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I. About this Handbook

This handbook contains general information pertinent to students on all WCU exchange program, third party programs, and Faculty-led programs. Throughout the booklet, reference is made to information specific to either WCU exchange programs, third party programs, or Faculty-led programs. To fully benefit from the information presented, you should understand the difference between these designations.

1. **Exchange programs** are those in which WCU selects and orients students, but exchange partner institution arranges housing, classes and administration abroad.
2. **Third party programs** include ISEP, CIEE, ISA, CAPA, etc. WCU selects and orients students, but a program provider or host institution arranges housing, classes and administration abroad.
3. **Faculty-led programs** are those in which WCU selects, orients, and arranges housing and administration abroad.

In each section, you will find a [“Quick Links”](#) box on the right. This is to help you navigate through each session should you need to refer back to the handbook and find a specific section.

I. Before You Go

WCU Pre-Departure Orientation

- x Attend the mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation held by Office of International Programs and Services (IPS) and/or held by your instructor (for Faculty-led Travel Courses)

Your Study Abroad Location

- x Take the time to research local conditions, the political landscape and customs of your host country before you depart and stay informed about current events and developing situations. For current news, safety bulletins and state travel warnings go to: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html>

Passport

- x If you DO NOT have a passport, apply for one as soon as possible at <http://travel.state.gov>
- x If you DO have a passport, verify that it is valid for at least 6 months after the end of your program.
- x Non-US Citizens: Visit the embassy website of your home country to find out your specific requirements.

Visa

- x You may need an entry visa or other travel documents to study in your host country.
- x IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to verify the visa requirements of your host country and to obtain the student visa.
- x Visit the consular and/or embassy website of your host country to find specific visa information.
- x Non-US Citizens: You may have different visa requirements than US citizens.

Flight Ticket

- x Book your flight to and from your study abroad destination.
- x Book regional transit (trains, buses, etc.) for any additional trips while abroad.
- x For students who participate in Faculty-led programs, instructors may book tickets for you.

Registration with the U.S. Department of State

- x If you are a US citizen, you can register your trip in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) of the US Department of State (DOS) so that DOS it can better assist you in case of an emergency and provide important health, safety and security updates for your host country.
<https://step.state.gov/STEP/Pages/Common/Citizenship.aspx>

- Bee sting kit
- Insect repellent
- Medical kit
- Band-Aids or gauze
- Thermometer
- Cough and cold medicine
- Syringes for allergy treatment, insulin or other medical injections
- Aspirin/aspirin-free products
- A mild laxative
- Anti-fungal/anti-itch agent
- Anti-bacterial cream/spray
- Sunscreen, sunburn medication
- Feminine hygiene products
- Contraceptives and prescription birth control
- Water shoes
- Water purification systems
- Medical Checkup Forms

Health

Primary health care

- x Develop a plan with your physician on how you will maintain your health while traveling. This is especially important if you have any ongoing health issues that may require attention while abroad. If you are on any medications, you should ensure that you have a supply to last the duration of your time abroad.

Travel Clinic

- x It is highly recommended that you schedule a visit to a travel clinic. A travel clinic will focus on immunizations and other health recommendations specific to the country.

Some vaccines are given as a series and some require a time interval before departure in order to be effective.

Medications Abroad

Prescription

- If you have a pre-existing medical condition, take an adequate supply of your medication to last your entire trip. All medications must be carried in their original containers along with a letter from your physician indicating the generic name and brand name of the medication, as well as the dosage and a description of your medical condition.

benefits. Depending on your program, one of these might be included in your study abroad fee, but if not, you may get one of these cards on your own. The cost is minimal.

- x The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) can provide discounts on international and local transportation, accommodations, and admissions to museums, theaters, historical sites, etc.
<https://www.isic.org/>

Academics

Exchange/Direct Enrollment/Third Party Programs

Financial Aid

- x You can use financial aid to study abroad. Consult with a financial aid office before you apply to a program. WCU Financial Aid Office: finaid@wcu.edu or 828-227-7290.
- x Be realistic! Plan your foreign study according to the financial aid and financial resources you have and not what you hope to receive in additional aid or scholarships. Keep in mind that most programs and exchanges have a non-refundable deposit or application fee.

Managing Your Money

- x Contact your bank. Let your bank know that you will be out of the country and inform them of the countries you will visit and the duration of your stay.
- x Know whether your bank charges international transaction fees if you use your card in another country. Be sure to check and see if your bank has partner banks in your host country where the fees may be waived.
- x Consider opening a local bank account. For students going abroad for a semester or longer, it may be more cost effective to open a bank account with a local branch in the host country.
- x Know the exchange rate from US dollars to the local currency. Check online (google "exchange rates") every once in a while to make sure that the exchange rate you have been using to calculate the cost in US dollars has not fluctuated dramatically.
- x Make a copy of your debit/credit card. Keep a copy of your debit card and/or credit card scanned and emailed securely to yourself and someone that you trust.

Communication

Email

- x Given that IPS will need to contact you throughout your time abroad, it is impor.56 TmA2.56 Tm()TJ-0.h2m5

II. While You Are Away

Health Abroad

Report Medical Conditions

- x We strongly encourage that you inform your program director or on-ground coordinator of any medical or psychological conditions in person.
- x The stress of being overseas – especially initially upon arrival – may exacerbate medical conditions you may have.
- x If you have any questions or concerns about this possibility, consult your physician.

Recommendations

- x Eat well
- x Exercise regularly
- x Get plenty of sleep

Sexual Health

- x Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) & Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, are among the most common infections worldwide.
- x The most reliable way to avoid these is to abstain from sexual activity.
- x If you are sexually active, correct and consistent use of condoms can reduce the risk. As the availability and quality of condoms can vary by country you might consider packing your own supply as a precaution.
- x Do not use drugs intravenously or share needles for any reason.
- x For more information, please visit <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/std>

Health Insurance Summary of Benefits

- x The State of North Carolina has arranged health insurance for participants in study abroad programs in UNC-system universities through **GeoBlue** (www.geobluestudents.com). WCU requires that all students studying abroad have this insurance, which includes Medical Evacuation and Repatriation of Remains (ME&RR) coverage.
- x GeoBlue covers you in any country you visit outside the U.S. It does **not** cover you inside the U.S. That is why you need to maintain your current health insurance policy, as well.
- x The policy also provides Medical Evacuation, Political Unrest Evacuation, & Repatriation of Remains.
- x The GeoBlue network includes doctors all over the world. Consult the wcp1 (a)2 1 Tf(H4m[G)6 (.001 Tc 0.00a2 (

- Do not carry large amounts of cash and do not carry all of your money and documents all in one bag. Also avoid carrying wallets and/or money in back pockets which tend to be easier prey for pickpockets.
- Be alert in crowds, especially in train stations or popular tourist attractions. Thieves often use distractions in these locations to their advantage.
- Do not hitchhike.
- Do not rent cars, motorcycles, mopeds, or scooters.
- Do not stay out or walk late at night alone.
- When traveling long distances, attach your bag to the luggage rack with a bike chain or lock.
- American foreign policy can affect how people overseas will treat you. You will often be seen as a representative of your country. If your travel destination is having political or military difficulties, ranging from demonstrations to terrorist attacks to civil war, stay away from all sites of such activity.

often the targets of sexual assaults. Therefore, women should remain extra vigilant while abroad and do their best to prevent themselves from ending up in a possibly threatening situation.

- x The second reason to consider gender while abroad relates to how cultural expectations and practices often result in well-defined gender roles within a society. Gender roles abroad may differ greatly from those in the U.S. You may not choose to behave in exactly the same ways as traditional local women or men do; however, it is important to educate yourself about cultural gender roles within your host community in order to make sensitive choices about how you will behave as a woman or a man while abroad, and to understand how your personal views and opinions may be interpreted by your host culture. Think about ways to deal with intercultural frustrations relating to gender and/or being a woman overseas, including your response to people's possible stereotypes of American women. American women have a reputation in many countries as being looser, more carefree, and often more relaxed with their personal boundaries. This opinion is often created/reinforced by American television shows, music, and films. This awareness may help you forestall any unwanted advances from men in the host country.

Legal Issues

Regardless of your citizenship, as a visitor abroad you are required to obey the laws of the country you are visiting.

If you ever get into legal trouble abroad, you should immediately contact your program director. If you are a citizen, you may also contact a Consular officer at your local U.S. Embassy abroad. However, their ability to help in some situations is limited.

x A U.S. CONSULAR OFFICER **CANNOT**

- o Get you out of jail
- o Represent you at trial or give legal counsel
- o Pay legal fees or fines with U.S. government funds

x A U.S. CONSULAR OFFICER **CAN**

- o Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest
- o Give you a list of local attorneys
- o Notify your family or friends and relay requests for money or other aid with your authorization
- o Intercede with the local authorities to ensure that you are treated humanely and ensure that your rights under local law are fully observed

x WCU Student Code of Conduct

- o Students who participate in study abroad are representatives of WCU and are expected to conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully. Study abroad students, just as ude u d (u)1 (s)-2 (t a)2 (s) fb1 (e)5

Cultural Shock

- x "Culture shock" is the term used to describe the disorientation that every student experiences when spending an extended period in a new culture. The common symptoms include homesickness, boredom, withdrawing from the culture by spending excessive amounts of time alone or with other Americans, excessive sleeping, compulsive eating, irritability, stereotyping of or hostility toward host country nationals, weepiness or even some psychosomatic illnesses.
- x During your period abroad, you may experience several normal stages of cultural adaptation. These include: Initial euphoria; Irritation and hostility; Gradual adjustment; Adaptation and biculturalism.
- x There are several ways you can minimize the impact of culture shock.
 - o Learn as much as you can about your host country before you go.
 - o Keep an open mind.
 - o Be flexible.
 - o Go out and do things to meet students.
 - o Look into local volunteer opportunities through a social service agency, a school or a church.

Documenting Life Abroad

Share Your Experiences

- x Write a journal entry about what you have seen and experienced in your host country. You may use this journal entry as a starting point for a blog post, articles, research, a senior thesis, or a presentation.
- x Use social media as an easy way to keep in contact with family and friends while still being able to document your life abroad. You are representing WCU, your school, and the United States with your social media posts. Please act accordingly and be appropriate.

Share Your Experiences Project

- As part of our newly started project, we are asking students abroad to share clips of their experiences. These can be in front of a landmark, in class, with local friends. We will put them together to create Study Abroad Promotional Videos to inspire others to study abroad.
- o In at least one video clip, say "Come to (location where you are) (country)."
 - o Send us clips as you have them.
 - o Horizontal clips only please!
 - o They can be edited or unedited either!

Social Media

- x Follow our Instagram account @WCUAbroadCatamounts. We will repost your photos and share them with us so we can promote our study abroad program.
- x Use our hashtag #wcuabroad while posting photos on Instagram. We will repost your amazing photos!
- x Ask us about doing an Instagram takeover for our Instagram account. You can show us and share your experiences with our followers your experienc(s)-42 TJO Tc 1.9w 35.74 10AMCID 71 BDC q0 0 612

Withdrawal from the Program

- x Leaving a study abroad program is a big decision. If you feel that you must withdraw from your study abroad program, please first consult the host university international office and/or program director. Also speak with WCU's Study Abroad Advisor about your feelings. Speak with your loved ones, as well.

Credits and Grades

- x **Be sure you understand the local grading system:** must pass your courses abroad in order to receive credit for them here.
- x Your credits will be treated as transfer credits by the Registrar's office. That means that they will be treated as pass/fail and will not affect your GPA.

Transcript

- x While still at your host university, check in with the relevant office there to inquire about when your transcript will be produced. Be aware that some universities can take 2-7 months to produce and send your transcript.
- x Also be sure they will send it to IPS and not to you. Our Study Abroad office needs your official transcript in order to process your credits earned abroad.

III. When You Return

Re-entry: Reverse Cultural Shock

- x Once you have adapted to life abroad, coming home will require readjustment. You will have to integrate what you have learned abroad into your U.S. life. There are a few common symptoms.
 - o Feeling as though your friends and family do not understand the experience you had abroad.
 - o Feeling critical of U.S. customs and behaviors.
 - o A desire to return to the country or community in which you were immersed.
- x Try to share your experience with your family (photos, stories, etc.) and let them know how much you appreciate the chance they have given you.
- x Ask and listen to what your friends experienced while you were away. Try to do new things together to get the relationship on a new footing. Maintain contact with friends you met on your program.
- x Talk over your academic experience with your advisor. Make contacts with international students on your campus through IPS. Contact IPS and volunteer to talk to students who plan to study abroad. Seek

Acknowledgements

Indiana University Study Abroad Handbook; University of Washington Study Abroad Handbook