

# MEANINGFUL TRAVEL TIPS AND TALES

FIRST-TIME STUDY ABROADERS



An Initiative to Make Travel More Accessible



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# WHY WE CREATED THIS BOOK FOR FIRST-TIME STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS

## A NOTE FROM GOABROAD



**S**tudying abroad for the first time can seem overwhelming and no one knows that better than we do. That's why we scoured our expert articles directory to come up with a comprehensive resource of study abroad tips for first time student travelers.

Studying abroad isn't an excuse to take throw-away elective classes and party in a foreign country. You're there to learn – about yourself, about your host culture, about your chosen field of study, and about the world at large. You're going to work hard, play hard, and explore far and wide. It won't be easy, but we think you're up to the task. So, ask yourself:

**Are you ready to study abroad? What are your first steps? How do you make the most of this experience? How important is knowing the language before you get there? Etc.**

The list of questions to ask before preparing to study abroad just gets longer and longer the more you think about it. But, we've already thought about it. In fact, at GoAbroad we've thought about it for 20+ years in the field, and we've learned a thing or two in all that time.

As part of GoAbroad's mission to provide the best and most comprehensive resources for meaningful travelers, our writers share their best study abroad tips every step of the way— from pre-departure to dealing with the post-study abroad blues. They're the experts with real experience and all the best info on how and when to apply, the best possible program options for you, scholarships and grants, and anything you might need to know. So, now you can go out into the world and really soak it all in!

Interested in joining this initiative? [Partner with us!](#)

# OUR CONTRIBUTORS



**Megan Lee** is an international educator, traveler, and writer. After leading study abroad programs in Asia, the South Pacific, and East Africa, she now is the Director of GoAbroad.com.



Raised in a multicultural family in the colorful Chicago suburbs, **Raquel Thoesen's** greatest joy is gallivanting around the world, and learning about its endless cultures, languages, and foodie treasures. With a degree from Arizona State University in hand, Raquel taught English abroad in Germany through the Fulbright program.



**Emma Rattenborg** was born and raised in Fort Collins, Colorado and currently studies comparative cultural studies at Northern Arizona University. Emma's passion for international experiences began after spending a month in Northern India during the Summer of 2012.



**Danielle DeSimone** graduated from the University of Mary Washington with degrees in English, creative writing, and Italian. She lived in southern Italy for five years and has so far traveled to fifteen countries, in addition to studying abroad in Bath, England and Bologna, Italy.



**Justin Brendel** is a student at Haverford College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and he studied abroad in Greece during Fall 2016 with College Year in Athens. He hails from Atlanta, Georgia and enjoys making spontaneous decisions, traveling, journaling, taking pictures, and being outside. Justin is currently studying religion and economics, but he may pursue a career in journalism.



← This could be you! Want to share your own travel tips and tales? [Give us a shout!](#)



# 10 BEST PLACES TO STUDY ABROAD

by Raquel Thoesen

If your college career is starting to feel monotonous and lackluster, it's probably because you've been missing out on one of the most enlivening experiences of a person's life. Studying abroad is right up there with notable milestones like marriage, taking out a mortgage, and having your first child. Don't be surprised if your semester abroad yields more pictures than the first six months of your first born's life.

The unforgettable moments you experience while submerged in unfamiliar smells and sounds halfway around the world possess a special power able to change your perspectives, mature you, and teach you lessons you won't learn anywhere else.

There aren't many other opportunities in life in which you get lost in unfamiliar metro systems, meet strangers destined to become lifelong friends, and make face-reddening cultural blunders all in the same day.

If kayaking through Scandinavian archipelagos or bungee jumping from New Zealand's picturesque cliffs on the weekend seems like something you might be interested in pursuing, there's a chance (a pretty big one) that you are study abroad material. So, after brainstorming where in the world you would want to study abroad, there are a [few people you should contact](#) to get that planning ball rolling.

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## 1. New Zealand

While there are unfortunately no real Hobbits wandering the valleys of [New Zealand](#) on quests, the unworldly landscape will have you wondering whether you really are in Middle-earth. With two islands, 30 million sheep, and the strongest rugby team in the world, New Zealand is also one of the best places to study abroad because you can dabble in adrenaline pumping extreme sports in your free time while studying at some seriously top-notch universities.

### Study Abroad Programs in New Zealand:

- [ISEP Study Abroad - Massey University](#)
- [Pacific Discovery - Summer Program](#)

## 2. China

As a world superpower housing a little more than 18 percent of the world's population, understanding how China's complex culture shaped over thousands of years of dynasties, wars, and art has quickly become increasingly vital for the world stage. [Study abroad in any one of the dozens of cities](#) lining the eastern coast to experience the overwhelming results of urbanization or discover China's quieter rural areas frozen back in time.

### Study Abroad Programs in China:

- [GoAbroad China - Shanghai Fudan University](#)
- [IES Abroad - Summer in Beijing](#)

## 3. Chile

This slice of life is wedged between the imposing Andes mountain range to the East and a 4,000 stretch of pristine coastline on the Pacific Ocean to the West. While you may have only heard of the capital city, Santiago, [there are several other cities](#) throughout Chile's pepper-shaped borders to consider for study abroad.

### Study Abroad Programs in Chile:

- [Syracuse University - Santiago Center](#)
- [Universidad de Aconcagua - Culture & Service](#)



## 4. Sweden

If you like midday coffee breaks accompanied by pastries and dancing around flowery poles on Midsummer, [Sweden](#) is calling you to study abroad next year. With a well-developed knowledge based economy, Sweden places great emphasis on education and has a highly educated population as proof, resulting in several accomplished higher education institutions.

### Study Abroad Programs in Sweden:

- [DIS Study Abroad - Stockholm](#)
- [Uppsala International Summer Session](#)

## 5. France

From the beaches of Normandy to the star-studded promenades of Cannes on the French Riviera, [France](#) is jam-packed with culinary delights, a freedom fighting history, and a whole lot of beauty to explore. Apart from being an obvious choice to refine your skills in the language of love, France's universities and study abroad programs offer incredible opportunities to study fashion, art, philosophy, and culinary arts.

### Study Abroad Programs in France:

- [CISabroad - Semeser in Aix-en-Provence](#)
- [Forum-Nexus Study Abroad - Summer Program](#)

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## 6. Spain

As the birthplace of the world's second most spoken language and conveniently located just a short flight away from Africa and the rest of Europe, [Spain](#) is naturally a classic study abroad favorite (and [no stranger to recognition as one of the best places to study abroad](#)).

### Study Abroad Programs in Spain:

- [AIFS - Universitat Popeu Fabra \(UPF\)](#)
- [Barcelona SAE - International Studies](#)

## 7. Thailand

A bargain cost of living, top universities, and tropical ethereal beaches, have made [Thailand](#) a study abroad destination hotter than its spices. Whether you choose to study in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, or a more rural location, you'll find colorful markets, mouthwatering food, and a whole lot of smiles everywhere you go.

### Study Abroad Programs in Thailand:

- [Athena Study Abroad - January Term](#)
- [Knowledge Exchange Institute - Bangkok](#)

## 8. Italy

Who hasn't dreamed of gazing upon Michelangelo's intricate frescos in the Sistine Chapel or devouring a "real" pizza under the shadows of the Duomo's spires in Milan? From the great Roman civilization to some of the most savory cuisine in the world, [Italy](#) never fails to capture our imaginations. With so many study abroad programs in Italy to choose from, you can study virtually anywhere on this boot shaped country, and even on a few islands!

### Study Abroad Programs in Italy:

- [BABILONA - Center for Italian Language & Culture](#)
- [CIEE - Global Institute Rome](#)

## 9. Brazil

Plunge into a country as colorful and spirited as its annual kaleidoscopic celebration of Carnival. Although you won't find sparsely clad samba dancers and catchy drum beats all year round, [studying abroad in Brazil](#) will introduce you to a whole new world of sun-kissed beaches, extremely friendly people, and an incredibly diverse population spread out from the remote Amazon Basin to the cosmopolitan streets of Sao Paulo.

### Study Abroad Programs in Brazil:

- [Boston University - Intensive Portuguese](#)
- [Temple University - Afro-Brazilian Culture & Music](#)

## 10. England

Prestigious top-tier institutions such as the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford have helped shaped England's international reputation as a prominent destination for quality higher education and a secure place as one of the [top destinations for study abroad in 2018](#).

### Study Abroad Programs in England:

- [Oxbridge Future Leaders - Oxford](#)
- [API - University College London](#)

If study abroad isn't already prominently highlighted, circled, and bolded as number one on your bucket list, you have some heavy editing to do before the year is up. Regardless of your major or foreign language abilities (even lack thereof), we guarantee there's a study abroad program perfectly tailored for you that will make this year one for the books; all you have to do is [start your search!](#)



Travel Deeply



The impulse to travel is one of the hopeful symptoms of life.

– Agnes Repplier

Nobody can discover the world for somebody else. Only when we discover it for ourselves does it become common ground and a common bond and we cease to be alone.

– Wendell Berry

Traveling tends to magnify all human emotions.

– Peter Hoeg

I am not the same having seen the moon shine on the other side of the world.

– Mary Anne Radmacher

# TOP RATED STUDY ABROAD ORGANIZATIONS

by the GoAbroad Writing Team

**M**aking the decision to go abroad can be one of the biggest decisions of your life, so, why shouldn't you choose the best of the best in meaningful travel? Online reviews are becoming increasingly important across all industries, and travel is not excluded. That's why we value participant reviews immensely, as a way to verify our partners, get valuable feedback about program experiences, and most importantly (today) **highlight exceptional organizations and programs.**

Before you even decide how you want to go abroad, check out these top rated organizations and programs. These are the "Best of the Best" in terms of participant reviews and ratings, so we've basically done your trip planning for you.

**IES** *"I would recommend IES to anyone who was studying abroad. They were friendly and helpful from the moment we arrived to the airport from the moment we left...My summer abroad has continued to be a positive influence even months later, and the staff continues to make an effort to keep a connection to their past students."*

- [Lauren](#), IES Abroad Alum



*"Studying abroad can be an exciting, but also stressful process. With AIFS everything was simple and easy. From applying to landing in England everything was taken care of...My time in London already would have been incredible, but going abroad with AIFS just made it that much better."*

- [Danielle](#), AIFS Alum

*"SOL exceeded my every expectation from the moment I arrived in Granada. Studying abroad was a life changing experience that I would not change for anything and SOL made that possible!"*



- [Lexcohan](#), SOL Alum



*"My semester studying at the CEA Paris Center was whole...I had a full experience of learning, exploring, and growth. I learned so much about people around the world, about my field of study and what I want to do in my life, and about myself. CEA gave me all of the tools to know Paris and helped me process all that I was experiencing."*

- [Hannah](#), CEA Alum



*"I will never forget the experience of a life time that CISabroad and Bond University have given me. I have made the most amazing friendships and was able to explore wonderful places. CISabroad made both the adjustment to Australia, but also home from Australia as smooth as possible."*

- [Kayla](#), CISabroad Alum



*"There was wonderful student support in this program as well and professors and advisors genuinely cared about each student! Within our group, we cared about each other as well, so I always had somewhere to turn if I needed help in anyway!"*

- [CU Boulder Student](#), SIT Alum



*"This program was an awesome experience! The process was incredibly easy to follow, and the staff at*

*ISA were very helpful with pretty much anything you needed, especially the resident director. Not only was Scotland itself amazingly beautiful and full of all the hiking and scenery you could ever want, it was also very close to the mainland for weekend trips to Prague/Budapest/Spain, whatever strikes your fancy! 10/10 would recommend."*

- [Erin](#), ISA Alum



*"I really liked how involved Athena was in making sure that everything went smoothly and I really appreciated all the answered phone calls and emails. I really loved Athena's Kyoto summer program. For*

*my first time going abroad, it was a fantastic introduction to traveling and to Japan."*

- [Sarah](#), Athena Study Abroad Alum



*"I want to make it known that it wasn't just the grandeur of Paris that made my study abroad experience as incredible as it was. It was the small things, the minute things that made up my daily life while abroad. And I know without a doubt in my mind that I wouldn't have had such a cherished experience if it weren't for API."*

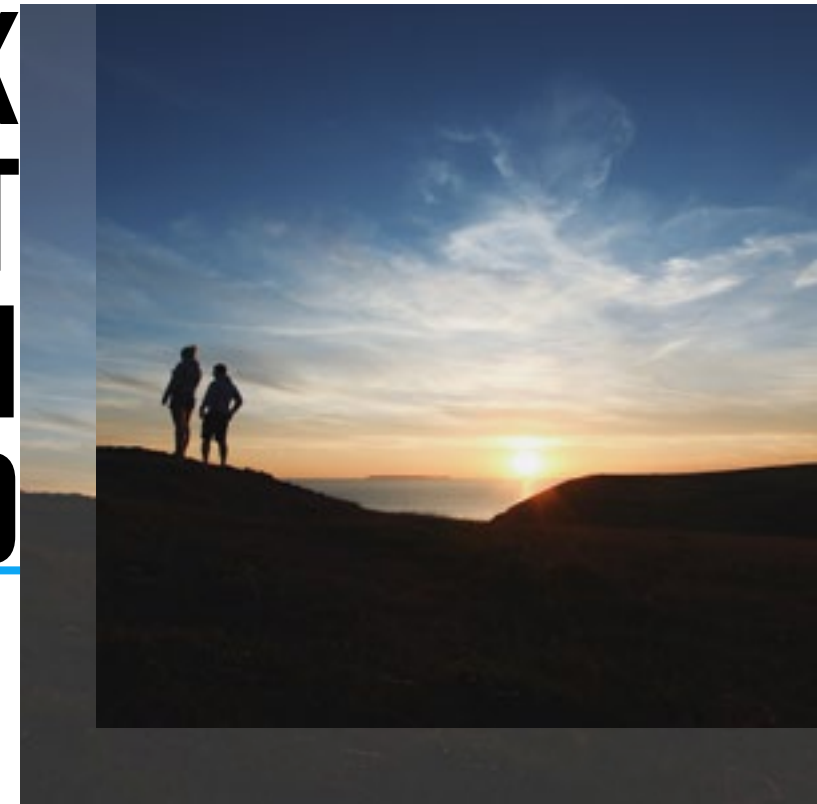
- [Kristina](#), API Alum

There are so many great organizations and study abroad programs to choose from that it can seem a little overwhelming at first, but if you start your search with this list, you're sure to find the right fit.

**If you're still feeling a little lost, an [online advisor](#) can help match you with a few stellar programs!**

# HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT PROGRAM ABROAD

by Megan Lee



In the 1990s and prior, there were fat, thick catalogs for international programs. In the 2000s, there were online directories and digital program catalogs, such as GoAbroad.com.

And now, there's [MyGoAbroad](#), your best mate when it comes to picking the perfect international program for you.

While advisors are helpful and word-of-mouth recommendations are important (not to mention it's really fun to snag free swag at campus fairs!), until now, there hasn't been a place to store alllllll of the programs you are considering while sifting through your options.

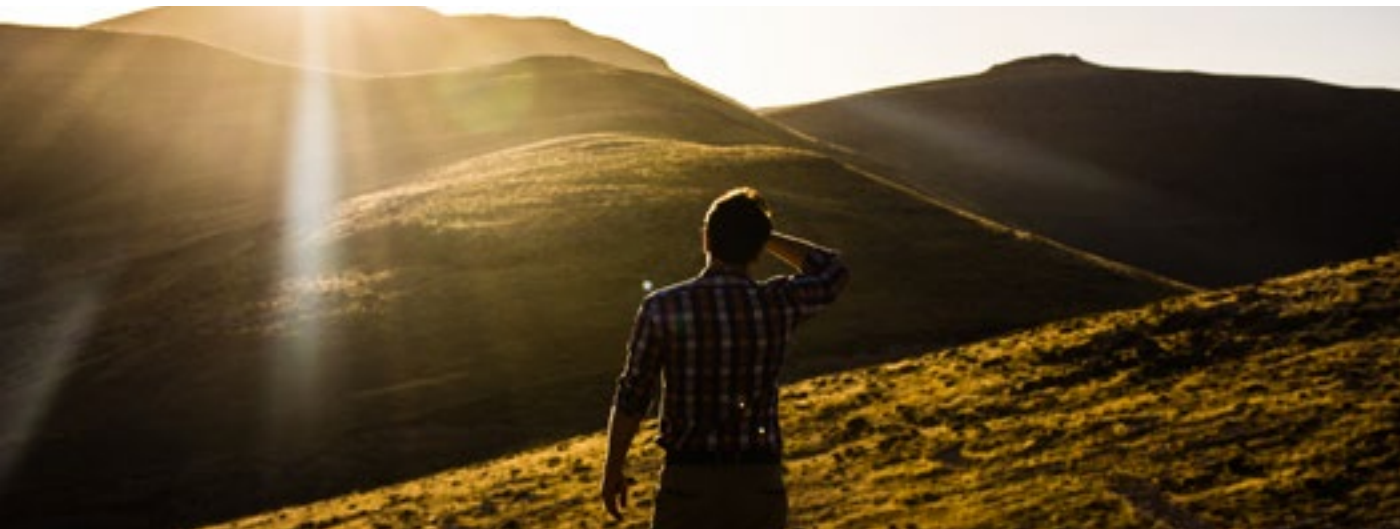
Enter MyGoAbroad!

With thousands (literally thousands! \*gulp\*) of international program options out there, it can be overwhelming to find a program that fits all that you're looking for. Whether you want to find a study abroad program, find volunteer opportunities abroad, find internships abroad, or are wondering how to find teaching jobs abroad, you're in luck.

Here's how to pick the right program abroad for you, without wanting to rip your hair out and without stress of not understanding your choices.

## 1. Make a Profile

Use Facebook, your Google account, or your email address to get your MyGoAbroad profile started. You can opt to beautify it now (fill out those questions and upload a purdy photo) or later (you're very busy and important, after all). Skip this step if you are eager to get started on your international program hunt.



## 2. Request Program Matches

Let us do your homework for you! It doesn't hurt, and you'll receive a fully-customized shortlist of programs to jumpstart your research and give you an idea of what options are out there. From your dashboard, click on "[Request Program Matches](#)," fill out our online inquiry form, and our team of matchmakers, also known as online advisors, will help you find the international programs you'll want to swipe right for.

## 3. Use GoAbroad.com & Start Searchin'

Get the full scoop on how to use GoAbroad's many functions with [this handy-dandy infographic](#).

**Choosing to study abroad.** You're looking to go beyond travel and dig deep into local culture by attending classes at local universities abroad. Whether this means really going all in to those French classes, or exploring how local politics shapes major geopolitical events, you're going to gain a whole new perspective on life, school-work, and your chosen field of study.

You'll need to start really nailing down your personal goals for however long you choose to study abroad. Oh yeah— you need to decide how long you'll be abroad, whether it's just for summer or winter break, an entire semester, or the whole academic year.

**Pro Tip:** You don't have to bookmark only one kind of study abroad program; perhaps you're considering summer Mandarin language programs in China as well as fall semester fashion business programs in France. Don't limit yourself!

**Choose a place!** Much like picking your favorite ice cream (\*cough\* Talenti \*cough\*), it can be a formidable challenge to take that list of 200+ amazing countries and zero-in on a destination to call "home" for the duration of your meaningful travels. On GoAbroad, the indecisive will appreciate filtering by "Region" instead of a specific country.

Feel free to peruse options in multiple countries or corners or continents; the world is your search-engine oyster!

**Laser focus with sub-filters.** Now's not the time to compromise. Be picky when deciding what international programs options will make the best fit for your time abroad. Do you want to take specific types of courses or volunteer in a particular effort? Do you only have two weeks to spare? Our sub-filters will navigate the noise to pinpoint legitimate program options for YOU to find programs abroad.

## 4. Click SAVE!

Once you've read reviews and interviews and have a clearer idea of the type of experience you want, it's time to bookmark and save program options. Once you go back to your MyGoAbroad account, all of these top picks will magically appear in your dashboard for quick and easy future reference.

**Pro Tip:** You can also save articles and inspiration from GoAbroad.com to your dashboard! Bookmark how-to lists or helpful resources to come back to later. We especially love our [Scholarships Article database!](#)

## 5. Now COMPARE

Saving a bunch of international programs doesn't really do you too much good if you're not going to compare them limb for limb. From your Dashboard, click the "Programs" tab in the left hand column, then the "COMPARE PROGRAMS" button in the upper right hand corner. You can compare up to three programs side by side, a nice feature when you're wondering how to find study abroad programs, for instance!

Be sure to note inclusions, locations, projected costs, and overall feedback from past participants. Like Harry Potter and Voldemort, keep pitting program options against each other until you find three to five programs that feel like a perfect fit (Hint: this will be your go-to list for next few steps).

## 6. Email Your Interest to Program Providers

Try to include a variety of program providers when selecting international program options. Ask for different price quotes, what makes their experience "different" or the "best," and what common complaints are from previous participants (that's a juicy, but worthwhile question). Start to note the vibe of your correspondence with different contacts.

*Do some respond immediately to your inquiries instead of taking 24-48 hours? Are you garnering a more personal connection with one over the other? Follow your intuitions as you shift from the "window shopping" phase to more brass-tacks.*

## 7. Double Check that ALL of Your Travel Stars Align

Be thorough in your research, committing to crossing off the T's and dotting the I's as you go. Do you need university credit and can you fo'sho get it? Do you need a significant upfront deposit and do you have the resources to cover it? Other important checkmarks should include travel insurance, ability to secure a visa/passport, if health insurance will be an issue, the costs of flights, etc.

## 8. Sign Up for a Study Abroad Program & Dive Right In!

You've done the legwork, you've outlined your goals, you've finally narrowed it down to the single program that is the best fit for your needs and hopes. Congrats! Now get the heck outta here and have a great time traveling abroad!

## 9. Have a Kick\*\*\* Resume

You're basically hired and you didn't even apply yet. That's because you come back from abroad with a competitive skills set that puts you far beyond the pack; it's just up to you to communicate the value of your international experience to potential employers. Don't worry, we've got your back.

**Psssst. Here are:**

[3 Steps to Adding Study Abroad to a Resume](#)

## 10. Pay it Forward & Leave a Review

Remember how helpful those reviews were as you were gathering information about which program was going to be the most beneficial to you and the experience you were looking for?

Those reviews didn't come from nowhere; they came straight from the horse's mouth (aka program alumni and past participants - no offense!). The great news is you have a horse's mouth now. Be sure to pay it forward and provide feedback to the organization who ran your trip.

[Leave a Review here!](#)

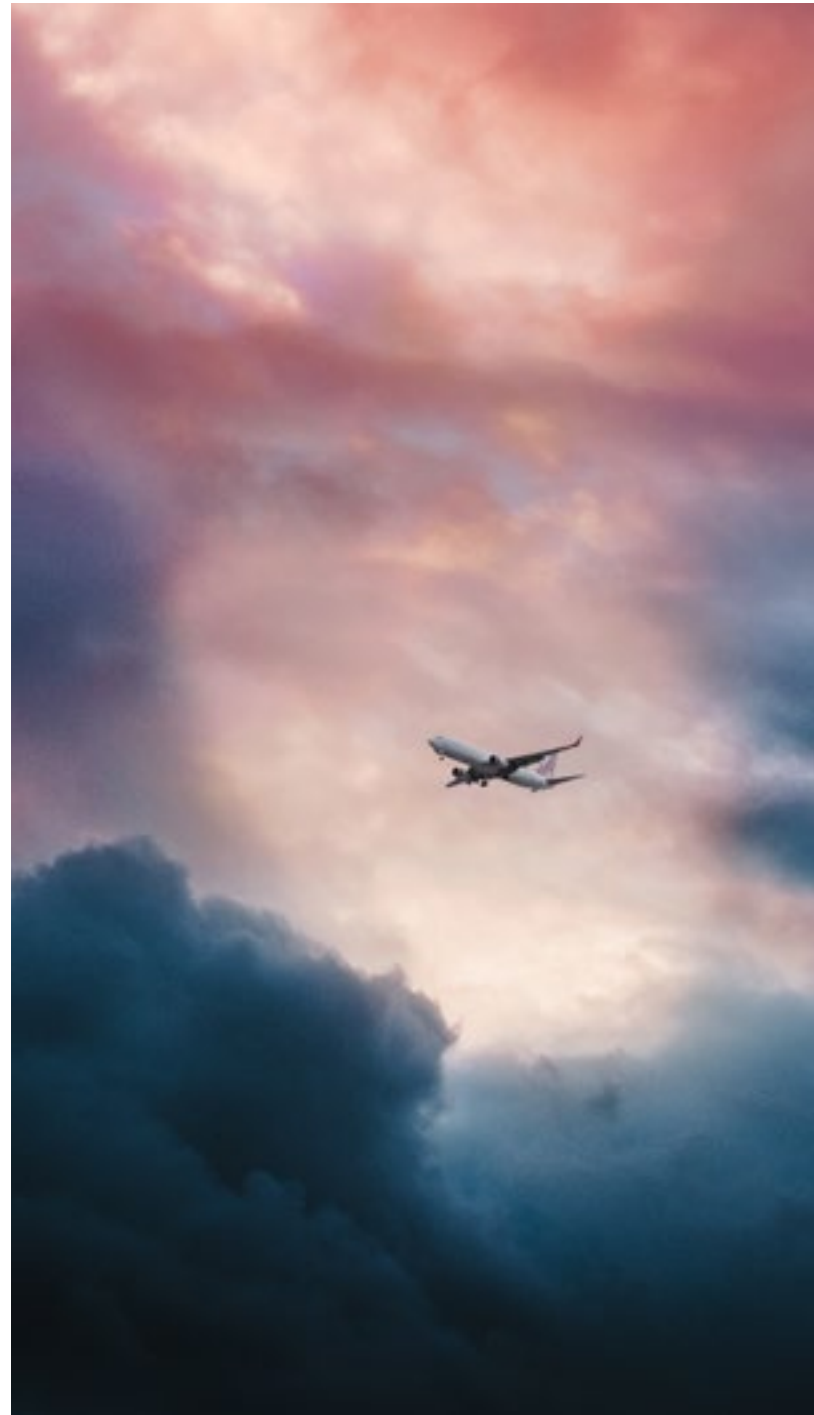
If you want to take it a step further, help future travelers (and get hashtag FAMOUS) by [completing an interview](#). They look great and are incredibly helpful for would-be travelers.

## 11. Login to MyGoAbroad NOW to Start Planning Your Next Adventure

It happens when we least expect it: that travel bug grabs hold of hearts and doesn't let go. It's no surprise that you're already gunning for another trip with passport in tow. Your trusty friends at GoAbroad are ready to help you start the process over for your next grand adventure.

**Now's not just the time to travel.  
Now's the time to travel meaningfully.**

There's never been a better time to travel abroad. From your computer chair, the world of international programs is at your fingertips; it's up to you find the one program that suits you so you can move forward and accomplish your travel goals.



# 8 ESSENTIAL "TO-DO'S" BEFORE YOU GO ABROAD

by the GoAbroad Writing Team

**T**hink you're ready for that trip of a lifetime? When it comes to study abroad, the amount of preparation you do before getting on the plane will make a big difference in your overall experience. Take the extra time now to prepare and plan, so you can maximize your time abroad. Wandering through side streets and munching on local delicacies sounds like a lot more fun than worrying about why your phone won't connect to a foreign network.

**To help you get prepared, here's a checklist of things to keep in mind before heading to the airport:**

### 1. Get a Passport

Before you can start collecting colorful stamps from all over the world, you need somewhere to put them first. **Start your passport applications several months before your flight date**, especially if you need visas from foreign embassies. While the passport process is usually pretty simple, sometimes bureaucratic matters get in the way and cause everything to take much longer than you thought.

Most likely, you will need to **apply in person** at your local passport agency. Be prepared to provide proof of citizenship, an extra form of identity, and recent document photos. Check your local office for specific requirements before you head in to fill out that application!



As soon as you receive your passport, **make a couple of copies of the front page**. Take one copy with you when you travel, and leave another copy with someone you trust back home. Worst case scenario, if your passport gets stolen, this will help you out a lot.

**And if you do already have a passport, double-check the expiration date!** Even with a valid passport, most countries deny entry if it is due to expire within three to six months of travel. Travel plans have a tendency to change, and who wants to get stuck in Uzbekistan or Belarus (or even France, for that matter) because they cannot board an airplane with an expired ID?

## 2. Apply for any Necessary Visas

Visa specifics vary for every country, but the bottom line is the same: **it's tedious and it takes a while**.

Do some research and find out if your country of destination requires a visa. If so, what kind of visa will you need? Sixty percent of the world's countries require visas for any length of stay, most of these as a regular visitor's visa. However, if you will be studying or interning for more than a short semester, you might have to sign up for a student visa. If you are planning to work, you will need a work visa (though you may be able to work abroad without a visa, too).

In addition, some countries have different approaches to the above: in the United Kingdom, there are several Tiers of visas that you will need to declare. In Australia, you have the option of a working holiday visa. The types of this necessary evil are vast; find out the one that you qualify for.

**Apply early for visas.** If you get frustrated while waiting in line at the bank, just think about how long it can take for government institutions in several countries to get something done. Embassy addresses and phone numbers can be found on [GoAbroad.com's Embassy and Consulate Directory](#).

## 3. Visit the Doctor

This step might also not be fun, but just think about how much more tedious it can be to go get a check-up or tooth cleaning in a country where you don't speak the language and the "office" is an untidy corner in someone's living room. **Get a medical check-up and a tooth-cleaning**, so that you can run among the lions and lick those gelatos without any worries in the back of your head.

Also, be sure to **check any necessary vaccinations** that you might need. This is more common with third-world countries, where there are pesky diseases such as bird flu, chikungunya, dengue, malaria, typhoid fever, or zika. Believe me, these aren't fun and will interrupt your planned trek to Machu Picchu or hike up Kilimanjaro. Get on top of your shots! Try not to leave this until the last minute either, as some vaccinations need a week or two to kick in fully (plus, who wants to board a plane when their arm feels like it's swarming with medical bees?).

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has a great website that offers the most up-to-date information regarding vaccinations and shots that are needed or recommended.

## 4. Set up a Communication Plan

Even if you're going on a trip to get away from it all, it's always good to know your options to get in touch with friends and family back home (for when you do end up in that dentist chair or get that unwanted mosquito bite). Plus, it's nice to call and tell Mom and Pop that you made it to the other side of the ocean.

With modern technology, this is easier than ever. Try free services that you can use with an internet connection (such as Skype or WhatsApp) anywhere in the world. Check your cell phone plan; some can be activated abroad, but most will not function in other countries.

If you're not thrilled with the idea of buying and carrying around a phone card, check into the SIM card capabilities of your phone. GSM phones are SIM-card approved, which means that you can switch it out in every country (as long as the network is unlocked), which is great. With CDMA phones, it might be a bit more tricky.

## 5. Get Insured

Whether it's health insurance, baggage protection, or travel insurance, **make sure that you are covered while abroad**. If you are traveling with an organized program, these usually offer you the option of buying an insurance package; if you do not have your own international coverage, these are great options.

You can find reliable, reputable travel insurance options on [GoAbroad.com's Travel Insurance page](#).

## 6. Develop a Budget

This is particularly helpful if you will be spending extended time abroad with a study or volunteer program. **Research the cost of living** in that particular country, and see where your expenses will go every month: accommodation, food, transportation, entertainment. If you are merely taking a personal trip, make an educated guess about how much you will be spending on hotels, excursions, dinners out, etc.

Regardless, **be realistic** about the expenses and take more money with you than you think you will use. Not only because sometimes two glasses of vino will turn into three, but emergencies and unexpected opportunities always arise. Be prepared.

**One more money tip:** usually, it will be cheaper to use your credit card abroad for more purchases, and just take one big stack of cash out for cash-only purposes (street carts, bus fare, indie shops, tips). ATM fees add up!

# "...don't forget to pack a dose of patience and flexibility alongside the sunscreen and camera!"

## 7. Research Your Host Country

No matter how cool and open-minded you are, **you're probably going to experience culture shock** (they eat what?!). No amount of research is going to change that. However, it's always good to go prepared so that your time abroad can be spent exploring and enjoying instead of flipping through new guide books. Research the places you want to visit, any festivals that happen during the time you'll be there, and events that you can participate in.

In addition, **read up about the culture**. If the country is more traditional, maybe you will need to pack clothing accordingly. If someone greets you with three kisses on each cheek, you will not gawk at them like a fish and take a big step back.

Furthermore, do **memorize a few basic phrases** in the language of your destination country. Hopefully, you will pick up many more words while there, but coming at least with a "ciao!" will make a good first impression (and will make asking for the loo a lot less awkward than pantomiming it).

## 8. Pack & GO!

You won't need make-up in Nepal, your blow dryer won't work in Madrid, you'll probably never use your baseball glove in Botswana, and you can buy cheap sweaters in Ecuador. **Pack light!** Research your destination in advance, find out what kind of items you must bring (for example, mosquito netting or tampons) and find out what items you can purchase cheaply there. Leave extra space in your luggage for souvenirs!



**Invest in practical luggage;** unless you're going to spend your entire time in a resort, you'll probably be doing quite a bit of walking on your travels (weekend trips, at least!). Get a sturdy backpack and something that you can carry around easily, whether that is through bustling crowds of London or through dense jungles of Brazil.

**Friendly reminder:** don't forget to pack a dose of patience and flexibility alongside the sunscreen and camera!

Now that you have organized paperwork thoroughly, completed the bureaucratic procedures, dusted off that high school bilingual dictionary, and wrapped up everything you need, you're ready! **The adventure awaits, eager to excite and throw some challenges your way.** As a savvy traveler, you will embrace whatever comes, be open to growth, make the most of the experience, and conquer the world. Just don't forget your passport at home!



# APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDY ABROAD WITHOUT WASTING YOUR TIME

by Danielle DeSimone

## GET A SCHOLARSHIP FOR STUDYING ABROAD — FAST

**Don't let study abroad costs get you down.** A common misconception about study abroad is that it is unaffordable, but guess what? There are literally [thousands of study abroad scholarships and grants](#) out there, just waiting for you to apply for them! And who doesn't love free money? We all get those heart-eye-emoji vibes just thinking about it.

You might have to make some sacrifices in the months leading up to your summer/semester/year abroad (say no to splurging on dessert and cut down on that post-Christmas-sales shopping), but being smart with your money before studying abroad is just one stepping stone on the way to bigger and better adventures.

Smart saving tactics mixed with financial aid (like scholarships to study abroad) mean you'll be able to \*finally\* achieve your travel goal – just as long as you're willing to put in the work of applying!

Here are 10 sure-fire steps to score the best study abroad scholarships (but don't think that means they're easy study abroad scholarships!). Since you're busy juggling school, work, family, and friend commitments, we didn't want to waste YOUR time with outdated ideas or strategies to help you win those awards. We wanted to cut to the chase. **Without further ado, here's our barebones advice on how to study abroad with scholarship.**

### Step 1. Ask for Help

First and foremost, don't be afraid to reach out to the people around you for help. Contact your university's study abroad office, your professors, the financial aid office, and your academic advisors to ask them about scholarships or grants that they may know of.

**If possible, go in-person** to these offices to ask for advice on how to get a scholarship to study abroad, rather than just emailing or calling. Not only will this make it easier for your professors or study abroad office to help you, but they'll be impressed with your clear determination and initiative in arriving to discuss financial aid in person. The hardest part of getting study abroad scholarships is simply finding them, so be sure to ask the professionals if they know of any!

### Step 2. Research, Research, Research

It cannot be said enough: do your research! The more scholarships you can apply for, the more financial aid you will get. You can start by exploring [GoAbroad's Scholarships Directory!](#) There are also a number of other resources, such as NAFSA, that compile [lists of scholarships for study abroad students](#), but this list is not exhaustive and there are many different types of scholarships to study abroad that you should also explore, including...

**Location-Specific Grants/Scholarships to Study Abroad:** These scholarships or grants are created to encourage students to study in specific countries, or even certain cities. You might find these scholarships through your university, by the government of the country you plan to study in, or even through the government of your home country, which hopes to foster international relations through the exchange of study abroad students.

**Program-Specific Study Abroad Scholarships/Grants:** These scholarships or grants are often offered to students who decide to study abroad through a particular program. This could be the independent study abroad provider or through a particular program crafted by your university, and only students who plan to study through that program qualify to apply.

**Subject-Specific Grants/Scholarships for Studying Abroad:** Many grants or scholarships are awarded to students who plan to pursue a certain field of study or major while abroad, such as Foreign Language Scholarships. This financial aid can be incredibly specific, zeroing in on not just the subject, but also a certain subject to be studied in a particular country.

**Student-Specific Scholarships/Grants:** Some scholarships are awarded based on the students themselves, due to factors such as gender, race, religion, disabilities, or sexual orientation. For instance, there are specific study abroad scholarships for high school students! With a demand for more diverse study abroad students, programs such as the [Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship](#) or [Diversity Abroad Scholarships](#) are especially helpful for students searching for financial aid. Study abroad scholarships for minorities are out there, you just have to find them!

**University-Provided Study Abroad Scholarships/Grants:** Many universities provide scholarships or grants on a merit-basis to be generally applied to any students looking to study abroad. However, don't just research financial aid provided by your home university! Study abroad grants for undergraduates can be available from different institutions depending on your affiliations. Also, look at the university you will be studying at while abroad; many higher education institutions throughout the world provide scholarships for international students to encourage a more diverse student body to attend their university.

**Organization-Provided Scholarships/Grants:** Be sure to do thorough research of nonprofit, chapter, or heritage organizations that may provide scholarships or grants to deserving students who match their criteria. Prime examples include [scholarships for LGBT students](#) or students of [Italian](#) or [Hispanic](#) descent. The possibilities are endless!

**Government-Funded Scholarships/Grants for Study Abroad:** Aside from assuring that your [FAFSA financial aid](#) will carry over for your study abroad semester, there are a number of government-funded grants or scholarships that encourage students to study or do work abroad. Good examples of this include the **Fulbright Program**, or **Chevening Scholarships and Fellowships**, which are funded by the UK government specifically for international student leaders looking to study in the UK.

**Or, you could just bookmark these [45 Scholarships for Study Abroad Around the World](#)**

### Step 3. Contact the Scholarship/Grant Funder Directly

The best way to know all the nitty-gritty details of the scholarships you will be applying for, as well as up-to-date application requirements, is to contact the funder directly – they practically wrote the book on how to get a scholarship to study abroad! Not only will this ensure that you have all the correct information, you will also be showing the scholarship or grant funder/provider that you are not afraid to take the initiative and actively pursue the scholarship you are applying for.

**Get. On. Their. Radar!**

### Step 4. Tweak Your Resume

Once you've compiled your list of study abroad scholarships that you plan on applying for, you now have to work on actually being awarded the scholarships. A huge part of this is your resume! Be sure to highlight any international experience you've had, update all of your recent campus activities and try not to go over one page. Writing concisely is important.

Cover letters go hand-in-hand with resumes, and are sometimes a crucial part of an application, as they can be your one chance to make an argument for why you deserve to be awarded a scholarship. However, you can't just send in a generic cover letter about wonderful of a student you are. Focus on how you plan to translate your lessons from abroad into your life on campus and at home.

If you are applying for a scholarship to study abroad provided by an international university, be sure to research how that country typically organizes their resumes or cover letters and, if you're confident enough in your language skills, you could try writing them in the language of the country you will be studying in!

## Step 5. Check Your References

No, we don't mean your bibliography. Most study abroad scholarship essays and applications require personal references; that is, someone you've worked with either in a professional or academic setting. For most students, this means reaching out to professors and asking for their assistance. When asking a professor to be a reference, or to write you a recommendation letter, always ask them far in advance so that they may prepare.

It is also important to choose professors or employers who you have interacted with, so that they know you well enough to recommend you. In other words, don't ask your Spanish 101 professor who you took a class with two years ago to write your recommendation letter (unless your relationship with him/her is *sólido*).

Reach out to authority figures who you know not only would be happy to recommend you for a scholarship for studying abroad, but are also pertinent to the scholarship itself. For example, if you are applying for a leadership scholarship abroad, reach out to the academic advisor of the campus club you are a part of. If you are applying to an international relations scholarship, reach out to your political science professor. However, regardless of who you reach out to, always be respectful and realize that you are asking them to take time out of their busy schedules to help you (and a follow-up, written thank you note never hurts either).

## Step 6. Mark Your Calendar

If you are applying for a number of different scholarships or grants, as well as applying for the study abroad program itself, it can be difficult to keep track of all the different deadlines and application requirements. This may seem obvious, but make a calendar specific to your study abroad scholarship applications, with each deadline clearly marked. Staying organized is crucial when applying to more than one scholarship (or even just one!).

**“Staying organized, working hard, and following these tips will lead you to scoring a scholarship, and will ultimately lead you to achieving your goal of studying abroad.”**

## Step 7. Apply, Apply, Apply!

It may seem tiring, but apply for study abroad scholarships as quickly and thoroughly as you can. This bit WILL require considerable amounts of time and patience, but every little bit counts. Since you've already done a lot of legwork, your process should run smoothly. Even smaller awards all add up and ultimately will allow you to have a much more affordable and less stressful summer, semester, or year abroad!

Also, be sure to customize your applications whenever possible, and avoid the temptation to simply copy and paste from one application to another. Scholarship providers know when you've done your research on the values of their foundation or the focus of a specific scholarship. Customizing each application will give you a much better chance of becoming a pro at figuring out how to study abroad with a scholarship.

## Step 8. Take Your Time & Take it Seriously

It can be easy to feel the need to rush through applications, especially if you are applying to a number of them. However, you should treat study abroad applications just as seriously as the applications you completed to be accepted into your university. Read and follow the directions for scholarships to study abroad, and leave yourself enough time to complete all of your applications without feeling like you're under a heavy-hammer deadline. You'll turn out better-quality work if you do not feel rushed, and better-quality work means a better chance for more financial aid!

## Step 9. Have the Grades

This may seem rudimentary, but in order to get the a scholarship for studying abroad, you often have to have good grades. Not all scholarships or grants require stellar grades or grade point averages, but many of them do. This is simply because the providers want to know that the student receiving their scholarship is serious about their study abroad experience. It's important to put in the work and get good grades before your time abroad to show scholarship providers that you plan to take your study abroad experience seriously as not just a chance to travel, but also an opportunity to expand your academic horizons.

## Step 10. The Proof is in the Passion

Most, if not all, study abroad scholarship applications require a personal essay. You might start having vivid flashbacks to your university application essays and the stress they caused, but never fear! In these applications, it's your chance to shine. Be sure to let your passion for study abroad and the country you'll be studying in to come through in your application essay.

Scholarship funders and providers want to know that their money is being used for a good purpose, and that the student who is applying for them appreciates the opportunity they are being given. So don't be afraid to express yourself; tell your story and explain why you deserve the scholarship that will allow you to study abroad.

At the end of the day, the most important thing to remember is to put in the time and effort when applying to study abroad scholarships, just as much as you would for any other academic scholarship, and you are sure to see the results. Even if you do not receive as many scholarships for your study abroad experience as you would have hoped, there are other options to fund your time abroad with crowdfunding websites such as FundMyTravel or even by finding tutoring and babysitting jobs while you are abroad (an excellent way to immerse yourself in the culture you are studying in!).

## One Final Tip!

Try not to get bogged down in all the money matters and forget the real reason for all the work: the incredibly life-changing experience of throwing yourself into another world beyond your comfort zone, and all the adventures that come with it.



# HOW TO PACK FOR A MULTICULTURAL STUDY ABROAD TRIP

by Emma Rattenborg

Packing can feel like enough of a challenge when you're going to one place for a short amount of time, let alone compared to when you are going on a study abroad trip covering several countries and several climates over several months. Truth be told, packing for a trip like this is not fun, but it doesn't have to be a total pain your arse. In fact, with the right frame of mind, packing is just a byproduct of daydreaming the adventure to be had.

So set your stress aside (ain't nobody got room for that their carry on!) and instead fill your pack with all the [actual essentials](#) for the best trip ever, including...

## 1. Culturally Sensitive Clothing

**We scream this from the rooftops!** Are your travels spanning across cultures that are vastly different from each other? Will you be dipping your toes into the pools of more progressive capital cities as well as more traditional rural areas? Will you be weaving in and out of various religious norms and contrasting interpretations of appropriate modesty?

Pack your bags with items that will not offend locals. You don't want to have to revamp your wardrobe every time you cross a border, and it's better to [be more conservative and modest](#) whenever possible. Keep it cute, but keep it practical and culturally sensitive, too.

## 2. Good Luggage

This is exceptionally important because of how much you will be traveling during a multi-country study abroad program. Determine what will work best for you, while putting your study abroad program into consideration. Whether it's fitting everything into a backpacking backpack to be as minimal as possible, purchasing a large duffel bag, or sticking with the classic, roly suitcase, we suggest paying more upfront for the convenience and comfort of traveling with your belongings; pay for high quality equipment whenever possible (and save yourself the back aches in the future).

## 3. Comfortable Shoes

If you are setting off on a trip to multiple different countries, you are going to want happy feet the whole way 'round. Proper walking shoes are vital to study abroad satisfaction. It never hurts to bring a pair of good quality adventure shoes, like Chacos, or a more stylish pair that has a good sole. It may be tempting to stock up on good "2-for-1" deals, but those shoes rarely do you any favors in the comfort department. Keep your shoes neutral colored to ensure re-purposing with different outfits.

## 4. Layers

Packing layers is essential; they are a godsend when it comes to traveling to different climates or during different seasons. Finding a light down-jacket or shell that can be packed into a small pouch can be a life-saver, and takes up next to no room. Warm socks, a hat, and a fleece are also useful to have. Even if your destination is warm, buses and flights can get cold (and sometimes it's nice to have super snuggly gear to cuddle up in).

## 5. Your Style

This is actually a really important part about packing for a multi-cultural study abroad experience. While you may want to be as practical as possible, it is important to think about what you are comfortable wearing! Even if you are going to a country where you have to be more modest, find clothes that suit your personality that also allow you to cover up! You don't want to feel like you are wearing a stranger's clothes!

## 6. A Day Pack

Day trips are a huge part of traveling, and having a small backpack can be much nicer than having a satchel or bag, especially because the weight is more evenly distributed and your belongings will be kept more safe. It can fit a lot more and is better suited for any activity, whether it be going for a hike or just walking around the town. This can also be a carry-on if you have a duffel too.

## 7. Snacks on Snacks

Although there will be convenient stores and markets to get food in, squeezing your favorite snacks into the empty nooks and crannies of your pack is a wonderful idea. Not only will a lot of the food items be foreign in the convenience stores, but you'll also get cravings and a taste of home can be nice.

# PACK SMART FOR STUDY ABROAD



GoAbroad.com For the full study abroad packing list, [sign up for the GoAbroad Newsletter!](#)

Plus, it is never fun to be looking for food when you have passed the hunger threshold (#hangry), and having a Cliff bar on hand can at least give you more time to look!

## 8. Scarves

This one is directed toward the ladies, scarves are an amazing accessory to bring abroad. Not only does it allow you to change your outfits up, but it can also help you quickly dress more modestly. This is especially helpful in more traditional countries and cities, especially if you intend to go to religious sites, such as mosques. Scarves are a great way to add flavor to an outfit without taking up a lot of room, too!

## 9. Travel Clothes (Duh?)

There is one thing that really sets a multi-cultural abroad experience from a single country one, and that is the amount you will be traveling!

It will sometimes seem like you are constantly getting on a new plane, train, bus, or boat, and you are going to want to be comfortable! Bringing a pair of sweats that pack well and a sweatshirt can be important, just don't go overboard because they can take up a lot of space!

## 10. Clothes That Go With Everything

Packing smart means you will get the most outfits possible, while packing like a minimalist. Plain t-shirts, tanks, and long sleeves go great with leggings, jeans, and skirts (for you ladies). Having clothes that you can dress up and down and layer are key. Plus, once you throw that scarf on it will make for a travel-perfect outfit.

*Now that you've stuffed your pack silly with your "must-haves" for your study abroad trip, the next challenge arises: where are you going to put all of your lovely souvenirs?!*

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# THE INHERENT RISKS OF STUDY ABROAD & HOW TO PREP FOR THEM

by Megan Lee

If you're a student contemplating study abroad, but feel nervous about the inherent risks, you're not alone. There ARE real risks to travel. But, these risks shouldn't be debilitating or cause you to acquiesce just yet. **Here's what you need to know to be prepared to handle emergencies while studying abroad.**

## BEFORE YOU GO

Arm yourself with as much information as possible before you put your boots on the ground. In this way, you won't be scrambling to gather pertinent details during your first week and can transition to life abroad with more ease.

### **Make sure your program provider has an emergency response plan in place.**

There are many factors at work when you are deciding between study abroad program options; the obvious ones, like if the company has a study abroad program in your destination of choice or if they offer a program oriented around your preferred subject matter. You might also be considering which study abroad programs' credits will transfer directly to your home university, which program your friends are choosing, which program is the most affordable, or which program sounds the coolest. Needless to say, there is a LOT that goes into making a final decision on which study abroad program is best for you.

But, as you shop around and weigh your options, be sure to inquire specifically about what measures providers have taken to ensure the safety and security of their program participants.

### **Here are some valuable questions you might consider asking your program provider or host university:**

- Do you have a specific emergency response plan for this country? What is it?
- Are your staff well-trained in CPR, wilderness first aid, or other apposite certifications?
- What is the chain of communication between departments of the program during an emergency?
- Will I be given a refund should my program end suddenly due to extenuating circumstances?
- Is insurance included and what does it cover?

- Has your organization ever had an emergency it needed to respond to and how did the process go? Were parents satisfied with your organization's response and the way it was handled overall?
- Are there any specific safety concerns in this area we should be made aware of?
- What precautions will be covered during orientation?

### **These questions can be directed to all relevant/applicable audiences, including:**

- Your on-campus study abroad office/advisor
- Your off-campus program advisor
- The international student office of the foreign university you will be attending
- The on-site director for the program you will be attending

The more intel you gain prior to leaving, the more complete picture you will have about your overall safety. The existence of a comprehensive, holistic approach to emergency response, where all parts are working together, should make or break your final decision of where to study abroad and what organization to study abroad with.

### **Familiarize yourself with your embassy location and contact information in your study abroad destination.**

In case of an emergency, your strongest ally will be the diplomats and representatives from your home country at your local embassy. Students should review maps and contact details, as well as national emergency procedures and protocols in advance of their travels. Research should be conducted on government websites and any unanswered questions should be directed to your national embassy in your study abroad destination.

You can find the address and contact information for embassies around the world through [GoAbroad's Embassy Directory](#).

### **Enroll in a government travel program.**

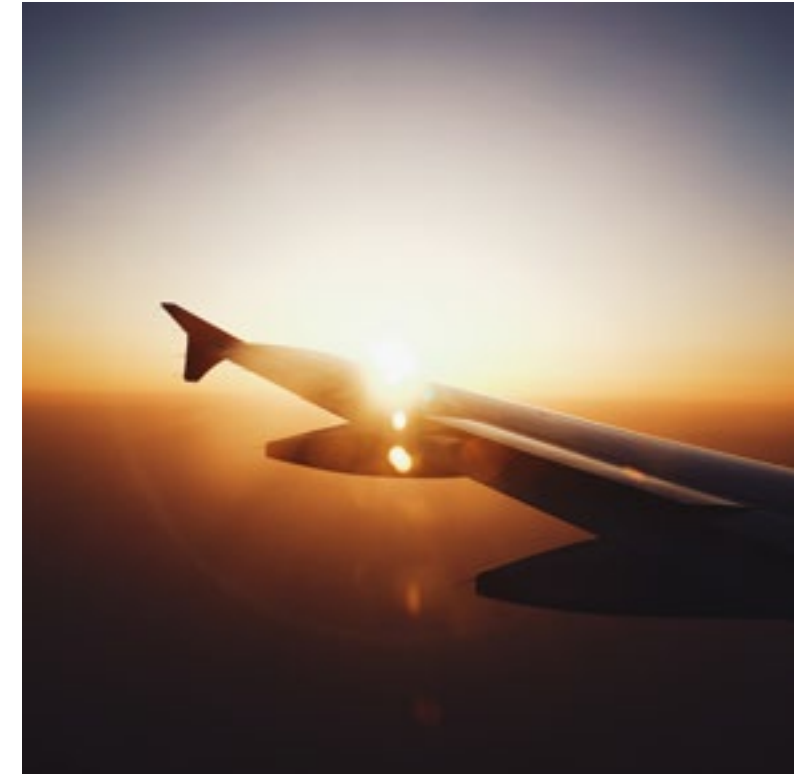
Different countries take unique measures to ensure their citizens are traveling as safely as possible. Many countries offer a safe travelers program specifically designed to track and locate travelers as they move around outside of their home country. In the UK, this is the [Registered Traveller Service](#). While Australia offers the [Smart Traveller Program](#), and U.S. citizens can opt to sign up for the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#).

While it may come off as a bit "big-brother-y," these government programs share underlying goals: to keep you safe, keep tabs on whether or not you are alive, and keep your family informed on your status in an emergency situation.

Research your government's website(s) to see if similar programs exist for travelers from your home country. You might likewise research and take heed to your national government's travel warnings and alerts. For American students, the [U.S. Department of State](#) provides a range of resources and updates related to traveling abroad for your reference.

### **Make multiple physical and digital copies of your ID and passport.**

This may be one of the oldest travel tips in the book (besides to always aim for the window seat on the plane). However, it can't go without being said again, and again: have multiple copies of your travel identification documents handy. Leave physical and digital copies with your immediate family, make sure your study abroad provider has multiple versions, save your files in your school AND personal email accounts, keep a copy folded up neatly in your wallet, and stash a few extra physical copies in your notebooks and your suitcase. It may seem excessive, but it can potentially alleviate undue stress in case of an emergency.



### **Know your insurance policy like the back of your hand.**

While many rightly consider medical evacuations or emergencies as they are choosing an international or travel insurance provider, you might likewise consider tacking on a policy that covers security or political evacuations. If an emergency situation occurs and you are in imminent danger while studying abroad, your travel insurance company can arrange for you to be evacuated immediately to a safe place.

*It's important to understand that security evacuations are different from political evacuations and the travel insurance provider will be the one to determine whether an evacuation is a covered event or not, based on the circumstances.*

Insurance policies range from covering the cost of departing to the nearest safe location, unintended expenditures for accommodations, economy airfare back home, and many other expenses.



## WHILE YOU'RE THERE

Once you land in country, be diligent in staying up-to-date on best practices for ensuring your safety.

**Review procedures with your on-site staff, ideally during orientation.**

Make sure all of your questions are answered during your on-site orientation. Typically, program providers or host universities will conduct an orientation during your first three to seven days in country. A significant portion of this should be devoted to explaining emergency protocols, and clearly outline expectations for students in these types of situations.

The first few days abroad can be overwhelming at best. Be sure to take notes during the lectures on emergency response systems to help you stay focused; plan to review your notes at a later date when your brain is slightly less clouded from fun/jet lag/excitement. Ask your on-site directors to email you digital copies of any germane materials or physical addresses for important points of interest.

**Here are some more questions to ask:**

- Who do I call in a crisis?
- What should I do if the internet and phone lines are down?
- Where is the safest place I can go?
- Should I leave the country if I have a chance without telling you?
- What if I am not in country during the emergency?
- Who should I contact if you are not available?
- How soon should I be in touch with my family? Immediately? After establishing contact with you?
- Is there anything I should know about talking to news teams on behalf of the organization or as a study abroad student specifically?

**Pay a little visit to your embassy.**

If your country's embassy is in your study abroad destination city, you would be wise to take note of its location, and perhaps even schedule a brief trip there to ensure you know where it's at and what it looks like.

There's no need to schedule an appointment or go inside (unless you have a deep seated love for waiting in lines and bureaucratic shenanigans). Just getting a feel for the neighborhood and how to get there should do the trick.

**Get your on-site director's contact details and save them in multiple places.**

Your on-site director or liaison will likely be your first point of contact in case of an emergency. To ensure this can be done in multiple ways, take note of their physical address, their phone number for work, potentially their personal phone number, their email address, and potentially their Facebook account. Review with the individual how to best reach them in an urgent situation.

Once you've gathered the necessary info, save it in multiple places. Your email inbox, your notebook, your Google documents. Share the details with your family back home if you think it might be helpful in case of an emergency.

**Always make sure to tell at least one person or friend where you are going at all times.**

We're not trying to be your mom-away-from-mom, but it is important that you have a buddy who is aware of your whereabouts whenever possible. Even if you are going out for a stroll, give your roommate a window of time you can be expected to return. Shoot a text to a friend letting them know your general vicinity or the direction you're heading in. Let your on-site director know in advance if you are intending to travel outside of your study abroad city or country.

All tales told, the more people are aware of your bearings, the more safe you will be.

If you are impossible to track down in a crisis, you might incite unnecessary worry or heaps of stress. Your friends and extended network might aptly jump to the worst case scenario, thinking you were abducted, injured, or even worse. Save everyone the heartache by being proactive in telling others where you are headed and when.

**Keep your phone game strong.**

If you are taking your cell phone with you on your study abroad trip, guarantee that it will be worth it in the case of disaster. Have it prepped to make both local or international calls with ease. Figure out in advance how to dial international calls quickly. **Keep it charged** and within easy access. Have emergency numbers saved and easy to locate (more easily than your last failed Tinder date's digits). **Save the emergency number for your study abroad destination** (spoiler: it isn't 911 in every country!). Buy a phone card with a few minutes calling time pre-loaded to store in your wallet in case your cell phone service cuts off.

## WHEN OR IF SOMETHING HAPPENS

Yikes, no matter how many preemptive measures are taken, it isn't possible to fully guarantee complete and utter safety while abroad (or in your home country, for that matter).

**Seek shelter and safety.**

Don't go out looking for more trouble. If you hear news reports of mass shootings, army coups, pending hurricanes, or other calamities, your number one priority is finding a safe place to rest. After you've secured a location, stay put. It is important that you don't wander aimlessly or put yourself in imminent danger by going outside.

**Contact your on-site staff immediately.**

Depending on your study abroad provider's emergency response policy (you know, the one you paid close attention to during orientation!), you will likely need to call your provider first. Establishing contact and answering questions relating to your location, your physical and emotional well being, and your overall safety status will allow them to communicate with their headquarters and ultimately your family, friends, relatives, university, etc. back home.

**Let everyone back home know you are alive and well.**

Double check with your on-site provider that you can communicate directly with your family back home. If you can, get to work on checking in on Facebook, emailing Mom and Dad, calling your boo, whatever you need to do to feel the people who matter in your life know about your well-being.

**Discuss the emergency situation openly.**

Processing a traumatic experience like an international political crisis or natural disaster is tough stuff.



In order to process and move on healthily from your shock, seek communities who shared a similar experience. Talk with others about what you went through.

Reflect on the distress creatively. Write in your journal, draw pictures, craft songs or poems. Don't bottle it all up and hope that it will go away. Don't use one horrid experience as an excuse to shut out the world and never go back outside. There are ways to effectively and earnestly process your experience that don't include becoming a bearded hermit on a mountaintop.

#### Consider returning home.

If you are frightened to your core or want nothing more than a hug from someone you love, it might be time to book a flight back to your home country. If issues are ongoing and there is no end in sight, you may not have a choice in the end. But if you are feeling shook up and can't imagine returning to your humdrum way of life prior to the disaster, then cutting your program short isn't a bad option.

Think through your decision from start to finish and ask your program provider what options are available to you, or what the financial implications of your decision will be. You may see sticking around as proving to yourself how thick your skin is. You may see sticking around as a waste of time. No matter your stance, there is no right or wrong way to respond to an emergency while studying abroad.

#### IS IT WORTH THE POSSIBLE RISKS?

Absolutely. Just as with every time you hop in your car to drive, you board a plane headed to a city across the country, you enter a movie theater or a mall, you more or less exist on the planet...there is always risk.

**The value study abroad brings is to not let yourself be afraid of foreign places or foreign people.**

**“Some risks are better disguised than others, but uncertainties and instabilities can be found everywhere in the world.”**

The world can seem scary if you let the flagrant fear mongering of modern news take hold of your emotions. But the world is utterly beautiful and profound too. Instead of allowing your fear for potential catastrophes to hold you back, view it instead as a lesson in proper preparation.

Just remember: challenging your comfort zone can start as early as even considering the possibility of study abroad. And the sweet spot of study abroad is just that: challenging your comfort zone.

**If you strongly desire peace in the world, studying abroad is an organic means to an end** (as we discussed in our article about [What Terrorism means for Study Abroad](#)). With more understanding and collaboration established between nations from the ground up, future policies will more be more humanistic and negotiations will be less violent. It starts with ordinary people, dedicated change agents, and optimistic students, like YOU, to tip the scale in harmony's favor.

**Study abroad is risky business, but so is staying in the familiar warmth and comfort of your home.** Oftentimes, the perpetrators of atrocious events are actively seeking to provoke terror, horror, alarm, panic. If you let your fears hold you back, you let them win. With necessary [precautions and pre-planning](#), many emergencies abroad can be attenuated and handled as smoothly as possible.

*For more information on student safety while studying abroad, refer to this excellent and insightful report from the Forum on Education Abroad titled: [Insurance Claims Data and Mortality Rates for College Students Studying Abroad](#).*



## LAST MINUTE ADVICE: WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD

by Justin Brendel

Deep into the refrigerated section of a Publix Supermarket, I searched. Pacing around cold, perspiring dairy products, deli meats, and pre-made foods, I looked for one item: olives. Greek yogurt was already in my cart, but I needed olives. Not canned olives drowning in salt-watery juice, but real, authentic, flavorful, fresh, and delectable Kalamata olives. Eventually, I was pointed to the deli section where I found my beautiful olives sitting between 16oz cups of fresh salsa and hummus.

The cultural abstraction was so comical looking back, but all I could think about in the moment was eating those olives. They glistened entrancingly in their container and held so many stories. They quickly found their way into a Greek salad the moment I was home.

My study abroad experience in Athens, Greece was transformative. By the end of my time there, tomatoes and olives, two foods that I abhorred, were my dietary staples.

I became aware about the seasonality of foods, keen on sardines and coffee, and knowledgeable about how pesticides, GMOs, and non-organic food-sprays can compromise a food's taste and flavor. But my eating habits were not the only things that were altered because of study abroad in Greece; my passions, vocational direction, indifference toward ancient history, and lack of cultural understanding also changed. I left Greece knowing so much more about myself than I had ever expected.

Many told me that studying abroad would be an incredibly formative experience, but I never believed them. Now I do. I'm not asking you to just believe me. And I'm not demanding that you study abroad to Greece. But, in my experience, studying abroad in Greece transformed me, so I highly recommend it!

## My Best Study Abroad Tips

These are the best study abroad tips I have to help you make the most of study abroad, and I strongly believe these tips can help maximize the formative nature of your abroad experience. Try them out. Add to them or take some away. Make them your own. Each person has to make the most of study abroad in their very own way.

### 1. Be Spontaneous

Flexibility, boldness, courage, willingness to explore, eagerness to learn, desire to change, and an intention to listen is vital to fostering a formative study abroad experience. Effectively, going abroad consists of two main decisions: where to go and how to spend your time there.

If you are having trouble deciding where to study abroad here is a piece of advice: be spontaneous. Go somewhere you might not otherwise visit, **find some place that makes you uneasy, and live somewhere that intrigues you.** Be spontaneous by allowing your comfort to be interrupted. Do something new. Experience something great.

Once you decide where to study abroad, please don't let your fixed academic schedule and lengthy bucket list stop you from making spontaneous decisions. **Allow yourself some time to aimlessly explore.** Buy the cheapest plane ticket off of RyanAir, wherever it leads you. Talk to people you pass by on the street. Get lost. Ride the metro. Grab a meal with a beggar. Run a marathon. Climb a mountain (ideally Mount Olympus). Get an internship. Get another internship. Talk to a street artist. Go to a museum. Serve someone. Live in someone else's shoes. Be flexible.

Don't spend your time planning and scheduling so much that you miss out on the precious moments around you. Seize your days abroad and be a good steward of the time you have. And, if you can, go sailing on the Aegean Sea. It's incredible.

### 2. Allow Immersion to Work its Magic

Greek is tough. While abroad, I studied Ancient Greek because I wanted to one day read ancient poetic and sacred texts. This decision effectively shot my chances at communicating with people in Modern Greek, but I made an effort to say what little Greek did know in every conversation I had with a native speaker. Gradually, my arsenal of Greek words and phrases grew and by the end of my time in Greece, I was ordering pastries and coffees out the wazoo. You're probably thinking, 'big whoop, the guy got himself a pastry,' but that was huge at the time. I set myself up for failure in daily conversation by studying a dead language, but I realized that going abroad brings a powerful and understated tool: immersion.

While abroad, **immerse yourself in the culture** around you. Learn a language by hearing it. Appreciate a culture by observation. Understand a people by listening to their stories.

One of the richest ways I found to immerse myself in Greek culture was by visiting cemeteries, sitting in on a Greek Orthodox service, going to the weekly street market in my town (Pangrati), walking everywhere, observing both modern and ancient architecture, spending downtime outside, working out in a park, playing pick-up basketball with Greeks, traveling within Greece, and listening to real Greeks tell real stories. Don't settle for Google, YouTube, or even articles like this one to tell you everything about a certain place. Ask a Greek about Greece and learn some history along the way.

Ultimately, you will find your study abroad experience more formative if you leave some of your anxious questions unanswered.

### 3. Write About it

Most every classics major, archaeologist, geographer, ancient historian, early Christian scholar, and late antiquity fanatic knows Pausanias. Potentially one of the most influential travelers in history, Pausanias became so vital to people's current academic pursuits and increasing understanding of ancient culture and topography because of his dedication to documentation. As a Greek, he wrote about everything around him, including object dimensions, agonizingly minor details, obscure rituals, small gatherings, and large-scale events. He was honest and painstakingly candid in his documentation, and he made the most of his travels.

***Wherever you go, do what you can in the moment to remember that moment for sometime in the future.***

To this day, the most meaningful object I have from Greece is my journal. All the olive oil, vacuum-safe olives, and smuggled baklava only last for so long. I urge you to write your way through your study abroad experience. Take time to reflect. Write a blog. Create a journal. Send letters. Capture moments.

When you look back, the "normal" days, simple encounters, and routine meals might teach you something extraordinary. Just look at Pausanias. Through his travels and first-hand documentation, new perspectives have been developed. Maybe yours will spark new thoughts too.

## Don't Waste this Opportunity, Make the Most of it!

Capture moments with pictures, buy t-shirts, purchase that knock-off sculpture of Zeus you always wanted, do things you never thought you would do, face your fears, embrace discomfort... be spontaneous, immerse yourself, AND write about it all along the way. Allow your abroad experience to become timelessly formative, that is how you make the most of study abroad.

**So...go! [Study abroad](#), wherever you choose.**



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