

2011-2012
ACC Handbook
for
Study Abroad Students



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

- ✓ Make sure to follow all instructions from your International Program Coordinator regarding pre-departure requirements.
- ✓ Apply for your passport if you do not have one. If you already have a passport, make sure that it is valid for at least six months past the date of your anticipated return.
- ✓ Collect documents required for your visa (if the country you are going to requires one for entry). Apply for and obtain the visa. Please note you must present your passport with a valid visa to the IP Office by April 30, 2012.
- ✓ If needed, collect other required entry documents (e.g. financial statements, program acceptance letter, immunization records, etc.).
- ✓ Make a travel planning appointment with your primary care doctor. If necessary, have a physical, dental, eye examination, etc. and make sure you have enough prescription medication for your time abroad. Please note your completed health forms must be submitted to the IP Office no later than March 30, 2012.
- ✓ Learn about your destination country and city, including health and safety issues by reading all information provided by the IP Office and attending the mandatory student pre-departure orientation(s).
- ✓ Make sure you understand what your health insurance plan covers and how it works.
- ✓ Consider purchasing insurance for personal liability, property loss, trip cancellation, etc.
- ✓ If needed, arrange for power of attorney for the person handling your financial affairs in your absence.
- ✓ Photocopy important documents such as your passport and itinerary and provide to family members/emergency contacts. Keep copies with you, separate from your original documents.
- ✓ Bring a list of international contact numbers for your bank(s) and your credit card and ATM card numbers.
- ✓ Arrange with your bank to have \$100.00 in local currency to bring with you. Make sure you have the credit cards, ATM cards, phone cards, travelers' checks, etc. that you are planning to use. Make sure you have a back-up plan in case ATM/credit cards do not work in your destination country.
- ✓ Make a plan with your family/emergency contact for communication when you arrive and during your stay.
- ✓ Take this handbook with you.

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Introduction

Whether you are going abroad for the first time or already consider yourself a seasoned traveler, we want to make sure that you are well prepared for the experience. This handbook is designed to address issues that may arise before, during, and after your time abroad. If you have questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact the Office of International Programs.

Your experiences overseas will almost certainly challenge and stimulate you, and we anticipate that you will look back on your time abroad as one of the highlights of your education at ACC. If you are like many ACC students who have spent time abroad, you will return to from your study abroad experience with a greater understanding of yourself, a different perspective on world affairs, new friends, and an eagerness to continue to explore newly discovered interests.

Best wishes for a productive and memorable experience!

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General Items

Application & Interview Process

The IP Office is the first stop for all students interested in study abroad. IP Coordinators will advise students on the application and interview process and program details. Only ACC students in good academic standing may travel on short-term ACC study abroad programs.

All students must complete the same admission process. Even if you know a study abroad faculty leader, you will not receive special consideration during the application process.

Detailed Information Packets

Students must review their program's detailed information packet prior to applying. Information packets contain important program-specific details, policies and procedures. Packets are available at www.austincc.edu/intstudy, by e-mail request to studyabroad@austincc.edu, or for pick-up at the International Programs Office, HBC 508.4.

Student Deadlines

Early Application

November 15, 2011 Early Application Deadline

November 18 – December 2, 2011 Early Applicant Interviews with Faculty Leaders

December 12, 2011 Student Acceptance/Rejection Notification (via ACC student email)*

December 19, 2011 Participation/Participant Confirmation and \$400 Non-Refundable Deposit Due

Regular Application

January 17, 2012 Regular Application Deadline

January 20 – 30, 2012 Applicant Interviews with Faculty Leaders

February 1, 2012 Student Acceptance/Rejection Notification (via ACC student email)*

February 8, 2012 Participation/Participant Confirmation and \$400 Non-Refundable Deposit Due

Scholarship Application

January 17, 2012 Scholarship Application Deadline

February 1, 2012 Scholarship Notification

Payment Deadlines

February 15, 2012 50% Program Fee Balance Due

March 9, 2012 100% Program Fee Balance Due

*Students will have one week after receipt of their acceptance letter to confirm their participation in the study abroad program and pay a non-refundable program deposit.

Program Rules & Student Conduct

While participating in ACC-sponsored travel abroad, students, agree to adhere to all applicable ACC standards of conduct for students. Students must understand and agree to observe the laws of the country in which they are residing and all applicable ACC academic and disciplinary regulations in effect for the program. If students do not abide by applicable ACC regulations, they will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary actions, including termination of participation. In such cases, students will return to the U.S. at their own expense. All study abroad program participants will be required to complete appropriate forms and waivers as issued by the International Programs Office.

Students with Disabilities

It is the student's responsibility to notify the Office of Students with Disabilities, the International Programs Office and faculty leader if he or she desires accommodation for any disability. Accommodations available in the U.S. may not be available at an institution abroad. Students requesting academic accommodations are required to self-identify and contact the faculty leader, IP Office, and the Office of Students with Disabilities.

Immunizations and Health Review

All students must discuss their travel plans with medical professionals and obtain required vaccinations and, if necessary, medicine for the duration of their stay abroad. In case of an emergency while abroad, all students should carry a medical profile and an up-to-date copy of their immunization records. Completed health forms are due no later than March 30, 2012.

Health Insurance

All students must carry health insurance that is valid overseas for hospitalization and physician care. Students must present proof of overseas coverage to the IP Office.

Accompanying Persons

Accompanying persons who are not ACC study abroad participants, regardless of relationship status, are not allowed on ACC study abroad programs.

Student Accommodations

Students will be accommodated in facilities that fit each study abroad programs' requirements. Accommodation options include, but are not limited to, residence hall style housing, hotels, bed and breakfasts, or host families. The choice of accommodation is made solely by the IP Office based on availability, budget, and safety. Students, regardless of relationship status, will be accommodated with students of the same sex. No co-ed room sharing is allowed on ACC study abroad programs. Students do not have the option of changing accommodations prior to or after arrival in country. Please note that accommodations in destination countries will be different compared to your

personal home in the U.S. or other U.S. accommodations you may have stayed in during personal vacations.

Roommates on Study Abroad Programs

Please check with your International Programs Coordinator about same-sex roommate requests on your study abroad program. Remember that there are no co-ed accommodations. It is important that you and your roommate respect each other's space, study habits, and sleep patterns during your study abroad program.

Group Travel

The IP Office will book group flights for each study abroad program and students are required to travel to/from their study abroad destination on the group flight. Students are not allowed to make their own travel arrangements.

Program Cancellation

There are a number of reasons a program can be cancelled. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

1. A program may be cancelled up to the time students are boarding their flight, if there has been a significant deterioration in the safety, health and security conditions pertaining to the group's travel arrangements or in the sector of the country or countries where travel is to occur. Examples include acts of war, terrorism, or widespread civil unrest; an outbreak of a severe or infectious disease; significant industrial disaster, major disruption of public utilities or services, or natural disasters such as hurricane, earthquake, or flood. The decision to cancel the trip will take into consideration information received by the IP Office from EHS&I, in-country U.S. Embassy officials, the appropriate U.S. State Department Desk Officer, and other officials from U.S. agencies, NGOs, or officials at local colleges and universities;
2. If safety, health, or security conditions deteriorate while group is in country;
3. A faculty member does not fulfill mandatory duties as outlined in call for proposals and program development timelines; and/or
4. A program does not meet the minimum number of student participants to cover program costs.

International Travel

Travel Registration for U.S. Citizens

The International Programs Office will register all U.S. Citizen study abroad participants with the U.S. Department of State's Smart Travelers Enrollment Program (STEP). All students must complete all required ACC study abroad application materials and associated forms prior to departure for a program.

Travel to Countries on U.S. State Department Warning List

ACC will not fund or sponsor student travel to a country on the U.S. State Department Travel Warning List or to countries where the U. S. has issued travel restrictions.

U.S. State Department Travel Information

The U.S. State Department maintains two websites that provide travelers with a wealth of information about traveling and living overseas: *travel.state.gov* and *studentsabroad.state.gov*. Both websites provide information on preparing to travel abroad and dealing with medical, financial, and legal problems while abroad.

Passports

Your passport is your most important legal document while traveling overseas. Apply for a passport as soon as you decide to go abroad. You must have a valid passport to show border and customs authorities when you enter or leave the U.S., when you cross most other national borders, and on all occasions that require official verification of your citizenship. U.S. passports are issued by the Department of State and are good for a period of 10 years if issued at age 16 or older.

Information about obtaining a U.S. passport (including the application) can be found at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

- **Helpful Tip:** Before leaving the U.S., make two copies of your passport. Keep one copy with you but separate from the actual passport and leave the other copy with your family/emergency contact. Having a copy of your passport speeds up securing a replacement. You may also want to carry two extra passport pictures and a certified copy of your birth certificate.

Always keep your passport in a safe but accessible place. Loss or theft of a U.S. passport while in the U.S. should be reported immediately to Passport Services. Directions for completing the “Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport” can be found on the State Department’s website at http://travel.state.gov/passport/lost/lost_848.html.

If the loss occurs while abroad, immediately notify the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. Contact information can be found at <http://www.usembassy.gov>. Theft of a passport should also be reported to local police authorities. You should also immediately notify your faculty leader.

Visas

A visa is a stamp or document from a foreign government that grants official permission to enter that country on or after a certain date for a defined length of time and purpose, such as study, tourism, or work. Check well in advance for the visa requirements of your destination (for some countries, obtaining a visa can take more than two months). Visa procedures and customs requirements vary depending on citizenship. Make sure you check all requirements for your country of citizenship and for all the countries you plan to visit.

If you are a U.S. passport holder, you can find visa requirements for a specific country in the Entry/Exit Requirements section in the Country Specific Information on the State Department’s website at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html or you can visit the country’s embassy website to which you are traveling.

Your International Programs Coordinator can assist you during an initial advising appointment where you will research requirements together. However, it is your responsibility to complete all visa requirements. The IP Office will not act on your behalf or as an agent. Please note you must present your passport with a valid visa to the IP Office by April 30, 2012.

Other Entry Requirements

Check the entry requirements of the country or countries to which you are traveling (*information can be found on the country's embassy website*). To enter a country (with or without a visa) and/or to obtain a visa, you may be required to show any of the following:

- Proof of sufficient funds for the duration of your stay, such as a bank statement or a statement from the Financial Aid office
- Proof of medical insurance and required vaccinations
- Letter of good conduct from local police department
- HIV/AIDS test results
- Extra passport photos

F-1 Visa Holders

If you are on an F-1 visa in the U.S., be sure that your I-20 is signed before departing the U.S. so that you may re-enter more easily. Please contact the ACC International Student Office if you have questions.

Power of Attorney

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal document during your absence, you may want to arrange for your legal Power of Attorney to be held by an appropriate person to act on your behalf.

Personal Property Insurance

All travelers should consider purchasing personal insurance to cover, at least partially, any financial loss incurred by trip interruption or cancellation, as well as loss of baggage and personal effects while either traveling or living abroad. Many, but not all, homeowner's insurance policies contain a clause extending this coverage worldwide. Check to see if your family's policy contains such a clause. Normally, a copy of the police report filed at the time of loss or theft is required by the insurer before any claim will be considered.

Laptop Computers

If you will need easy access to a computer for research or academic work, you may want to bring a laptop. However, keep in mind that there are risks in transporting and storing the computer. When traveling, keep your laptop with you at all times; never put it on the seat in front of you or underneath your seat. Do not leave your computer unattended in public places, even for short periods of time. You may want to create back-up files of your documents in the event your computer is damaged or lost during your travel. Research and buy appropriate electrical travel adapters if needed. Also, please be aware that you must remove your computer from your bag when going through airport security screening checkpoints.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The ISIC is required of all ACC study abroad participants. A number of privileges and discounts are available to students, including discounts on travel and specially priced or free admission to museums, theaters, concerts, and historical sites. To qualify, you must be able to prove your student

status. The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) provides this proof wherever you go. It is the most widely recognized proof of your student status.

The cards are available at the ACC International Programs Office for \$22 plus an additional \$5 for two photos.

Luggage

Some ACC sponsored programs have specific requirements regarding luggage size, weight, and number of pieces. Your international programs coordinator will advise you if any requirements pertain to you during the advising process.

If you do not have specific luggage requirements for your program, you can check luggage and carry-on regulations for all airlines on which you will be traveling by going to the specific airline website. Visit the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for information about your U.S. airport security experience and prohibited items in carry-on and checked baggage:

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

You may want to mark your bags in a distinctive way, so you can easily find them. Count your pieces of luggage each time you travel from place to place.

- **Helpful Tip:** Do not bring more pieces of luggage than you can carry yourself. Traveling light is safer and easier.

Immigration and Customs Inspections

Upon entry to any country, you must show your passport and any required visas and/or proof of immunizations. At an airport, this usually occurs just after you deplane, but before you recover your luggage. Remember that admission to the country is entirely at the discretion of the immigration officer. It is wise to be polite and to dress neatly. The immigration officer, who determines the length of stay to be authorized and stamped into your passport, will normally ask you about the purpose of your visit and how long you plan to remain in the country.

After your passport has been stamped and you have collected your luggage, you must pass through a customs inspection. You will probably receive a customs declaration form to complete prior to arrival, and customs officials will examine it when they look at your luggage. Your bags may be carefully examined, and you may be detained or asked to pay duties if there are any irregularities or violations of customs regulations. You may also be waved through with no special attention.

Do not joke about bombs, firearms, and/or smuggled items.

Returning to the U.S.

U.S. residents are usually permitted to bring \$800 worth of foreign souvenirs and gifts into the U.S. duty free. All articles acquired abroad and in your possession at the time of your return to the U.S. must be declared to Customs officials, either orally (if you do not exceed the \$800 limit) or in writing. Declaration forms will be distributed during your flight back to the U.S. For more information on clearing U.S. customs visit: <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/clearing/>

MAINTAINING HEALTH ABROAD

Staying healthy while traveling abroad may depend on three important factors: making adequate preparations, knowing destination-specific health risks, and following sound U.S. and local medical counsel. Living away from your usual cultural environment may also cause a degree of emotional stress—which, in turn, could trigger physiological consequences. The impact on personal relationships, counseling sessions (if you are in therapy), and your general health (especially if you are on medication of any kind) is something to consider as you prepare for your sojourn abroad.

Traveling in developed countries usually incurs no greater health risks than traveling in the U.S. However, in some regions of Africa, Asia, South and Central America, and the Middle East, sanitation and hygiene may be below U.S. standards. Cities often have better health environments than rural areas, but not always. For information on worldwide health conditions, consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at wwwn.cdc.gov/travel and the World Health Organization at www.who.int. All special health needs or medical conditions should be noted on the Health Information Form that you are advised to carry with you. If you have diabetes, are allergic to penicillin or any other medication, or have any physical condition that may require emergency care, carry identification—a tag, bracelet, or card—on your person at all times. The ID should indicate the specific nature of the problem and spell out clearly what must or must not be done should you be unable to communicate this information.

The sections below highlight some of the most common questions regarding health abroad. For more information, please visit wwwn.cdc.gov/travel or www.who.int.

Travel Planning

Travelers who have a chronic medical condition, are pregnant, or are traveling to Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Eastern Europe, and the South Pacific (except Australia and New Zealand) should contact their International Program Coordinators for specific program guidance.

Required Immunizations for Entry into Some Destination Countries

Because of specific health concerns and conditions in various countries, proof that you have received certain immunizations may be required. In such a case, you must carry an official “International Certificate of Vaccinations” form, issued by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and approved by the World Health Organization. This form is available from many physicians and travel agencies, and it must be filled out and dated by the physician or clinic administering the immunizations. In some countries, you may be asked to present the form upon entry to the country at the same time that you show your passport and any required visa.

Prescriptions

Should you currently be under the care of a physician or require regular medication or injections (e.g. Insulin or allergy shots), be sure to check with your personal physician for any advice concerning your welfare while abroad. If you need medications regularly, take an adequate supply with you. It is advisable to keep all medicines (prescription or over-the-counter) in their original and labeled containers. A letter from your physician should accompany prescription medicines. This letter should include a description of your condition, the dosage of prescribed medications, and the generic name(s) of the medicine listed. If you are required to take medication containing habit forming or narcotic drugs, please contact your International Programs Coordinator for guidance.

The Centers for Disease Control recommend that people who require routine injections carry a supply of syringes and needles sufficient to last their stay abroad. Be aware that carrying needles and syringes without a prescription may be illegal in some countries, so take along a letter from your doctor.

Routine and Emergency Medical Care Abroad

Upon arrival (if not before), you should find out what arrangements exist locally for routine health care and the location of the nearest pharmacy. Make sure you also learn the name and location of the hospital nearest to your residence abroad and how to summon emergency medical care. A list of 911 equivalents is posted on the U.S. State Department's Students Abroad website:

<http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/emergencies.php>

- **Helpful Tip:** Take good care of yourself while traveling!
Do not wear yourself down, watch out for excessive exposure to heat, drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, and get plenty of sleep!

Jet Lag

Jet lag refers to the physical and mental effects the body suffers when traveling rapidly across time zones and the resulting disruption of the traveler's normal sleep-wake cycle. As a result, the traveler may experience indigestion, daytime sleepiness, headaches, and changes in blood pressure, fatigue, and poor concentration. Symptoms typically increase with the number of time zones crossed. The Mayo Clinic has put together useful information about jet lag at

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/jet-lag/DS01085>.

Food and Water Safety

In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available, or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, only hot beverages made with boiled water or canned or bottled beverages may be safe to drink. Where water may be contaminated, ice or containers for drinking should also be considered contaminated. Iced drinks and non-carbonated bottled fluids made from water of uncertain quality should be avoided. It is generally safer to drink directly from the original beverage can or bottle. If no source of safe drinking water is available, tap water that has been boiled for ten minutes may be safe. Once it has cooled, it can be used for brushing teeth and drinking.

Be careful when choosing foods to eat. In areas of the world where hygiene and sanitation are poor, fresh fruit and vegetables should always be selected with care and should be properly rinsed with clean water before eating if they can be eaten without peeling. Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products, such as cheese, and eat only fruit that you have peeled yourself. Following these precautions will help you avoid intestinal infections, such as travelers' diarrhea, which are caused by organisms in contaminated food or water. For further resources please visit

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/safe-food-water.aspx>.

But be warned: following the guidelines is no guarantee, and you may still develop diarrhea. Many countries offer an abundance of food sold from roadside stands, and, in many countries, it is advisable to avoid such food. Locals may have no trouble with such food or drink because they have developed immunities against indigenous microorganisms.

Travelers' Diarrhea

Travelers' diarrhea is a common affliction that usually strikes a couple of days after arrival in a new environment and seldom lasts longer than about five days. Diarrhea is nature's way of ridding the

body of noxious agents; intestinal motility serves as the normal cleansing mechanism of the intestine. The most important way of coping with this disorder is to maintain adequate fluid intake to prevent dehydration. Most cases of diarrhea are self-limited and require only simple replacement of fluids and salts lost in diarrhea stools. Drink fluids such as canned fruit juices, hot tea, or carbonated drinks.

- **Helpful Tip:** Always dry wet cans or bottles, plates, bowls, or utensils before using. All surfaces that come into direct contact with the mouth should also first be wiped clean.

It is strongly recommended that you consult a local physician rather than attempt self-medication if your diarrhea is severe or does not resolve itself within several days, if there is blood and/or mucus in the stool, if fever occurs with shaking chills, or if there is persistent diarrhea with dehydration.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Many diseases (e.g., gonorrhea, herpes, etc.) are primarily contracted through unsafe sexual activity. AIDS is the best known and the deadliest, but the same precautions apply to all sexually transmitted diseases. Everything you already know about sexually transmitted diseases and how they are contracted is as true overseas as it is at home. Whatever the situation in your host country, you are not more likely to contract AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases there than in the U.S.—if you act sensibly and refrain from unprotected sex and other behavior that carries the risk of infection. Since you will not know your overseas environment as well as you know your home environment, or might not be able to control it to the same degree, you should prepare yourself in advance, before leaving the U.S.

Knowing Your HIV Status

Some countries require all incoming foreigners to take the HIV antibody test. Check to see if your host country requires HIV testing. You may need a “doctor’s certificate” showing the results of an HIV antibody test. Consulates in Washington, D.C. and/or New York City carry information on HIV testing. If you need to be tested, do so only at a center that offers pre- and post-test counseling. There are many institutions whose primary focus is AIDS counseling. Allow two weeks for the testing process. Consider getting tested twice: first anonymously (which allows you the privacy to decide what you want to do if the result is positive), then again for a doctor’s certificate, if needed.

Overseas Blood Transfusions and Blood Products

Many countries, including the U.S., Australia, Canada, Japan, and countries in Western Europe, screen donated blood for endemic diseases, including HIV, hepatitis, and syphilis; **others do not**. In some locations, ascertaining the availability of screened blood and blood products may be difficult. If you are injured or ill while abroad, avoid a blood transfusion unless it is absolutely necessary. If you do need blood, try to ensure that blood from a reliable source is used. Regardless of the blood screening practices abroad, always take precautions that will reduce the risk of serious injury, especially traffic accidents.

Overseas Injections

In the U.S., we take for granted that equipment such as needles and syringes are never reused. Be advised that in some foreign countries even disposable equipment may be used many times with different patients. In some countries, if you require an injection, you can buy needles and syringes and bring them to the hospital for your own use. The best rule is to avoid injections unless absolutely necessary. If injections are required, make sure the needles and syringes come straight

from a package or have been sterilized with chemicals or by boiling for 20 minutes. When in doubt, ask to see how the equipment has been sterilized. Caution regarding instrument sterilization applies to all instruments that pierce the skin, including tattooing, acupuncture, ear piercing, and dental work.

STAYING SAFE AND OBEYING THE LAW

Taking Personal Responsibility

Safety and security depend to a large degree upon being well prepared, listening and heeding the counsel you are given, and remaining vigilant. Here are some essential rules:

- Try not to make yourself conspicuous by dress, speech, behavior, expensive personal accessories (cameras, iPods, laptops, etc.), or careless behavior.
- Do not take or wear expensive and/or flashy jewelry during your travel. Upon arrival in your destination country, make sure all official documents (e.g. passports) and valuables are safely secured.
- Avoid crowds, protests, rallies, or any potentially volatile situations, as well as restaurants and places where Americans are known to congregate.
- Keep abreast of local news. Read local newspapers and magazines and speak with local officials to learn about any potential civil unrest. If there should be any unrest, do not get involved.
- Report to the responsible authority any suspicious persons loitering around residence or instructional facilities or following you; keep your residence area locked; use common sense in divulging information to strangers.
- Whenever possible, make reservations at a hotel or hostel before you arrive in a city. Check a map and be sure you know where you are going before you leave. Looking lost or confused can make you an easy target.
- Be careful when using ATMs on the street and avoid using them in isolated places or at times when you are likely to be the only person around.
- Do not impair your judgment through excessive consumption of alcohol, and do not fall under the influence of drugs.

Pick-pocketing

Distraction is the most important element for a pickpocket. Ruses include someone dropping money in front of, approaching to ask for directions from, or bumping into a potential victim. Maintain distance with strangers. Keep in mind, pickpockets usually work in teams. Before leaving your residence, map out where to go and how to get there. When the plan and route are set, one walks with confidence and purpose. Pickpockets look for targets who are distracted (e.g., reading a map) and/or appear unfamiliar with the area. Be aware of the surroundings. Sneak thieves love crowded areas such as train stations, subways, bus terminals, tourist hotspots, and restaurants. Do not carry valuables or wear expensive jewelry. Do not flash money in public. This will certainly get the attention of a pickpocket. When taking money out of a wallet, do it discreetly or in a less crowded area. Do not place a wallet in a back pocket and do not pat/squeeze it to feel if it is still

there. This is a dead giveaway for thieves. Place a wallet sideways in a front pocket. Putting elastic bands around the wallet also makes it hard to pick. The ideal solution is to get a money belt or safety pouch that is worn around the neck underneath clothing. Do not hang a purse on the back of a chair when at a restaurant; do not leave it in a grocery cart or place it next to oneself when sitting down somewhere. Always maintain control of the handbag. When walking in the street, keep a tight hold onto it with the flap facing inward. It is a good idea to get a pocketbook with extra clasps or zippers. Wear purses across the torso, instead of on a shoulder. Better yet, if weather permits, carry the purse under a coat. For added safety, place valuables (wallet, credit cards, money, passport, etc.) securely on one's person and/or in a money belt.

Crime and Terrorism

Depending on where you are traveling, you may be in a place with less, more, or the same level of street crime that exists in the U.S. In any case, being a foreigner and not knowing the customs and patterns of local behavior may increase the odds of your becoming the victim of crimes such as fraud, robbery, or theft. In some circumstances, it is possible that you will get caught in the midst of political strife that may not be directed at you personally, or even at you as an American, but nevertheless can be dangerous. Students abroad should check the U.S. State Department website for information about any country that they plan to visit: <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

Local and National Laws

You are subject to the laws of any country you are visiting. You should make sure you know the laws and obey them scrupulously. Many of the legal protections you may take for granted are left behind when you leave the U.S. Avoid involvement with drugs and all other illegal substances. Buying or carrying even small amounts of drugs can result in your arrest. Drug laws vary, but in many countries they are extremely severe, regardless of whether the drug in your possession is for personal use or for sale to others. Bail provisions such as those in the U.S. are rare in many countries, and pretrial detention without bail is not uncommon. The principle of "innocent until proven guilty" is not necessarily a tenet of legal systems abroad. Bail is often not granted for drug-trafficking cases. Pre-trial detention, often in solitary confinement, can last for months. Many countries do not provide a jury trial, and in some cases you may not even be present at your trial. The average jail sentence in drug cases worldwide is about seven years. Americans have been jailed abroad for possessing as little as three grams (about one-tenth of an ounce) of marijuana. You could be in a country where prison and law enforcement officials do not speak English, the significance of which you may not fully appreciate until you are confined and feeling helpless.

Local Embassy or Consulate

Embassies exist to provide assistance to their citizens while abroad, including providing information about social and political events, health and safety concerns, and educational and cultural affairs. Should you need services from your Government, please speak with your faculty leader and the IP Office first.

Non-U.S. citizens should check with their home country's embassy or consulate to find out what services will be available to them while abroad.

U.S. Department of State's Office of Overseas Citizens Services

If you are a U.S. citizen and you encounter serious social, political, health, or economic problems, the embassy and/or consulate can usually offer limited assistance. For U.S. citizens, emergency assistance is available through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, operated by the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Consular duty personnel are available for emergency

assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas and in Washington, D.C. If you need to contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services from overseas call +1 202-501-4444.

Consular personnel know the local government agencies and resources in the country. They can help you:

- Replace a stolen passport
- Contact family and/or friends
- Obtain medical care
- Address emergency needs that arise as a result of a crime
- Obtain general information about the local criminal justice process and information about your case
- Obtain information about local resources to assist victims, including crime victim assistance and victim compensation programs
- Obtain a list of local English-speaking attorneys

COMMUNICATION

E-mail

You may have Internet access abroad, but it is worth asking before you go. Internet service in your destination country may not be as prevalent as it is in the U.S. For example, WiFi service may not be available. It is important not to overdo e-mail and other online communication with friends and family at home. Online communication can become a crutch, interfering with immersion in the host culture.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are increasingly used in most countries both to call overseas and communicate within the country. Keep in mind that most standard U.S. cell phones do not work abroad. We recommend that you learn about international cell phones generally, and cell phone use in your destination country, before you leave. Check with your International Programs Coordinator about cell phone requirements for your study abroad program.

Be forewarned: Cell phone charges abroad can be more expensive than in the U.S. Use your phone wisely, or be prepared to pay! Before buying a new cell phone, check with your current cell phone provider to see if you can temporarily upgrade your service so it works abroad, allowing you to use your current phone number. Be sure to discuss rates and fees, as they are likely to be higher than what you pay for domestic service and have more restrictions.

International Calls

To make a direct international phone call, you need:

1. The country code of the country you are calling. For example, the U.S. uses the country code of 1. The country code is dialed after the international direct dialing number/code and before the city/area code. Country and city codes can be obtained from any overseas operator or at <http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>
2. The city/area code (if any) for the number you are dialing.

3. The local number.

You may find it useful to use an international telephone card, available through most long distance phone companies. Since charges are based on U.S. rates, calls are more economical. Phone cards are also useful since many pay phones do not accept cash (cards can be used at regular landlines as well).

Time Zones

When making phone calls to or from the U.S., keep the time difference in mind, and be sure to remind friends and relatives! Should your friends, for example, call you in France at 10 p.m. EST, they should be aware that you have probably long since gone to bed. The time zone of every country in the world can be found at <http://www.worldtimezone.com>.

MONEY AND BANKING

Although banking has become more uniform, the advice below may not apply in every country. Well before you leave the U.S., you should get accurate information from your bank and from credit card agencies.

General Financial Information

The safest way to protect your finances while abroad is to diversify them by using an ATM card, traveler's checks, and credit cards. Carrying large amounts of cash is not recommended.

Currency Exchange

You may want to exchange about \$100.00 prior to departure to have cash on hand when you arrive at your destination. American currency can be exchanged for foreign currency at most U.S. banks, most international airports and major banks overseas (and at most major railroad stations abroad). In general, it is wise to exchange money at banks and not at hotels, restaurants, or retail shops, where the exchange rates are unfavorable. Banks abroad afford you the fairest exchange rate available, but you can expect to pay a commission every time you exchange currency. In some countries, the commission is based on a percentage of the amount you exchange, while in others there is a flat fee regardless of the transaction amount. Often, you can use your ATM card to withdraw money and avoid a commission charge, although your bank may charge you a withdrawal fee. Current currency exchange rates can be found at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/markets/currencies/>

Credit/Debit Cards

Credit cards make foreign currency transactions easy and are invaluable in financial emergencies. Do take a credit card along, but use it wisely; plastic can be dangerous because overspending is so easy. Interest charges can be costly, and the loss or theft of a card abroad is a serious inconvenience. Not all merchants abroad accept credit cards, regardless of the name brand. Visa and MasterCard tend to be more widely accepted than American Express. Some banks charge fees for overseas credit card use. Make sure you find out what your bank's credit card and/or debit card policies are before you depart.

Before you leave the U.S., make your bank and credit card companies know about your travel plans. Sudden changes in your account activity, such as frequent withdrawals in a foreign country, can trigger a fraud alert and cause your bank to freeze your account. You should also make a list of

international contact numbers for your financial institutions, as well as your account, credit card, and ATM card numbers. Keep this information in a safe location in case any of your cards are stolen.

The amount charged to your credit card bill is based on the exchange rate on the day that your bank or credit card company processes the transaction.

Transferring Money Overseas

Should you run short of cash while abroad, money can be sent from home in a variety of ways. The quickest (and perhaps most expensive) way is by Western Union. With this system you can pick up cash in the local currency within one hour after it has been sent from the U.S. Cable transfer from your American bank to a bank abroad is another safe and fast way of sending money. To pick up the money overseas you will need, in all cases, an official form of identification (e.g. your passport).

You might want to visit your bank before your departure to obtain a list of the overseas correspondent banks to which money can be transferred by cable and to let the bank know who is authorized to initiate cable transfers on your behalf. Most American banks have an internationally recognized correspondent bank overseas that can complete the transfer at your overseas location.

Budgeting

The overall cost of living abroad can sometimes be higher than at home in part because you are in an unfamiliar environment making transactions with unfamiliar currency. Depending on your site, you may also be confronted with an almost endless array of entertainment possibilities and attractions. A “go-slow” approach to buying makes sense. Little is more dismaying than running out of funds overseas with no easy or quick means of replenishment.

Some tips to save:

- Make both weekly and daily budgets and stick to them.
- Learn the value of the money in relation to the US\$ (or another currency you know well) wherever you are and as quickly as possible.
- Be alert to special student rates and discounts and know what is available with your International Student Identification Card (e.g., travel, entrance fees, accommodations, some entertainment, etc.).
- Take advantage of less expensive alternatives whenever possible. Cook for yourself (especially breakfasts) when possible.

ADJUSTING TO A NEW CULTURE

It can be easy to believe one understands a foreign culture even without having directly experienced it. Images in the media and information gleaned from books or encounters with natives can provide the illusion of real knowledge. Living in a culture and having to come to terms with its conventions and customs is a different matter entirely. Some cultural differences are evident (e.g., language, religion, political organization, etc.). Others can be so subtle that becoming aware of them can be a complex process. A first-time visitor may remain uncomfortable and off balance for quite some time. In adjusting to your new environment, you will have to deal not only with real differences, but also with perceived differences. Keep in mind that people of other cultures are just

as adept at stereotyping Americans as Americans are at stereotyping them—and the results are not always complimentary.

The best way to learn about local social customs is to inquire politely. Expect things to be different overseas. One of the basic reasons for you to travel abroad is to develop an appreciation for the people and customs of other cultures. ***Anyone who goes overseas demanding that everything be the same as what he or she is accustomed to will be sorely disappointed and probably better served by staying at home.*** Be flexible and receptive in dealing with differences, and you will find your own life experiences enriched.

“Culture Shock”

Just as an athlete cannot get in shape without going through a sometimes uncomfortable conditioning stage, so you cannot fully appreciate cultural differences without first going through some stages of psychological adjustment. It is possible that your initial reaction to life abroad will be euphoria, sparked by a sense of novelty and adventure. It is also possible that the euphoria will give way to a less pleasant emotion, as you try to make your way through an unfamiliar culture. You may realize that you are unable to follow your usual routines. Minor problems may seem like major crises. You may feel anxious because the signs of social intercourse that you are used to are lacking. You may become depressed.

These symptoms are often referred to as “culture shock,” although this is a misnomer. It is important to realize that these are perfectly normal responses to a new environment and, in fact, can be seen as a sign that you are truly immersing into a new culture rather than remaining in a U.S. “bubble.” There is no one-size-fits-all way of dealing with the challenges of this adjustment period, although the more you understand the mechanisms of it, the more effectively you can move past it and use it as a way to deepen your immersion into the new culture.

In his book **Survival Kit for Overseas Living**, L. Robert Kohls suggests the following techniques for adjusting to a new culture: learn as much as possible about the host country prior to departure, look for the reasons things are done or perceived differently, meet local people and find friends with whom you can discuss your reactions, if possible - read and speak the local language, and familiarize yourself with local viewpoints and customs.

You should emerge from the experience with the ability to function in two cultures with confidence.

Fitting In

Because cultural and social customs differ greatly from one country to another, it is impossible to give guidelines that are universally applicable. Keep in mind that you are a guest in your host country. Always remain friendly and courteous. If your missteps are well intentioned, you are likely to be given the benefit of the doubt as a foreigner who is doing his/her best.

Politeness

In many countries, social encounters are governed by a code of conduct that requires a greater degree of formality than in the U.S. Be aware of the differences between the “familiar” and the “polite” forms of address (and use them properly). Become familiar with the appropriate expressions of gratitude in response to your hosts’ hospitality and be prepared to offer a formal greeting to whomever you meet in your day-to-day activities.

Physical contact

When establishing social relationships, you will need to be aware of the level of familiarity that you should adopt at various stages of your relationships. Physical contact, for example, may not be appreciated or understood by someone unfamiliar with the American idea of camaraderie; a cheerful pat on the back or a warm hug may be uncomfortable in certain cultures. All cultures have social space norms: how far away to stand or sit when conversing, how to shake hands or wave farewell, for example. Restraint is advisable until you learn how the locals do it and what they expect of you.

Relationships

What may be considered normal relations between people of the opposite sex in the U.S. may be interpreted very differently by the host culture. Be aware that sexual behavior considered acceptable in the U.S. might invite trouble.

Personal Questions

Let your hosts take the lead when engaging in “small talk.” While Americans often find it easy to talk about themselves, in some countries your hosts may view such discussion as impolite.

Drinking and Drunkenness

Be extremely sensitive to others’ attitudes and feelings when it comes to drinking. You may find that your hosts enjoy social drinking as much as any American, but they might not look upon drunkenness as either amusing or indeed tolerable.

Humor

While each country has its own brand of wit and humor, few cultures appreciate the kind of “kidding” to which Americans are accustomed. Kidding comments, even when well intentioned, can be interpreted as unfriendly.

Photograph Etiquette

Remember that the people you are photographing are not objects of curiosity. Be tactful and discreet; it is always courteous to ask permission before taking someone’s picture. In some countries there are laws governing photography. If in doubt about local laws and/or customs do not photograph military installations, airports, official government building or men/women in military uniform.

Price Bargaining

Bargaining over prices is sometimes not only appropriate but expected. At other times, it is inappropriate. If you misread the situation, you may find that you have insulted the merchant. You can test the waters by politely indicating that you like the product, but that

the price is more than you had anticipated spending. If the merchant wishes to bargain, he or she now has an opening to lower his/her offer. If bargaining is not part of standard business practice, you can simply (and politely) terminate the conversation.

Tipping

While tipping is normal in the U.S., it may not be in the country you are traveling to. Make sure you know what the norms are in the country you are traveling to.

Clothing

Before you travel do some research regarding what kind of clothing people wear in the country you will be visiting. Some clothing items that are acceptable in American culture may not be acceptable or appropriate in a different culture. Also, be aware of proper clothing etiquette associated with entry into religious sites.

A Special Note to Women

Many U.S. women have a hard time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad in both public and private interactions between men and women. Perhaps the greatest challenge to U.S. women abroad stems from their tendency to be independent and to hold the belief that women may go where men go, do what men do, and speak as men do.

In some countries, it is not uncommon for women to be honked at, verbally and loudly appraised, and aggressively addressed in other ways. Local women, who often get the same treatment, have usually learned to ignore it. Although it may seem rude to be unfriendly to a stranger, creating boundaries to protect yourself is important. Use facial expressions, body language, and a firm voice to fend off unwanted attention.

Be careful about messages you may unintentionally communicate. In some cultures, American women are seen as “liberated,” and the misunderstandings based on this image can sometimes lead to difficult and unpleasant experiences. Eye contact or a smile at someone passing in the street may result in unexpected invitations. Uncomfortable situations can usually be avoided by taking precautions. Dress conservatively. Avoid walking alone late at night or in questionable neighborhoods.

You will have to learn the unwritten rules about what you can and cannot do abroad. Prepare yourself by learning about the gender roles and assumptions in your host country. You may not agree with some of the practices you learn about, but you should try to abide by them while in that country.

Above all, try to maintain the perspective that these challenging experiences are part of understanding another culture, which is one of the reasons you have traveled abroad.

Racial and Ethnic Concerns

No two people traveling abroad ever have the same experience, even in the same program and country. This rule holds true for students from U.S. minority ethnic or racial backgrounds. Some students have reported feeling exhilarated by being outside the American context of race relations; others have experienced varying degrees of innocent curiosity about their race or ethnicity and sometimes familiar as well as new types of ostracism or discrimination. No returning ACC student has suggested that the racial or ethnic problems one may encounter abroad constitute a reason for not going abroad.

LGBT Students Abroad

It is important to be aware of the laws pertaining to homosexuality in other countries, as well as the prevailing attitudes toward gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. Some countries are more liberal on these matters than the U.S. and some less. Whatever the general rule, there will always be pockets of difference and personal idiosyncrasies. You may want to consult the website of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (<http://www.iglhrc.org>) for more information.