

Navigating STUDYING ABROAD

Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity to learn about another culture, experience their history and traditions, and meet new people. However, along with excitement can also come some anxieties about this new adventure. Below are some tips for making this transition a bit smoother.



PREPARING...

✦ **Access your existing tool belt.** Reflect on how you've tackled transitions before (e.g., moving away from home to go to college) and use what you learned to help guide this transition.

✦ **Do your research.** Living in another country can be confusing. How do I get around? How do I take care of my basic needs (e.g., groceries, laundry)? Will my phone work? How much will things cost? Read up about the country you will be visiting. Talk with folks in the EAP office or other students who have already studied in the same location. Knowledge gives you power to take more control over your transition and reduce the stress that can come with making this big move.

✦ **Have an action plan for getting support there.** Even if you know the language, living in another country can feel overwhelming and lonely at times. Learn about the supports (e.g. student groups, counseling) that could help you feel connected and cared for while you are away. Access them sooner rather than later. You will likely find that other students have had a similar experience and you can band together to explore and support one another.

✦ **Expect some interpersonal challenges.** When you study abroad you are often interacting with other students who are also studying abroad from other countries. Clashes in cultural norms, expectations, and habits can create conflict and make your living situation more difficult. Just like roommate or friend conflicts you have here, it's important to talk to others directly and openly to resolve any conflicts. If you need some guidance or additional support to help you navigate these difficulties, consult with your on-site EAP staff.

REMEMBER TO...

✦ **Call your friends and family for support.** Trying to make your way in a new country and forge new relationships can be hard. You might feel lonely, often missing close friends and family. Before you leave, set up a regular schedule to talk with friends and family, especially initially when you first arrive. Don't hesitate to talk more to those who already support you to feel connected while you build new connections and find your way around.

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REMEMBER TO...

 **Be patient with yourself.** Things that you may do automatically here (e.g., getting around town) might take more time and effort. Language barriers can feel frustrating. Take a deep breath. Give yourself a break and do something that helps you to de-stress (e.g., listening to your favorite tunes, going for a walk). This can help you to think more clearly and develop a plan to tackle the challenges you are facing.

 **Celebrate holidays with new traditions.** Some students will spend the holidays or a special day (e.g., birthday) abroad. This can sometimes make you miss others with whom you usually celebrate these events. Make time to talk with others on these days but also gather with others in your host country to make a new tradition. For example, don't have a turkey to celebrate Thanksgiving? Make a feast of local foods and have people over.

 **Be safe, be smart.** Students often engage in social behaviors (e.g., substance use, sexual activity) while studying abroad that can be risky and endanger themselves. When out and about, go with a buddy. This includes nightspots and out-of-town travel. Also be aware that some laws and regulations are different than in the U.S. and can land you in a heap of trouble.

RETURNING...

 **Don't forget about your transition back home!** Coming back to campus can feel jarring and you might be surprised by how you and others have changed. Use resources like EAP and CAPS to help you make this a smoother re-entry.