

EDUCATION ABROAD

STUDENT HANDBOOK



CUAbroad



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Office of Education Abroad

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Congratulations!

You have been accepted to participate in an education abroad program through The Catholic University of America and will soon be embarking on an adventure of a lifetime. Whether your program is for a few days over the Spring Break or for an entire academic year, the experience and what you learn will be valuable to you for years to come.

You don't want to get to your destination and find that you've overlooked something important. We've written this handbook as a reference guide to help you get ready and know what to do once you've arrived at your destination. Make sure you read the entire document so you don't miss any vital pieces of advice. You'll enjoy your time abroad much more if you're prepared.

In addition to information contained in this handbook which is applicable to all CUA students who participate in education abroad programs, you will also receive practical program-specific information either from *CUAbroad*, another CUA department or another university/program. Please be sure to read all the information and follow advice provided to help make the transition as smooth as possible. You are also required to arrive in time at your overseas program location in order to take part in the mandatory on-site orientation. With all this information, you should be thoroughly prepared for your term abroad.

Congratulations again on your decision to participate in an education abroad experience and on your acceptance into a Catholic University of America education abroad program. On behalf of the staff of *CUAbroad*, I wish you a safe sojourn.

Sincerely,

Grace Schneider, Director of Education Abroad schneiderg@cua.edu

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Student Accounts	http://treasurer.cua.edu/controller/sa	(202) 319-5036	

BEFORE DEPARTURE

Preparing to Go

At CUA

Staying organized is imperative as students prepare to go abroad. It is helpful to organize all forms, paperwork and notes in a central place. It is suggested that students also make copies of all materials, memos, etc. for their parents.

All students should check-in with the following individuals and offices before going overseas:

- **Major Advisor** – Meet with your advisor to review the courses you'll be taking abroad and what courses to register for when returning to CUA. If a senior, make arrangements for graduation.
- **Housing** – Notify the Housing Office that you will be going abroad and make arrangements for housing should you wish to live on campus when you return.
- **Financial Assistance** – Participants should make sure that their financial aid package is not affected by going abroad. When speaking with the Financial Aid Office, indicate whether you are participating on a CUA or non-CUA program.
- **Student Accounts** – Clear your student account of all holds before going abroad. Any holds will delay billing and registration for the abroad program.
- **Mail Room**– Visit the CUA post office and request that all mail be forwarded to a US address.

At Home

All students should ask themselves the following questions:

- How will I manage my finances while I am abroad?
- Have I spoken with my loved ones and friends in the US about their expectations for me while abroad? How and how often will we keep in touch?
- Does at least one of my relatives/parents/guardians have a passport?

CHECKLIST: THINGS TO DO BETWEEN NOW AND DEPARTURE

Register for classes

- **CUA-administered programs.** This includes CUA in Rome, the London Parliamentary Internship, all faculty-led programs, and all CUArchitecture programs. Register for your study abroad courses through Cardinal Station.
- **CUA-affiliated or non-affiliated programs.** The CUAbroad office will register you for a full-time placeholder course for the duration of your semester abroad. You will need to register for courses with your abroad program. Do not register for courses through Cardinal Station.
- **Official Transcript.** At the conclusion of your term of study, request an official transcript to be sent to the CUAbroad office. This is your responsibility. Credits and grades be evaluated for CUA equivalency and the courses will be posted on Cardinal Station by the Registrar's Office. Next, the courses will be manually placed in their appropriate places on your tracking sheet by the Arts and Sciences office. If you participate in a non-CUA program, your credits - but not your grades - will be posted on your CUA transcript according to CUA rules and regulations.

Apply for your passport or renew your expired passport

- **You will need:**
 - Official passport application: <http://travel.state.gov>
 - Previous passport or a certified copy of your birth certificate
 - Two identical 2"x 2" passport photos
 - Photo ID (such as a Driver's License)
 - Payment: an application fee (approx. \$110) and execution fee (approx. \$25)
- **Processing times** are 2-6 weeks. If needed, you can expedite your application for an additional fee.

Apply for your visa, if required

- **If a visa is required,** you can obtain the necessary forms from the Consulate or the Embassy of the country you're visiting. Your program may also provide you with information on applying for your visa. You will need a valid passport to apply for your visa.

Make medical and dental appointments, check immunization records

- **Update your immunizations,** regardless of where you're going. Depending on your destination, you may need to begin medication to diseases such as malaria not common in the US. Check with your personal physician or the Center for Disease Control regarding what you'll need.
- **Medical and dental check-ups** are a good idea if you'll be gone more than a few weeks. Get any problems taken care of before you travel, and get any prescriptions you'll need written and refilled.

Apply for an International Student Identity Card (ISIC), if desired

- **The International Student Identity Card (ISIC)** is not required and is not included in the program price for most programs. At \$25, it can prove to be one of your best investments. It makes you eligible for discounted airfare (domestic and international) and provides a 24-hour-a-day traveler's assistance service (for assistance in any language in the event of theft of your passport, need for medical or legal referral, etc.). Application forms and processing of applications are available at CUAbroad or at any STA Travel office.

☐ Make travel arrangements, if not included in your program

- **Airline tickets.** Students are generally responsible for making their own flight arrangements. For the lowest prices, book your flight as soon as you know your required arrival date. Consider websites such as www.studentuniverse.com and www.statravel.com, which offer student-discounted airfare.
- **Rail passes** are another consideration, especially if you will be doing a lot of traveling on your own before, during, and/or after your program. The passes are only available for purchase in the U.S. (you can't get them in Europe, though regular tickets are available there). Several different types of passes exist, and which one you need depends on how much traveling you'll be doing over what period of time.

☐ Address your finances

- **Use the sample budget worksheet** in this handbook to help you determine what your expenses will be. Be sure to include airfare, local transportation, and other major expenses as well as the "little things" like phone calls (local and international), snacks, gifts for friends and family, postage, etc.
- **Pay any outstanding bills** (including rent and utilities) before you go, or turn them over to a trusted friend or family member to pay (consider using a temporary Power of Attorney).
- **Notify your bank and credit card company** that you will be traveling and ask about international fees and sister companies.

☐ Make copies of all your important documents

- Make copies of your passport, visa, credit cards, acceptance letter, insurance card, flight itinerary, arrival instructions, and emergency contact information.
- **Carry the copies** separate from the originals and leave a set at home with a family member.

☐ Find out how to communicate from abroad

- **Check with your cell phone provider** about the cost of using your phone while abroad. If prohibitively expensive, plan to purchase or rent a cell phone to take with you abroad. Many programs can help you with this.
- **Consider purchasing an international calling card** to reduce the cost of calling home.
- **Research apps** that reduce or eliminate the cost of texting, talking, or video chatting while abroad.

☐ Learn about the educational system in your host country

- Learn about the structure of higher education in the country in which you'll be studying, especially in regards to classroom expectations, homework, exams, and grading systems.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Passports

All students must have a signed passport that will remain valid for at least six months after the program end date. Make at least two extra copies of the identification page of the passport. One should be left at home with a parent and the other brought overseas.

Unless traveling across international borders, do not carry their passports with you on a daily basis. Keep the passport in a safe place.

When departing for overseas, keep your passports with you at all times. Do not pack it in any checked luggage. Keep the acceptance letter to the program with your passport in case you are asked for it at border patrol.

A lost or stolen passport should be immediately reported to the local US Embassy in the host country. The local embassy or consulate should be able to assist students in replacing a passport.

Study Visas

Most host countries will require a visa for a semester or academic year program. There are exceptions and if your destination country does not require a student visa, you will be told by the program administrator.

Non US citizens who hold legal residency status in the United States should consult the consular website of the host country for instructions and requirements.

The process to get a visa is a lengthy one. Do not delay applying for it! In order to apply for a visa, you will need a passport, an acceptance letter for the program, proof of legal residency in the US, and other documents required by the embassy.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

All faculty and students studying abroad are advised to register with the American Embassy in the host country through the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#). Due to a heightened sense of security for all Americans abroad, it is advisable that students take every precaution to ensure that the US Embassy is aware of their whereabouts.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

CUAbroad recommends that students purchase an ISIC. This \$25 card can save participants hundreds of dollars in discounts overseas and in the US.

Students can apply for a card online at www.myisic.com or in the CUAbroad office.

Here are some of the features of the ISIC card:

- Trip protection
- Baggage protection
- Travel document protection
- Discounts at museums, train tickets, restaurants, hostels all over the world
- Web and cell phone plan discounts overseas

Airports & Luggage

Once you have booked your flight, consult the airline's baggage restrictions. Check in at the airport at least 2-3 hours prior to any international flight.

Take special care in following these recommendations and airport requirements:

- Pack valuables, essential items, and important documents in a carry-on bag.
- Do not lock or vacuum seal your luggage. Bags that are locked are subject to search, and airports/airlines are not responsible for any resulting damage. Vacuum-sealed packaging may be opened, making it difficult to re-pack the contents.
- Use luggage that has wheels or a back-pack.
- Most airlines charge large fees for luggage weighing over 50 lbs. Weigh your luggage on a bathroom scale before going to the airport.
- Keep your passport and boarding pass on you all times.
- Items such as pocket knives, straight razors, metal nail files, and lighters must be checked.
- Pack your laptop in a place that's easy to access during airport screening.
- Empty pockets of all items before going through screening.
- Do not pack wrapped gifts in either checked or carry-on items. Passengers transporting gifts should leave the items unwrapped throughout the journey, as this will allow for easy inspection.
- Bring an empty water bottle to fill after going through security.

Cheap Student Travel

For low-cost airfare, search for student flights on websites like statravel.com and studentuniverse.com.

PACKING

No one can tell you exactly what to take overseas. The rule of thumb is to pack once, then take out half. You will accumulate things while abroad, so you will want to have enough room to bring them back at the end of the term. Shipping items internationally is very expensive.

Here are some of our suggestions on what to bring overseas:

- Clothing – Consider the country’s climate and pack accordingly. You generally need fewer clothes than you think.
- Prescription medication – Bring any prescription medication or specialized items (e.g. epipen, inhaler, etc.) with you abroad. Bring a note from your doctor and a copy of any prescriptions in case you are questioned at the airport or need to visit to a pharmacy overseas. Know that not all medicines are legal or available overseas. Contact Frontier MEDEX to find out, and if necessary, consult your doctor for advice.
- Adaptors/Transformers - Electricity in the host country may be a different voltage from the US. Electrical appliances brought from the US need an **adapter** to fit into the outlet and a **transformer** to convert the voltage level. Most hardware store should carry these items.

Packing Suggestions:

(If you are planning to do shopping and/or willing to purchase brands available in the host country, reduce the list accordingly.)

Essentials

- Passport/visa
- Credit/debit cards
- Tickets
- Arrival instructions
- Cash
- Health insurance card
- ISIC
- Prescriptions
- Prescription medication
- Glasses or contact lenses
- Copies of all important documents

- Camera
- Gifts
- Sunglasses
- Compact umbrella
- Combination locks for luggage
- A few photos of family and friends
- Flash drive
- Address book
- Journal
- Guide book
- Phrase book or dictionary

Toiletries

- Cosmetics
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrush
- Towel
- Deodorant
- Comb or brush
- Razors
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Pads/tampons
- Small, unbreakable mirror
- Hair equipment

Clothing

- Clothing (washable, culturally appropriate)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Flip-flops (for the shower)
- Sandals and/or dress shoes
- One nice outfit (for special occasions)
- Heavy sweater/down vest/fleece
- Swim suit
- Pajamas
- Hat
- Coat
- Hangers

Miscellaneous

- Safety pins
- Needle/thread
- Medium-sized backpack
- Adapter/converter for voltage

Basic Health Items

- Band-aids
- Antibacterial cream (Neosporin)
- Pain reliever
- Sunscreen
- Decongestant

WHILE ABROAD

Upon Arrival

Upon arrival at your program, call home to tell your family that you have arrived safely. Do not put this off or delay, as your parents will be anxious for you.

Safety Tips

Safety tips while traveling overseas are no different from those given to a local student:

- Do not walk alone at night.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Wear your backpack on the front of your body or keep your purse tucked tightly under your arm while in crowded spaces such as the subway.
- Do not participate in or congregate near any public demonstrations.
- Do not carry excessive amounts of money.
- Do not drink alcohol to the point that you are not in control.

Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency, all students should immediately contact these four parties:

1. The program director
2. Their family
3. The host institution
4. CUA

To contact CUA in an emergency, call the **Department of Public Safety at (001) 202-301-5111**. You may also contact *CUAbroad* during regular office hours at (001) 202-319-6010.

The CUA Department of Public Safety (DPS) is available to receive emergency calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Upon receiving an emergency call, DPS will contact the CUA “need-to-know” officials, including *CUAbroad*. Once DPS has notified *CUAbroad* of an overseas crisis, *CUAbroad* will follow up and handle the specific situation per its established overseas crisis management protocol.

Study abroad program participants abroad are notified via e-mail if the U.S. State Department issues a country-specific Warning or Announcement. Procedures are in place should an individual program participant – or all program participants – need to be evacuated from the program site.

Safety and Security

Operating Motor Vehicles

Vehicle accidents are a serious threat to the safety of travelers and the most common cause of death and disability in developed and developing countries. Participants on CUA’s international programs are not permitted to rent or operate motor vehicles. Travelers should always wear helmets when riding on bicycles or motorcycles.

Public Transportation

- Beware of pickpockets and petty thieves while in a bus or train terminal or at a taxi stop.
- Avoid carrying a wallet in hip or easily accessible coat pocket.

- Take only licensed taxis. Generally those found in front of terminals and the better hotels are the safest. Have the address of destination written out in local language and carry it on your person.
- Get a map and learn the route to destination. Note if taxi driver takes a different or longer way. Try not to travel alone in a taxi and never get out in deserted areas.

Hotels

- While out, put the “Do Not Disturb” sign on door to give the impression that your room is occupied. Call the maid when ready for the room to be cleaned.
- Consider leaving the light or TV on when out of the room.
- Place money or valuables in the safe deposit box at the front desk of the hotel. Guest rooms may not be secure.
- Always be sure to lock your room upon leaving.

Insurance

All students going abroad receive CUA’s foreign travel insurance provided by [FrontierMEDEX](#). This will be your primary health insurance policy during the program abroad. The insurance also provides for emergency evacuation in the event of medical, political, or environmental emergency.

Mental Health

Most college students are young adults going through the usual emotional ups and downs of university life. Some navigate more stressful and unusual transitions into adulthood. Last year, almost 10 percent of the full-time student body at Catholic University sought services from the Counseling Center for issues related to personal growth, depression, anxiety, interpersonal relationships, family problems, eating disorders, problems with alcohol, and sexual abuse to name a few.

Some students go abroad seeking an escape from their problems. If this sounds familiar, know that emotional distress will not easily be left behind. Internal distress is *inside* of you and will go with you wherever you are so you must be prepared to manage it ‘on location’.

To maximize your experience, consider your mental health concerns **before** going abroad. You can facilitate your cultural adjustment by thorough preparation. Keep in mind that the mental health resources available to you abroad will **NOT** be comparable to resources available to you on your home campus. Given this, it is of utmost importance to consult with your education abroad advisor, a medical professional or ideally, the counseling center **pre-departure** to plan out how you will address your psychological needs in a different country. All information is confidential and will not be shared without your permission.

CUA Counseling Center, 202-319-5765

Culture Shock & Cultural Adjustment

Culture shock is not a psychological disorder, but a *developmental phase* that is common amongst travelers and expected when one adjusts properly in a cross-cultural context. Anxiety, frustration, disorientation and unease are manifestations of this phase. Culture shock is about a student’s struggle in becoming culturally competent in a new cultural environment, where the rules, behaviors, expectations, food, language, and systems are all different from home. Culture shock is perfectly natural. If you find that your usual coping mechanisms are not working for you or you find yourself making coping choices that are not in your best interest, you may need more support and should consider seeking help.

The “U-Curve of Cultural Adaptation” is a model of the typical stages of a cross-cultural experience. While not everyone works the same way, the following stages are general trends to be aware of:

Honeymoon Stage – initial high and excitement of new contacts and new experience

Conflict Stage – isolation, frustration, unmet expectations, complaints about host culture

Critical Stage – accept responsibility for cultural adjustment, self-reflection, understanding

Recovery Stage – increased tolerance and understanding of cultural nuances, sense of belonging

Money Management

Students arriving with a Visa or MasterCard to access money should find out where local ATMs or bank offices are in the community. The web sites www.visa.com and www.mastercard.com both have worldwide ATM finders to help locate conveniently located ATMs. Considering the short period of time the program runs, opening a bank account is not advisable.

International Banking with Major Banks

- **Bank of America:** Many international partners. Visit <https://locators.bankofamerica.com/international.html> for more information.
- **Capital One:** Credit cards don't have foreign transaction fee (states with no brick-and-mortar locations: no fees)
- **Charles Schwab:** With a Schwab Bank Visa Platinum debit card, the bank will reimburse you for unlimited ATM fee rebates for cash withdrawals.
- **Chase:** No international partners
- **CITI:** No international partners, but many international locations. Visit <https://online.citi.com/US/GCL/citilocator/flow.action> for more details.
- **Citizens Bank:** No international partners, no foreign transaction fee
- **TD:** No international partners, no foreign transaction fee
- **PNC:** No partners, but fees are waived for Performance and Performance Select customers
- **Wells Fargo:** No international partners

Students living with a host family should ask them to clarify what they are expected to pay for. The discussion should include (but is not limited to) such expenses as:

Phone bills

Internet access

Food items

Toiletries

Practical tips for handling money overseas

- Inform your bank and credit card company that you will be traveling overseas.
- Contact your bank to find out if they have any affiliated banks in your host country. This can help you avoid certain international fees.
- Know your ATM pin by number, not by letter. Most international ATMs do not have letters on the keypad.
- Contact your US bank to understand their international banking policies especially regarding access and surcharges.
- Keep your account number in a safe place with the phone number to report a lost or stolen card.
- Keep in mind that toll-free numbers do not work from overseas. You should contact your credit card company to get a number that you can dial from overseas.
- Use online banking to periodically check your account for currency conversions and balances.
- Often the best exchange rate is obtained by withdrawing the foreign currency at an ATM in the host country. Banks will usually give the best rate of that month.
- Know the difference between an ATM card and a credit card. As both usually have a Visa or MasterCard logo, it's easy to confuse the two and end up withdrawing money from an ATM using a credit card. By doing so, you begin to pay interest (at a very high rate) on the cash advance by the credit card.

Staying Connected While Abroad

Technology has altered the way students experience education abroad and interact with both their host country and home country during their time overseas.

Social Media Do's

- Connect with past participants of your program
- Connect with local students
- Remain active in the CUA global campus
- Integrate and understand your host culture
- Reflect on your experiences by sharing them with others
- Blog or photo blog

Social Media Don'ts

- Let English language communication interfere with learning the language of your host country
- Check your social media feeds all day, every day
- Only connect with friends from back in the U.S.
- Stay home to Skype instead of exploring your host country
- Miss out on an experience because you were occupied with social media

Social Media and Homesickness

Many students will experience homesickness at one point or another during their time abroad. As strange as it may sound, it is best to not turn to Twitter, Facebook, or Skype.

When experiencing homesickness it can be helpful to step outside and engage with the host culture. Being reminded of what you are missing at home rather than enjoying the new experiences awaiting you can often exacerbate homesickness.

Cultural Differences

Religion

The US has perhaps the largest diversity of religions and, by most accounts, a very high church-attendance rate. As a CUA student, you may be puzzled by what you see as religious life in some of the host countries.

In most of the host countries in our programs, you will have many beautiful churches to choose from, but you will be surprised by how under-attended they are. It will become very apparent to you that the people in some of these countries view religion differently from the way most Americans do. All towns, no matter how small, have at least one church; in some cities, there are stunningly beautiful churches on every street corner. But if you go to Sunday mass, it will be held in a side chapel, with half a dozen people in attendance. You will meet people who consider themselves of a particular faith, but who never attend church services. Some people only go to church once a year. In these places, religion is more part of the general cultural tradition than of one's day-to-day life. As in the US, there is clear separation between church and state in many of the host countries, but that's where the similarity ends.

Food and Drink

Meals are still almost a ritualistic part of life in many foreign countries. You will rarely see anyone ordering food for take out or snacking while on the go. You drink your coffee in the car while commuting to work? That doesn't happen often in Europe. Coffeehouses like Starbucks, where one gets coffee on the run, are just starting to pop up overseas in a response to American pop-culture consumerism. If you choose to drink coffee while overseas, take your time! You will find that conversing over a fresh cup of coffee in a café is a most enjoyable pastime. If you visit the neighbors to have a cup of coffee with them, you better have an hour or more to spare, because just having a

cup of coffee and running away on other business is considered very rude. You might think certain foods or combination of foods are strange or sometimes disgusting. But before you complain, we urge you to give them at least one try. Try food the way your hosts eat it, and then judge.

Although the per capita consumption of soda is lower than in the US, soft drinks do exist overseas. If you order a soda, don't be surprised if you get one without ice. Tourists who come to the US think that they are getting cheated because of the large amount of ice one gets when ordering a beverage. They consider it as "watering down" the drink. Remember that there are no free refills in most restaurants overseas. If you want regular water, make sure to specify that you want tap water or "still" water; if you don't, you will end up getting sparkling water.

Enjoy the food and drinks of your host country. They will be the topics of many lively, sometimes comparative, conversations when you return home.

Conservation

Other nations are generally much more concerned about the environment and saving money. Due to the high costs of energy and water, conservation is an extremely important issue in Europe, for instance. By conserving water and electricity, you not only save money, but also get a chance to help the environment. If you want to fit well into your new culture, you should do your best to adopt these values as well.

Aside from remembering to turn lights off and take brief showers, you should learn what to do along the lines of recycling. You will likely see separate bins for different wastes - one for plastic and metal, one for paper, one for biological waste and one for everything else (compost, used paper towels, etc.). The colors and the location of these containers vary from country to country.

Avoiding Cultural Pitfalls

General Guidelines about Cultural Differences

It is impossible to offer more than a cursory discussion here about the various cultural and social differences and pitfalls program participants may encounter. Below are a few categories that you should consider and explore with you students depending on the location of your program.

Punctuality

*Countries with a **high regard** for promptness:* All of northern Europe, especially Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, etc.

*Countries where promptness is **appreciated and expected:*** Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, France, and the United States.

*Countries with a **relaxed attitude** toward punctuality:* Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece) and most of the Mediterranean. Note: Travelers will certainly find themselves in situations where they cannot afford to be late, so it is not wise to emulate this behavior very closely.

*Countries with a **lax attitude** toward promptness:* Most of Latin America and parts of Asia. Punctuality is not a highly regarded virtue in the Middle East. It is not recommended to schedule more than one appointment per day until the visitor is better acquainted with the habits of those with whom he or she is meeting.

Greetings

Most North Americans have learned since childhood to shake hands using a firm grip and to make direct eye contact. This kind of direct eye contact with elders shows disrespect in much of Asia and some parts of Africa and Latin America.

In Japan the bow is considered an act of respect and humility. In Southeast Asia, the *wai* is the greeting. In India, this same greeting is called the *namaste*. This involves placing the palms of the hands together in a prayer-like fashion, holding them about chest high, and dipping the head slightly. For Americans the proper reaction is to nod the head politely in response. A *wai* or *namaste* response is not expected.

Names

If a name appears complicated, a visitor should ask in advance how to pronounce it. In the Pacific Rim a person will have three names: The first name will be the family name. In Latin America there are also often three names: The first name is the given name, the second is the father's family name, and the third is the mother's maiden name. In Spain, however, the usage is different: A married woman adds her husband's name at the end.

Dress

In some more conservative countries, clothing that is too revealing may not be appropriate in many settings. It is a measure of respect. Often in the Islamic world, women are expected to wear their skirts or shorts longer or not wear shorts at all. The same is true for many cathedrals and churches around the world. Often shorts are not permitted and arms must be covered. Women should also carry a scarf to wear when entering churches or mosques. Without a head covering, entry may be denied at some Russian Orthodox and other churches. Also note that in parts of Asia and the Middle East, it may be customary to remove shoes before entering a home or sacred site.

Eating

In many countries the main meal is served at midday and a light snack in the evening. When eating in Europe and China, it is customary to keep both hands above or on the table. In parts of Central Asia, the hosts may be offended if guests do not eat a lot or refuse to try certain specialties. Vegetarians may find it difficult to follow their normal diet in areas where a lot of meat is consumed.

Guests throughout the former Soviet Union will find that it is customary for hosts to toast their visitors with vodka or other alcoholic drinks. They expect guests to drink with them. It is wise to be careful!

Those who are left-handed need to be aware that in the Islamic world, the left hand is considered "unclean." Only the right hand should be used for eating.

AFTER THE PROGRAM ENDS

Travel

You are welcome to continue traveling on your own after the program ends, but you will be entirely responsible for all financial and logistical matters.

Reverse Culture Shock

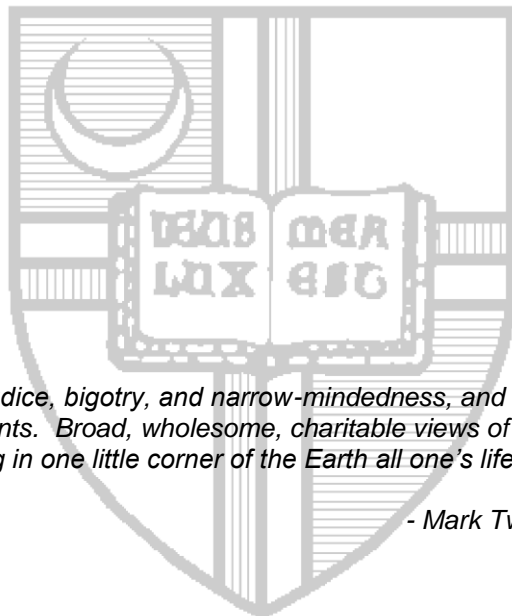
While you may expect to experience some form of culture shock when you go abroad, students rarely expect to encounter similar symptoms upon their arrival back in the US. Despite that, in post-program evaluations, the majority of students indicate that re-adjusting to life in the US was harder than making the initial adjustment to their host country.

Some reasons for reverse culture shock:

- Going home can be a let-down after the excitement of being abroad.
- You miss your friends from abroad.
- No one expects you to have changed, but you have.
- Family and friends have changed while you were away.
- Family and friends don't seem interested in hearing about your abroad experiences.

Some things you can do to help cope with reverse culture shock:

- Be patient with yourself. Adjustment takes time.
- Realize that most people will not be as interested in your experiences as you are. Be sure to express interest in others' lives as well.
- Connect with other education abroad students who might be going through a similar adjustment.
- Share your perspectives and expertise with community and school groups interested in learning about the host country, its culture, or the language.
- Become a mentor for others who are planning to study abroad or are currently abroad.
- Find a way to incorporate the overseas experience into your daily life and future profession.
- Getting involved in the international community on campus.
- Reflect on your experiences by keeping a journal or making a scrapbook.
- Stay in touch and continue the life-long relationships you have started while abroad.



"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the Earth all one's lifetime."

- Mark Twain