STUDY ABROAD
PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

Taiwan—Photo courtesy of Mary Borovicka

The World – See It For Yourself!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Before You Leave
- Academic Credit, Fees & Financial Aid ........................................... 1  
- Housing & Parking ........................................................................ 2  
- Required Documents ..................................................................... 3  
- Health & Safety ........................................................................... 4  
- Insurance Check & FAQ’s ................................................................. 6  
- Time Change, Jet Lag & Preparing for a Safe Trip ...................... 8  
- Financial Preparation ................................................................... 9  
- Preparing for Travel ..................................................................... 11  
- Suggested Packing List ................................................................. 13  

## While You’re Away
- Safety & Security ......................................................................... 14  
- Safety Tips .................................................................................... 15  
- Alcohol Use & Illegal Drugs .......................................................... 18  
- Health & Wellness ........................................................................ 20  
- Housing ......................................................................................... 21  
- Communicating While Abroad ......................................................... 22  
- Cross-Cultural Adjustment .............................................................. 24  

## Preparing to Return .................................................................. 30  

## Web Resources ......................................................................... 31  

## USC Contact Information ......................................................... 33  

---

All photos provided by USC Study Abroad students and returnees.
SO YOU’RE STUDYING ABROAD...

Congratulations on your decision to study abroad! You’ve narrowed down your choices, made applications, researched locations, and now you’re joining the privileged ranks of students seeking an international education. Loads of excitement awaits you—new experiences, new friends, a new culture. Each study abroad experience is different, and although some of the best lessons come through personal discovery, it is important to prepare as much as you are able to for your time overseas. This guide offers an overview of the steps you should take before, during, and after your time abroad to make the process as smooth and stress-free as possible. The Study Abroad staff is available to provide you with information, advice, and assistance, but it is your responsibility to be aware of your academic requirements, financial needs, necessary documents, and other important aspects of the process. Studying abroad can be the experience of a lifetime, so prepare well, adventure on, and enjoy the ride!

Before You Leave...

Academic Credit

- All USC students who study abroad must meet with their academic advisor and/or college dean and study abroad advisor to complete and sign the Study Abroad Approval Form before they leave. The form verifies that USC agrees to give you credit for the approved courses and provides access to scholarships and financial aid.

- Check with your major department to determine how many credit hours you can take away from USC. If you are taking more than 12 hours of major credit while abroad, make special arrangements with your department/college. Also, be cognizant of any hours requirements needed to retain the scholarships, loans, financial aid, etc., you receive.

- If you will be a senior during your program abroad, you must petition the dean’s office of your college to waive the “Last 30 Hours” rule and to submit your application for graduation.

- Once the Study Abroad Approval Form is complete, and all other paper work has been submitted, the study abroad advisors will authorize you to register for the INTL placeholder course. You will receive and email with directions to complete the registration through the VIP system. INTL is only a placeholder course and will
be removed once courses taken overseas are transferred. In order to remain enrolled at USC and access scholarships and financial aid, you must register for the INTL course.

Fee Payment and Financial Aid

If you are participating in a USC exchange program, you will receive a bill from USC as usual. Whether you pay tuition to USC, or to another institution or program provider, submission of the Study Abroad Approval Form will allow you to access your financial aid and/or scholarships. It is also recommended that you meet with the appropriate financial aid counselor in the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships during the semester preceding your exchange or study abroad program.

Regardless of the type of study abroad program you are taking part in, if you receive financial aid or scholarships from USC you must go to the VIP system and apply this aid to your bill. If you have an overage, this amount can be directly deposited into a checking account or a check can be mailed to your permanent address. If you still owe money to USC, you will need to make arrangements to pay this bill in a timely manner. We recommend that USC bills and other information be sent to your permanent address while you are abroad. Update your address using VIP.

Note about direct enrollment: Those who pay tuition directly to the host university or a program provider should expect to pay their tuition up front and receive an overage check later for the amount of scholarships or aid. The Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships will make every effort to process the paperwork prior to tuition payment, but cannot guarantee it.

Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships
1714 College Street
803-777-8134
Scholarships: Ashleigh Speaks
Financial aid: Paula Edwards

You may request a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at scfaid@sc.edu or apply online at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/.

Housing
- If you paid a deposit for on-campus housing before being accepted to a study abroad program, please contact Housing to make the necessary arrangements and cancellations.
- You will typically receive notification of your housing arrangements from your host institution’s accommodation office prior to your departure. Study Abroad does not
have access to this information. Any inquiries about your housing placement and computer services on that campus should be directed to the accommodations office or program coordinator at your host institution.

**Parking**
If you have a parking space in a garage on campus and would like to maintain seniority, e-mail Ami Steele in Parking Services, inform her of the semester(s) that you will be studying abroad, and note that when you return you would like to retain the same parking space as before. For more information, visit the Parking Services website at [http://www.sc.edu/vmps/park.html](http://www.sc.edu/vmps/park.html).

**Required Documents**

**Passport**
A passport is an official identification document issued by governments to their own citizens. (If you are not a U.S. citizen, contact the embassy of your country of citizenship.) You need a valid passport to enter other countries and to re-enter the U.S.

If you do not already have a valid passport, apply for one immediately. Processing an application takes four to six weeks—even longer during the peak travel season. You may apply in person at selected post offices, at federal or state courts of records, or at one of the passport agencies of the U.S. Department of State. For many programs, you will also need a visa, which you cannot obtain without having a passport.

To find current information and download your passport application, visit [http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)

Passport application forms are also available at the main U.S. Post Office on Assembly Street.

You will need the following to apply for a passport:

- Two 2×2” color photos (these cannot be vending machine photos). FedEx Kinko's on Greene Street, CVS on Assembly and most photo shops offer passport photo services.
- Certified birth certificate issued by the city, county or state
- Photo ID (e.g., a driver's license)
- Check or money order for $97 (effective at time of printing).

We suggest you get additional passport photos since you will need them for visa appli-
cations, ID cards, applications or other documents at your study abroad site.

If you already have a passport, check the expiration date to be sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond your stay abroad as required by many countries in order to issue you a visa.

**Visas and Residence Permits**
Some countries require a student visa or residence permit. Visit [http://www.embassy.org](http://www.embassy.org) for links to embassies and consulates based in the U.S. The Study Abroad office is glad to provide advice, but you are responsible for obtaining the appropriate documentation. The embassy or consulate of your host country has information about which document you need.

A visa is written permission to visit a country granted by the government of that country. If you plan to study in a country for an extended period, you may need a special student visa or residence permit. Information relating to visas may be obtained from the nearest embassy or consulate of the country concerned. Some embassies and consulates process visa requests quickly yet some can take longer to have returned or even require an in-person visit. Visa rules and procedures are controlled by the country to be visited and do not fall under the jurisdiction of U.S. embassies overseas or the State Department. You are then responsible for obtaining the required visa, if one is necessary.

If you are planning to travel to other countries before or after your program, contact the consulate of those countries and ask for detailed visa information. You can receive more information on any country from the State Department web site: [http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html](http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html). However, keep in mind that you must check with the embassies or consulates of the countries you plan on visiting to see if you need a visa.

**Health & Safety**

**Medical Self Assessment Form**
All participants on USC exchange programs are required to complete and return the Medical Self Assessment Form to the Study Abroad office. The information you provide on the form alerts the program administration of any medical or emotional problems, past or present, which might affect you in a foreign study context. If you have any concerns about health problems you may have while abroad, we encourage you to contact a staff member in our office. This is not to prevent you from participating, but rather to allow us to be aware of any additional needs that we can help accommodate.
Physical Exam
The Study Abroad office does not require you to have a physical exam before going abroad. However, it may be required for certain countries/visas. We do recommend that you schedule a visit with your medical provider to discuss any concerns; mild physical or psychological disorders can become serious under the stresses of life while studying abroad. We also recommend you have a dental check-up before departure.

Inoculations
We urge you to consult with your physician about any inoculations you should receive before leaving for the countries where you will study or visit. It is ultimately your responsibility to have all necessary shots. Inoculations should be recorded and certified in the yellow "International Certificate of Vaccination" pamphlet. You can get one of these from the Post Office when you turn in your passport application or from your physician.

USC’s Student Health Services Travel Clinic (in the Thomson Student Health Center) provides country-specific health information and administers or schedules any needed immunizations. Please consult their website at: http://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/travel.htm, or call (803) 777-0991 to make an appointment with the travel nurse (a small consultation fee applies). Students anticipating travel should make an appointment a minimum of eight weeks before travel to allow time for any counseling and administration of immunizations.

Standard immunizations, such as hepatitis, measles, tetanus, meningitis, and influenza are available through the immunization/allergy clinic also located in the Thomson Student Health Center. Please visit their website at http://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/tshc.htm or call (803)777-3175 for more information.

Prescription Medicines
If you take prescription medicine regularly or expect to take any while away, be sure to bring a sufficient supply with you for the time you will be abroad. Your insurance company may ask you for a letter that certifies that you will be studying overseas. Our office can issue this letter if necessary.

Ask your doctor about the availability abroad of any prescription medicine you take regularly. Even if your prescription is available, it may be simpler to take an adequate supply with you for the period you are abroad, provided it is not perishable. Be sure to keep all prescription medications in their original bottles to facilitate clearance through customs. In many places, you will also need to carry a letter from your physician, stat-
ing why you need your prescription medication. Pack all prescription medicines in your carry-on luggage in case your checked baggage is lost or delayed. Also, be sure to carry a copy of all current prescriptions, including that for eyeglasses.

**Further Information**
For more information on your destination, visit the World Health Organization Website at [http://www.who.int](http://www.who.int), the Center for Disease Control Website at [http://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), and Trip Prep at [http://www.tripprep.com](http://www.tripprep.com).

**Insurance Check**

**Mandatory Health Insurance Requirement for Study Abroad Participants**
Health and accident insurance is required of all participants on USC study abroad and exchange programs. Purchase of the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is required of USC exchange, departmental and affiliate participants, and is highly recommended for anyone participating in a study abroad program. The ISIC card provides supplemental emergency insurance coverage, but should not be your only source of coverage while abroad. The ISIC card also enables you to receive discounts on travel arrangements, accommodations, museums, cultural events, and entertainment. For information on how to purchase the ISIC card, visit [http://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/](http://www.myisic.com/MyISIC/)

U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. Some programs, such as U.S. Medicare and Medicaid, do not provide for payment of medical services while abroad. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas may face extreme difficulties.

All students should secure adequate health insurance coverage for travel within, to and from their host country, and for visits to neighboring countries. If you are on a parent’s insurance plan, make sure it provides overseas coverage.

Basic policies for international travel should provide the following coverage:

- Hospitalization for accidents and illnesses while abroad
- Ambulance and emergency room expenses
- Emergency medical evacuation
- Accidental death and dismemberment
- Repatriation of remains
- Routine doctor visits

Buckingham Palace, London, England—Photo courtesy of Carol Pickens
- Dental coverage
- Medication

In addition to the type of coverage the policy provides, you should also be concerned with the amount and duration of coverage:

- Maximum amount of coverage
- Duration of coverage
- Deductibles

**Insurance FAQ’s**

**If I need medical care while abroad, how do I file a claim with my insurance company?**
Check directly with your insurance carrier for instructions. You may need to carry some claim forms with you to complete after you receive medical attention abroad. Usually, you have to pay for your medical treatment while abroad and then apply to your company for reimbursement.

**Do I have to take a copy of my insurance policy with me?**
You do not need to take the policy with you, but you must take an insurance ID card or other evidence that you are covered. You should also take any claim forms that your insurance carrier requires. Be sure to carry contact phone numbers so you know who to call if you have questions about your coverage.

**I have to buy my own insurance for my study abroad program. What companies provide health insurance for study abroad?**
If you are a student at USC you are eligible for USC’s Student Insurance Plan. The University of South Carolina Student Insurance Plan is designed to cover you anywhere in the world while participating on a USC-approved study abroad program. For detailed information about overseas coverage and open enrollment dates, please contact Pearce & Pearce. They administer the plan and process and pay claims out of their office in Florence, SC. Their website (http://www.studentinsurance.com) provides full information on the plan (brochure, master policy, premium cost, etc.), on-line status concerning enrollment, premium payment options and claims processing, on-line enrollment, and downloadable forms (brochure, enrollment forms, insurance cards, etc.). If you have specific questions or need clarification, call Pearce & Pearce at (800) 622-6491, or e-mail them at usc@studentinsurance.com.
In the past, students have sought coverage from the companies listed below. You can contact the companies directly for information. Read their policy information carefully and decide which policy is best for you.
The University of South Carolina does not endorse any of these carriers and provides these contacts as a resource to you.

- T.W. Lord Associates (800) 633-2360
- CMI Insurance Specialists’ Health Insurance for U.S. Students Studying Abroad (800) 677-7887
- Cultural Insurance Services International (800) 303-8120 x5136
- Healthcare Global – Wallach & Company (800) 237-6615
- Hinchcliff (800) 242-4178
- Travel Guard (800) 826-4919
- HTH Worldwide (877) 424-4325

**Time Change and Jet Lag**

Before you go, find out what the time difference is between your home and your destination, keeping daylight savings time in mind. Travel across time zones can really alter your internal clock, a phenomenon known as jet lag. Jet lag affects each person differently; you may have very little difficulty adjusting, or it may take a little while. Most students are completely adjusted within the first week. In order to facilitate this adjustment, try the following:

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and other sleep-affecting substances the day you leave, during the flight, and during the period of adjustment once you arrive.

- Try to adjust your sleep times as soon as possible to the time clock of your destination. This may require staying up even though you feel incredibly tired.

- Do not plan on doing too much the first day or two after you arrive, allowing yourself plenty of time to rest.

**Preparing for a Safe Trip**

**Keeping Informed**

Between now and your departure—and once you have left the U.S.—it is your responsibility to stay informed about developments in the country/countries in which you will spend time (including any countries you'll visit that are not part of your study abroad program’s itinerary).

The U.S. State Department website ([http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html)) includes Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements, and Travel Warnings. Periodically checking this website is especially important if your program and/or travel takes you to regions of the world where unstable conditions exist or are likely to develop.
If you will be abroad during an election year, contact the Federal Voting Assistance Program at http://www.fvap.gov, which provides applications for absentee ballots.

**Emergency Services to US Citizens Abroad**

Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs is responsible for the welfare and whereabouts of U.S. citizens traveling and residing abroad. Overseas Citizens Services has a 24-hours a day hotline at (202) 647-5225 for American Citizens Services.

Further information regarding the emergency services to U.S. citizens abroad and related U.S. State Department services can be obtained on the following Web site: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1205.html.

**Document Safety**

Make two photocopied sets of your valuable documents and maintain "emergency files" containing: airline ticket(s), passport, traveler’s checks, driver's license, blood type and Rh factor, eye-glass prescription, name of doctor and dentist, insurance policies and the credit cards you take abroad. Leave one “emergency file" set at home and keep another with you in a separate place from the originals.

Leave a copy of your itinerary and contact information with family or friends at home. Never pack your passport or any other important documents in your checked luggage. Passports (including visa page), credit cards, and money should be worn in a pouch or a money belt as close to your body as possible.

**Financial Preparation**

Spend time before you leave to familiarize yourself with your host country’s currency and exchange rates (http://www.xe.com/ucc/). Decide how much you expect to spend on a weekly and monthly basis, and also during periods of travel. Cost-of-living estimates are usually available from most school websites and tourist offices, but probably the best sources of financial information are other students who have recently returned from your study abroad program. Visit the Study Abroad Virtual Advising Network (VAN, www.sa.sc.edu/sa/van.htm) to ask other USC students about their experiences abroad. Travel guides, including Frommer’s, Lonely Planet, Let's Go, and Rough Guides can also provide estimates for budget travel expenses. Links to their websites are available in the Web Resources section of this guide.
Estimate additional expenses beyond program costs:
In addition to basic costs, such as tuition, housing, and meals, you should develop a budget that includes the following expenses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Living Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passport/photos</td>
<td>Commuting costs to host school</td>
<td>Books, instructional fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa, if required</td>
<td>Hotel and food on arrival, if required</td>
<td>Housing or key deposit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and dental exams</td>
<td>Railpasses: Eurail Passes, Japan Railpasses</td>
<td>Gifts and souvenirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Prescriptions</td>
<td>Hotel and food on arrival, if required</td>
<td>Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveler’s insurance</td>
<td>Airfare to and from host country:</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIC Card (recommended)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.isicus.com">www.isicus.com</a></td>
<td>Laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luggage</td>
<td>Independent travel: room, food, transportation, entrance fees</td>
<td>Personal items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Technology has made handling finances while abroad easier than ever, but keep in mind that you don’t want to be stuck in the event that ATM’s and other electronic methods fail. Therefore, you should plan to have access to money in a variety of ways:

**Foreign Currency**
Prior to departure, you can purchase a small amount of foreign currency (equivalent to at least $50) from a U.S. bank to use when you first arrive for transportation, food and other incidental expenses that may come up. You can also order this currency online to receive in the mail through an agency such as [www.ordercurrency.com](http://www.ordercurrency.com) or you can opt to exchange U.S. dollars for foreign currency as soon as you arrive from a bank or official money changer in the airport.

**Traveler’s Checks**
In addition to getting local currency, you should purchase some traveler’s checks before leaving. If you find out about a good exchange rate, you can buy them in the host culture currency, or you can buy them in U.S. dollars for exchange at most banks worldwide. In the event that you run out of money or your ATM or credit cards don’t work, traveler’s checks are an excellent backup. Be sure to take one copy the serial numbers with you and leave a copy at home in case the checks are stolen or lost.
**ATM Cards**
Most students access their bank accounts from abroad with ATM cards on the PLUS or CIRRUS network. Each time they withdraw local currency using an ATM, their checking accounts are debited based on the current exchange rate plus a service charge. Contact your bank to get a listing of international ATM machines and service charges. Worldwide ATM locator: [http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp](http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp).

**Credit Cards**
If possible, you should carry a credit card with you, even if only for emergencies. Visa cards allow you to receive cash advances from banks or ATMs using a PIN number. MasterCard can be used to draw either cash or MasterCard traveler’s checks. American Express allows cardholders to cash personal checks or counter checks for a small commission charge. Confirm with the issuing company that your card(s) are working properly. Please understand that a credit card is not a debit card. If the credit card bill is not paid completely by the end of the billing cycle you will be assessed interest on your account. With cash advances from a credit card, interest begins accumulating immediately, not at the end of a billing cycle.

*With ATM or credit cards, be sure to alert your bank regarding when and where you will be out of the country. This will prevent them from freezing your account after what appear to be suspicious overseas transactions.*

**Wiring Money**
Wiring money from the U.S. to banks abroad is possible but is often costly and can take up to two weeks. The American Express office takes about a day to wire money but is very expensive. Avoid the added expense and hassle in the event of a financial emergency by having access to money in a variety of ways.

**Preparing for Travel**
Depending on how much you plan to travel while abroad, either before or after the semester or during semester breaks, you may want to look into the following before you go:

**Eurailpass**
This pass, which must be purchased in the US, provides unlimited train-travel to a number of different countries in Europe. Passes can be purchased for different lengths of time and for first or second-class travel. Variations of this pass exist, including country passes which provide unlimited travel within one country. Check with your local travel agent for the different options available to you or visit [http://www.eurail.com/](http://www.eurail.com/).
Travel Guidebooks
For good information on where to go, how to get there, what to see, where to eat, and where to stay, you might want to get a guidebook before you go. For travel on a budget, try the Let's Go or Lonely Planet series geared toward the college traveler. Frommer's also publishes a series of guidebooks with a budget in mind. Both can be found at bookstores and on-line.

The Internet
Don’t forget the internet when planning your trip! Do a search to find information on the city where you will be living and places you plan to visit. It is a good idea to look up the U.S. State Department website for basic country information and any travel warnings that might exist.

Packing Tips
First and foremost—pack lightly! Keep in mind that you will have to carry everything you bring, possibly through several airports and train stations on the way to your host school. A good rule of thumb is to bring only as much as you can carry (especially necessities for the first couple of weeks) and buy the rest when you get to your destination. Do not take anything that you would hate to lose: unnecessary credit cards, family heirlooms, or expensive jewelry.

Airlines restrict the amount of luggage that passengers can carry. Requirements vary from airline to airline: it’s your responsibility to contact your carrier and confirm the rules. In general, passengers are allowed two bags, a carry-on bag that can be stowed in an overhead compartment, and a personal item (such as a purse or laptop bag). Pack your bags a few days before you leave and try to carry them around when you’re tired, and afterward, eliminate any unessential items. A good tip is to pack your suitcase with what you think you would like to bring, and then take half of that out and leave it at home!

Remember that many electric appliances are engineered differently in other countries and yours may not be compatible with outlets overseas. If you absolutely cannot get along without these items, you will have to buy adapters that often cost as much, if not more, than the appliance itself. If you are participating in an extended program, you may want to buy curling irons, blow dryers, electric razors, etc., once overseas.

Take into consideration the climate you will be visiting when packing. Britain without a raincoat is an uncomfortable experience, as is Mexico without sunscreen. Also, remember to find out about local customs when considering what clothes to bring. Some cultures may require that women keep their legs and shoulders covered when in public; in others, you may find that dress is much more liberal than what you are used to in the States.
It’s a good idea to pack one change of clothing in your carry-on bag in case your luggage is delayed. All prescriptions, valuables, and important documents must be packed in your carry-on as well. Be sure to pack any sharp objects, such as Swiss army knives, as well as liquids or gels greater than 3 oz. in your checked luggage. The following packing list may help (list adapted from MSU handbook and William Hoffa, Study Abroad: A Parent’s Guide):

### Suggested Packing List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Toiletries/Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Documents to Carry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking shoes (1 pair)</td>
<td>Cheap watch</td>
<td>Passport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flip-flops (1 pair)</td>
<td>Camera/film</td>
<td>Tickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socks (3-4 pairs)</td>
<td>Prescription medicine(s)</td>
<td>ISIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwear (5-7 pairs)</td>
<td>Written prescription(s)</td>
<td>Driver’s license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorts (1-2 pairs)</td>
<td>Eyeglasses/contacts</td>
<td>Cash, travelers checks, credit cards, calling card(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skirts/trousers (2-3 pairs)</td>
<td>First aid kit</td>
<td>Copies of documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts (4-5)</td>
<td>Contraceptives</td>
<td>Letter of admission from host school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweaters/sweatshirts</td>
<td>Deodorant</td>
<td>Contact list for host and home campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain jacket</td>
<td>Sunscreen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 light jacket</td>
<td>Toothbrush/toothpaste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 nice outfits</td>
<td>1 Towel</td>
<td>Caps, shirts, and other items with college logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bathing suit</td>
<td>Flashlight</td>
<td>CD’s and tapes of American music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hat</td>
<td>Day pack</td>
<td>Calendars with U.S. scenery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 winter coat, if needed</td>
<td>Journal/photos from home</td>
<td>Handmade crafts or jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hostel sleep sack, sheet, or sleeping bag</td>
<td>Nonperishable foods (grits, peanut butter, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change purse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Umbrella</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adapter/voltage converter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gift Suggestions:**
While You’re Away...

While you’re away, you’ll be serving as an ambassador for USC as well as for your country. USC expects its students to respect their host cultures’ traditions and customs and to approach their overseas experiences with an open mind and willingness to learn. Students should keep in mind that while abroad, their actions will reflect on themselves, their families, USC, and the United States as a whole.

The following highlights a few things to consider while you’re abroad, including safety tips, health concerns, communication, etc., that will help make your experience as beneficial, safe, and rewarding as possible.

Safety and Security
Study Abroad is dedicated to maintaining the personal safety and security of study abroad participants. Before students depart, health and safety-related issues are discussed during a mandatory orientation. Our office maintains close contact with overseas colleagues and/or program providers and will work with them in case of an emergency. We encourage you to contact us if you are concerned about your (or your student’s) safety or welfare. Listed below are a variety of resources that we monitor regularly and that are available to the public.

State Department Resources
The US government provides accurate and timely information for overseas travelers about emergencies, country information, visas, passports, living abroad, and other topics at http://travel.state.gov.

Consular Information Sheets
Consular Information Sheets are available for every country in the world. They include such information as location of the US Embassy or Consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties. If an unstable condition exists in a country that is not severe enough to warrant a Travel Warning, a description of the condition(s) may be included under an optional section entitled "Safety/Security." Consular Information Sheets generally do not include advice, but present information in a factual manner so the traveler can make his or her own decisions concerning travel to a particular country. Consular Information Sheets can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html.

Public Announcements
Public Announcements are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats
and other relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with demonstrations, conferences, and violence by terrorists, especially targeting or involving Americans. Current Public Announcements can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

**Travel Warnings**  
Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. Countries where avoidance of travel is recommended will have Travel Warnings as well as Consular Information Sheets. Current Travel Warnings can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**  
The CDC also provides valuable information for travelers on its website: http://www.cdc.gov/.

**Safety Tips**  
When you are abroad, your environment is new and different. You may not know where to go; there may be communication problems. Foreigners are looked upon as easy targets for these reasons. Most first-world countries are safer than the US, but crime still exists. As you travel, keep the following safety tips in mind:

- Be street smart, don’t walk alone after dark, even if it’s only a short walk and even if you are male.

- Try to blend in to your surroundings. Keep in mind that Americans often tend to be more boisterous in public than people from other cultures. Observe how the locals look and act and adjust what you do accordingly.

- Do not carry valuables with you. Leave your passport and large sums of money at your residence. It’s also smart to leave expensive-looking jewelry at home, too.

- Be aware of your purse and wallet at all times; don’t put anything of value in the outside pockets of your jacket or pants. Use a passport holder or belt underneath your clothing to carry your passport, train tickets, etc., when traveling.

- Leave your baseball caps, athletic shoes, and USA t-shirts at home. Wearing this type of clothing, or clothing with English sayings on it, will draw attention to you and make you a prime target for pickpockets.

- Be aware of who is around you, especially when you are in large crowds. This is
where pickpockets do their magic.

- Know who to contact locally in case of an emergency; keep emergency contact numbers and your international student identification card with you at all times.

- Ask your host family, roommates, and friends about places to stay away from, such as dangerous areas of the city, known drug neighborhoods, etc.

- Know who to contact in the US in case of an emergency.

**Safety Precautions for Times of Political/Social Unrest or Conflict**

In times of political or social unrest in the host country or region, or when the United States becomes a party to a political conflict anywhere in the world, additional precautions are advisable. This is a list of precautions we give to our study abroad participants.

- Stay informed about current political situations by listening daily to the television or radio, if available. Ask friends, host family, and colleagues to share with you any relevant information they learn. In the case of an emergency, remain in contact with on-site staff and watch for advisories that may be made to the general public through the media.

- Make sure that you are registered with the closest US Embassy or Consulate, this can be done online at [http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_1186.html).


- Keep away from areas known to have large concentrations of residents aligned with interests unfriendly to the United States and its allies. Always consult with the on-site officials before undertaking travel to neighboring cities or popular tourist destinations.

- Be as inconspicuous in dress and demeanor as possible. Wear moderate colors and conservative clothing. Avoid American logos on your belongings and clothing. Avoid large loud groups.
• Keep away from political demonstrations, particularly those directed toward the United States. If you see a situation developing, resist the temptation to satisfy your curiosity and investigate what is happening. Walk the other way.

• Do not agree to newspaper or other media interviews regarding political conflicts. It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Do not make reference to your program group. In such cases, always say “no comment” and hang up or walk the other way.

Other Safety-Related Issues

Insurance for Personal Property
Participants should consider obtaining insurance to cover damage or theft of personal property abroad. Although occurrences are rare, students may encounter personal property loss due to a fire or other incident in the local residence overseas. Insurance company policies vary widely on the circumstances and amount of coverage for personal property abroad. Check with your insurance company, or contact any insurance company that provides home or renter’s insurance to learn more about the extent of coverage possible for personal property abroad.

Registering with an Embassy
USC study abroad participants who are US citizens are strongly encouraged to register with the nearest US Embassy as soon as possible after arrival in their host country. Citizens of other countries should register at their own country’s embassy. Registering will aid students if an emergency occurs in the country in which they are studying or if they lose their passport.

Keeping in Contact
Students should always check their e-mail, as it is our only way of easily contacting them. Also, students should always keep in touch with the on-site study abroad staff.

Travel to Other Countries
Before students travel to a country outside the host study abroad country, they should make sure to know the safety conditions of the country they will travel to as well as any countries they will be traveling through. Most large cities as well as remote areas, in the US and abroad, suffer from common crimes. Students should use the same precautions abroad that they would in any large metropolitan area. The following are some general safety precautions we offer students:
Know where you are going. Do your homework before traveling: read guidebooks, look at maps, check with local staff, etc.

Leave expensive or expensive-looking jewelry at home.

Do no carry valuables, even in a backpack or locked luggage. If you must carry cameras, laptops, etc., do not leave them unattended.

Do not flaunt wallets, purses, cell phones, or cameras. Wear a money belt, concealed under your clothing.

Put valuables in the hotel safe or ask your local contact about storing valuables while at the program site.

Avoid unlit places and walking alone. Stick to well-traveled streets and walk in groups at night. Be especially cautious when you are new to a city and know little about what parts of town may be less safe.

**Emergency Phone System**

If an emergency comes up during business hours (Mon.-Fri. 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.), please call our office at (803) 777-7557 and a staff member will assist you. If an emergency comes up during non-business hours, parents and students can reach USC’s Police Department by calling (803)777-4215.

**Alcohol Use and Illegal Drugs**

**Alcohol Use**

Although alcohol abuse may not carry the same legal penalties as use of illegal drugs, it can create dire circumstances for you, your participation in the program, your safety, and the future of the program.

Remember that you are serving as an ambassador for USC, South Carolina, and the United States. Although there may be no minimum drinking age in your host country, the customs regarding alcohol use may be very different from ours. Alcohol abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the world and will not be tolerated on USC study abroad programs.

Violation of local laws and/or USC regulations or policies may result in: immediate dismissal from the program, academic withdrawal from the University for the current semester, and/or disciplinary action upon return to campus.
If you drink, drink wisely. Do not endanger yourself, others, property, or the future viability of the program.

**Illegal Drugs**
The University of South Carolina has a zero-tolerance policy regarding the possession, use, manufacture, production, sale, exchange or distribution of illegal drugs by students participating in USC study abroad programs.

Violation of this policy may result in: immediate dismissal from the program, academic withdrawal from the University for the current semester, and/or disciplinary action upon return to campus.

Each year 2,500 Americans are arrested overseas. One third of the arrests are on drug-related charges. Many of those arrested assumed as U.S. citizens that they could not be arrested. From Asia to Africa, Europe to South America, U.S. citizens are finding out the hard way that drug possession or trafficking equals jail in foreign countries.

If you choose to use illegal drugs abroad, there is very little that anyone can do to help you if you are caught. You are operating under the laws of the host country and the regulations of the local institution. Neither the U.S. government nor USC will be able to secure your release should you be caught.

It is your responsibility to know the drug laws of a foreign country before you go, because "I didn't know it was illegal" will not get you out of jail. Some laws may be applied more strictly to foreigners than to local citizens; therefore, don't assume that just because local people are using drugs, it is acceptable for you. Information regarding drug penalties of your host country is available at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs_1237.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs_1237.html).

**Health and Wellness**

**Dealing with Stress**
There will be some stress involved with traveling overseas, adapting to a new environment, and possibly learning to communicate in a second language—not to mention the stress of classes! The support systems that you have relied on in your home environment, such as family, friends, and co-workers, won't be as readily accessibly when you are overseas. Certain physical and emotional conditions can also be exacerbated due to stress. Before you leave, please do the following:
Discuss any pre-existing medical or emotional conditions with a doctor or counselor before you leave. Talk with them about ways to handle any condition while abroad.

Be prepared to feel homesick at times, and know that this is okay. Everyone feels homesick once in awhile. Try going to see an American movie and eating out at McDonalds or the Hard Rock Café—sometimes this can help cure a bout of homesickness. Preparing an American meal for your friends or host family may also bring home a little closer!

Find outlets to relieve stress and ways to take part in those activities that you enjoyed at home. Join a sports team, go hiking, or participate in the drama club.

Keep a journal of your experiences and let any frustrations or loneliness come out on paper.

Work at making new friends, building relationships with your host family, and creating a support system within your new environment.

Do not hesitate to talk with the on-site program director should a physical or emotional health concern arise.

**AIDS and STD’s**
As in the US, students traveling abroad should take appropriate precautions to avoid exposure to the HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases. For more information, contact the CDC National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS or the World Health Organization at (202) 974-3000.

**Dietary Needs and Housing**
Students living with a host family should fill out the housing form completely and not be afraid to be honest about what they need. Stating needs before arriving may be easier than having to explain them in person. In most other housing situations (dormitories, apartments), students have more control over when and what they eat and do.

**Dietary Needs for Vegetarians**
Vegetarians or students on a special diet need to be aware that their dietary needs might not be easily met in some countries. Be sure to discuss this with your medical
provider. Students may also wish to consult travel guidebooks, which include information for vegetarians.

**Eating Disorders**
There are many cross-cultural differences in the meanings of food and in standards of beauty. Students with eating disorders may find these differences create additional challenges for them. A well-meaning host may insist on serving more food to students than they care to eat or someone may intend to compliment them by saying that they have put on weight. Students with eating disorders should discuss their plans to study abroad with health care providers before leaving. We also encourage students to contact a staff member in our office, with whom they feel comfortable, so that we can pursue finding support networks at the program site.

**Housing**

**Things to Remember**
Your housing arrangements overseas may take the form of host families, shared apartments, student dormitory housing, or hotels. In any case, the relationship between you and those with whom you live should be based on mutual respect. In order to make the most of your stay, try to be considerate of others and accepting of different ways of doing things. Should any problems arise that cannot be settled between you and your host family or roommates, discuss them with the housing coordinator on-site or your program director.

**Host Families**
It is a nice idea to take a small gift to your host family, such as something distinctive from your hometown, a calendar or picture book with scenes from the US, college memorabilia, etc. Be sure to inform your host family of any allergies you may have at the beginning of your stay. At any time, should you feel uncomfortable with any members of your host family, do not hesitate to contact the housing coordinator and ask to change families immediately for your safety and security.

**Communicating While Abroad**
Staying connected with friends and family at home is easy to do by e-mail and phone. In fact, one of the first things you should do when you arrive is to call a family member or friend. They’ll be worried if you don’t call, and Study Abroad won’t know where you are, either, if they call the office. Sending your study abroad and academic advisors a quick e-mail when you arrive is also a courtesy.
Build your network abroad, the people who can really help you in case of an emergency are the friends, faculty, and international office staff you will meet at your host university. Cultivating relationships with people abroad is important for successful cultural adjustment and in the event of an emergency when parents, friends, and USC staff are far away and unable to provide immediate assistance.

If you intend to take your own computer, the accommodation information supplied to you prior to departure should include information about internet hookup and international specifications. Contact your host coordinator if you have additional questions about computer and telephone access at the university.

There are many resources for communicating with friends, family, and other people important to you while you’re abroad. The following includes information regarding different methods for communication.

**Calling Cards**
Calling cards used in the U.S. (for instance, through MCI, AT&T, and Sprint) can usually be used overseas to make calls to the US. Often, they require the use of an access code that is specific to the country from which you are calling used in order to connect you with an English-speaking operator or touch-tone menu. Contact your long distance carrier for the access code(s) you will need while abroad and to inquire about rates. Many long distance carriers offer international calling plans that include lower international calling card rates. You may want to check the internet for cost-effective calling cards such as AloSmart at [http://www.alosmart.com/](http://www.alosmart.com/).

**Pre-paid Phone Cards**
Depending on the country you are in, you may be able to buy pre-paid phone cards that work in public payphones. These can be used to make local calls and often international calls as well. Ask your host family or roommates about these cards once you arrive. Note that the country code for the U.S. is “1.” This must be dialed before dialing the area code of the number you are trying to reach.

**Collect Calls**
Collect calls can also be made while abroad, though usually at higher rates. You will need to call the local operator or the international operator through your calling card access number.

**Cell Phones**
Some program providers include cell phones and cell phone plans with their study abroad programs. Also, depending on the location and duration of your term abroad, cell phones and plans can be procured for the term you are abroad, as purchased by your own finances. International rates are sometimes included in these plans. In many cases, cell phones used in the US do not work on al-
ternate networks while abroad, so if you want a cell phone plan, you will often have to buy a new cell phone. If unsure whether to get a cell phone in your specific location, talk to students who have studied there before, or talk with roommates, friends, and/or your host family when you arrive.

E-mail
E-mail access is common throughout Europe and other first world countries, and is becoming more common in other locations as well. You may have e-mail access through your host university. If not, internet connections are often readily available at public libraries and internet cafés. Ask before you go and after you arrive to find out more about internet access. USC’s Webmail service can be accessed from any computer with internet access. Other e-mail providers, such as Hotmail, Yahoo!, Google, and many other sites, offer free e-mail accounts that also can be accessed from any computer with internet access. This is a great way to stay in touch with family, friends, and the Study Abroad office while abroad. Just make sure that you don’t spend too much time on-line and miss out on what’s going on around you.

Skype
This is an increasingly popular and affordable means of international communication. It offers free voice or video chats from computer to computer and has an affordable computer to phone option that allows students to call any phone number from their computer. Registration is free at www.skype.com as well as other providers.

Mail
Regular mail, while slower than e-mail, still works! Sending a package or letter can take anywhere from six days to two or three weeks to reach you from the US, and vice versa.

Blogs and Photo Sites
Blogs, a form of an on-line journal, can be a great way to inform friends and family of your adventures while abroad. Some sites even allow you to upload photos to go along with your descriptions. Many blog sites are available and have free accounts, and some are even specific to traveling, such as http://www.travelblog.org.

If you have a digital camera or decide to scan your pictures, you can also post photos online on free sites such as www.snapfish.com or www.webshots.com, among others. This, along with e-mailing photos, is a great way to include your friends and loved ones in your experiences abroad, putting faces to names and showing them what your words cannot describe.
Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Living in a new culture can be exhilarating, rewarding, and stimulating. It can also be frustrating. It is one thing to tour a country, but it is quite another to live and function according to different, often mysterious norms.

When students spend a significant amount of time living and studying abroad, they are often faced with many new ideas, customs, cultural norms, and modes of interaction. While these types of things may initially result in a feeling of culture shock, they are exactly why we live, travel, and study overseas—to experience something different and learn from it! But knowing how to prepare yourself before you leave and how to deal with your new environment while abroad can help reduce this anxiety and make your stay exciting, fun, and enjoyable.

People experience many emotions while adapting to a foreign culture, from excitement and interest in the new culture to depression and fear of the unknown. The following are some tips to help you prepare for your new adventure.

The Four H’s of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Your time abroad may go something like this:

**Stage 1: Honeymoon**

When you first arrive in your host country, everything will seem new and exciting. You are in a new place and everything seems great! Perhaps you are involved in a flurry of orientation and getting settled, getting hosted around the town or city. The sights, sounds, and tastes are all a new adventure. And, at first, you may even see more of the similarities between your host country and the US than the differences.

**Stage 2: Hostility**

After you have been in the host country for a short while, though, you realize that things are not the same, and problems may arise. Maybe you are tired of the food or struggling with the language. Maybe the university seems incomprehensible and bureaucratic. Your patterns of behavior may be slightly, or extremely, different from that of those around you. You may begin to get frustrated with these differences and the mistakes you make in communicating. Your initial enthusiasm has drifted away, and you may feel like you don’t really belong. You may be feeling homesick at this point.

**Stage 3: Humor**

However, almost always the feelings of irritability and hostility dissipate with time, and once you have lived in your host country a while longer, you start to better understand local culture and customs. Things that once appeared strange now seem commonplace to you. Chances are your ability to communicate in a second language has improved...
tremendously. Now you are able to deal with new and challenging situations with humor rather than frustration.

**Stage 4: Home**

At this point you have “settled in” to your new surroundings, and it feels much like home. You may have begun to adopt some of the cultural norms of the host country (like taking a siesta after the noon meal in Spain or Mexico!), but still have managed to retain your own cultural identity. You understand yourself and others better. Culture shock has worn off. In fact, you may not want to return to the US!

**Strategies for Cultural Adjustment**

Most experts agree that culture shock, even if delayed, is inevitable. However, there are some basic things you can do to get the most out of your time abroad and to make it as rewarding as possible. Below are some strategies that you can use when you recognize culture shock and are faced with the challenge of adjustment. While the suggestions below are not a complete set of answers to everything you might encounter, they offer a starting point for cultural understanding and acceptance.

**Before You Go**

**Talk with others who have lived or traveled abroad** Hearing firsthand accounts of time spent overseas is the best way to get a picture of what you should expect. Keep in mind, though, that each individual comes away with a different experience, so talk to as many people as possible before you go in order to hear a variety of experiences and views.

**Learn as much as you can about the host culture** If you educate yourself about the country in which you will be living, you will begin to understand and appreciate your new surroundings. Learn about the country’s history, natural resources, social customs, religions, art, and political structures. Find out the culture’s set of manners, expected behavior, and unspoken rules. Read about the country’s present problems and national issues. Learning about current affairs will help you to get a sense of how people evaluate events from different perspectives.

**Become more familiar with the local language** Independent study in the local language should facilitate your transition. Continue your study of the foreign language until your departure. Rent and watch foreign films to become accustomed to the rhythm and sounds of the language of your new home.
Know what’s happening in your own country You will find that people around the world often know far more about the United States and its policies than you do. Whether you are familiar with current events, particularly foreign policy, expect to be asked about your opinions and to hear the opinions of others. Prepare now by reading newspapers and news magazines.

When You Get There

Ask questions This is the easiest way to find out more about your host culture and learn how to maneuver within it. Don’t be afraid to ask questions of your host family or roommates. As long as your questions are not hurtful or inappropriate, no one will mind answering. Observe your surroundings, notice how the people around you dress, eat, greet each other, and carry themselves. This will help you better understand your surroundings and adapt more easily.

Expect to feel frustrated sometimes You are bound to have communication problems when you are not using your native language or dialect. Moreover, people will do things differently in your new home, and you will not always think their way is as good as yours. Try to stay away from these ethnocentric attitudes—the belief that one’s own way of life is superior to all others. Rather, try to adopt a sense of cultural relativism—learn to accept your new culture for what it is, and live by its standards.

Expect to feel depressed sometimes Homesickness is natural, especially if you have never been away from home. Remember that your family and friends would not have encouraged you to go if they did not want you to gain the most from this experience. Don’t let thoughts of home occupy you to the point that you are incapable of enjoying the exciting new culture that surrounds you. Think of all you will share with your family and friends when you return home.

Expect to hear criticism of the United States If you educate yourself on U.S. politics and foreign policies, you will be more prepared to handle these discussions as they occur. Remember that such criticism of U.S. policies is not personal. Most foreign nationals are very interested in the U.S. and may know more about U.S. politics than you do.

Do not expect local people to come and find you When was the last time you approached a lonely-looking foreign student with an offer of friendship? Things are not necessarily any different where you are going. If you are not meeting people through your classes, make other efforts to meet them. Take ad-
vantage of the university structure and join clubs, participate in sports, and attend other university-sponsored functions.

**Write a journal** One of the best ways to deal with cultural adjustments and to reflect thoughtfully on the differences between U.S. and the other cultures is to regularly write in a journal. As you write, you’ll think your way out of the negative reactions that may result from your unfamiliarity with language and cultural behavior. Journaling will force you to make meaningful comparisons between your own culture and the host country. When you return home you’ll have more than just memories, souvenirs, and photos of your time abroad; you’ll have a written record of your changing attitudes and process of learning about the foreign culture.

**Try to have a tolerance for ambiguity** You may not understand what’s going on around you sometimes, especially if you are in a non-English-speaking country. That’s okay. Remaining open, patient, accepting, and relaxed can help you maneuver through new situations and help ensure that you have a positive experience abroad.

**Talk to someone if you have a serious problem** The staff of the international office at your host institution is available to counsel students with problems. Share smaller problems with other international students since they are going through the same process and can provide a day-to-day support group.

Most Importantly...

**Pack an open mind in your luggage** Understand ahead of time that almost everything will be different from what you know in the U.S.—and don’t expect it to be the same. Just because they speak English in England does not mean that Britons believe or act the same way you do. Having specific expectations will leave you frustrated and disappointed. However, going into this experience with an open mind will help you have a positive and enjoyable time.

**Further Cultural Adjustment Resources**

**On the Web**

Virtual Advising Network. Insights suggestions and answers from USC students who have recently returned from studying abroad.
Adjustment Tips. Strategies for making the most of study abroad.  
http://www.pct.edu/international/cultural/adjustment_tips.htm

Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. Strategies for language and culture learning and use.  
http://www.carla.umn.edu/maxsa/guides.html

County Home Pages. Country information for study abroad students.  
http://www.studyabroad.com/country_menu.html

Country Studies. Learn about your host culture before you leave.  
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html#toc

Exploring Cultural Differences by Bill Hoffa. Tips for handling culture shock, stereotypes, gender and racial issues. Includes bibliography for additional reading.  
http://www.studyabroad.com/handbook/cultdiff.html

International News Index. Links to newspapers, TV and radio stations worldwide.  
http://newslink.org

Transitions Abroad. Resources for studying and living abroad.  
http://www.transitionsabroad.com/

**Other Publications**


Survival Kit for Overseas Living, Robert L. Kohls, Intercultural Press, 1996.


**Resources For Women**


Solo Woman Traveler, Transitions Abroad Publishing 1996.

(Cultural adjustment sections adapted from the following websites: University of California Education Abroad Program, Michigan State University's Office of Study Abroad, University of Wisconsin--Madison Office of International Academic Programs and the University of Colorado–Boulder Office of International Education, and from Robert L. Kohls, Survival Kit for Overseas Living, chapter on "Culture Shock: 
Preparing to Return

Course Registration
Prior to pre-registration for the semester following your study abroad program, contact your academic advisor by e-mail to request that he or she remove any holds from your registration and to discuss your course selection. Consult the Master Schedule. When your appointment time appears on VIP, you are ready to register for classes.

Financial Aid
If you need financial aid for the academic year following study abroad, you should apply by the required deadlines for fall semester. You can find forms, links, and deadline information from the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

If you receive any state aid, such as LIFE and Palmetto scholarships, and cannot pay your fall bill without using this aid, then complete the State Aid Recipient Tuition Deferment Request Form and return it to the Study Abroad office by July 15. Only tuition fees can be deferred; housing and meal costs cannot.

Securing Academic Credit
Before you leave your host institution you must confirm that your host institution will send an original transcript to the Study Abroad Office (Legare College, Suite 321, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, USA).

If the transcript is granted by a foreign institution, the Study Abroad office sends the transcript to your college, where a dean or advisor evaluates it and assigns credit hours. Once the college assigns credit, the Registrar posts it as a block of credit for study abroad. No grades will be assigned however you will need to pass your overseas courses with a minimum grade of C in order to receive credit. Your cumulative GPA, which includes all grades earned at USC, will not be affected by studying abroad. If your transcript is granted by a U.S. institution, the Registrar automatically posts the credit, and grades are included in your collegiate summary GPA. These grades will not be included in your USC-only GPA. You are responsible for meeting with your academic advisor to confirm how the credit applies to degree requirements.

Housing
If you plan to live on campus when you return to USC, you can apply online through...
VIP. You may want to consider Carolina’s Global Community, designed for students looking for an international living/learning environment, located in South Quad. Students who have studied French or Spanish, are native speakers, or are currently enrolled in language courses may also want to consider the French House or Spanish House.

For housing placement questions, contact the following Housing staff: Anita Hansen (women) or Eddie Thomson (men).

For Honors College housing, contact Patsy Tanner.

Evaluation
Help Study Abroad staff members evaluate their programs and services, as well as your host institution’s, by completing an on-line evaluation while the experience is still fresh in your mind (http://www.sa.sc.edu/sa/current-BeforeYouReturn.htm).

Web Resources

The following websites give additional information that may help you in your preparations to study abroad:

Health & Safety


USC Travel Clinic. Provides country-specific health information and provides or schedules any needed immunizations. http://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/travel.htm

Budget Travel & Finances


ATM Locator:
Visa http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp,
MasterCard http://www.mastercard.com/atmlocator/index.jsp

Travel guides designed for budget travelers:
Frommer’s: http://www.frommers.com
Lonely Planet http://www.lonelyplanet.com/
Let’s Go http://www.letsgo.com/
Rough Guides http://www.roughguides.com/

Discounted Airfares for Students:
Council Travel/STA Travel http://www.statravel.com/
Student Universe http://www.studentuniverse.com
Academic Studies Abroad http://www.academicstudies.com/uscairfare.html

Web-based Ticket Discounters:

Railpasses:
General Railpass Information. Information about Eurail, Britrail, and various country


Worldwide Hostelling Information:
International Youth Hostels. International Youth Hostel passes and information.
http://www.hihostels.com/

USC & South Carolina News:


**Study Abroad Office**  
Legare College, Suite 321  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: (803) 777-7557  
Fax: (803) 777-7559  
http://www.sa.sc.edu/sa/  
General E-mail: saabroad@mailbox.sc.edu

Jennifer Engel, Director  
jengel@mailbox.sc.edu

Elise Hammonds, Program Development Manager  
hammonde@mailbox.sc.edu

Rachel Hardison, Study Abroad Advisor  
hardisor@mailbox.sc.edu

Sarah Langston, Study Abroad Advisor  
lanstos@mailbox.sc.edu

Kimberly Frier, Administrative Assistant  
frierk@mailbox.sc.edu

**USC Contacts**  
Office of the Registrar  
Petigru College, Third Floor  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: (803) 777-5555  
Fax: (803) 777-6349  
http://registrar.sc.edu/

University Housing  
1215 Blossom Street  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: (803) 777-4283  
Fax: (803) 777-4349  
http://www.housing.sc.edu/  
General E-mail: housing@sc.edu

Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships  
1714 College Street  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: (803) 777-8134  
Fax: (803) 777-0941  
http://www.sc.edu/financialaid  
General E-mail: uscfaid@sc.edu

Office of the Bursar  
Petigru College, Room 206  
Columbia, SC 29208  
Phone: (803) 777-4233  
Fax: (803) 777-7953  
http://web.csd.sc.edu/bursar/  
General E-mail: bursar-AR@sc.edu