participants.