

Tips for Managing Dietary Restrictions While Abroad

Be prepared:

- Plan as much in advance as possible. Whether you carry an EpiPen, a cream, a medication, or some other form of treatment, it's important to know how to legally transport it abroad. Also, it's good to know how and where to refill a prescription if needed.
- Talk with your study abroad program and make sure they are aware of any dietary restrictions, food allergies, or intolerances. Ask a lot of questions to make sure your expectations are realistic.
- Think about bringing some specialty items with you. If you're concerned about your nutrition and health while abroad, consider stocking up on supplements or vitamins to make sure you are still getting the nutrients necessary to stay healthy.
- Be very clear with your host family, roommates, and program leader about your dietary restrictions or allergies and how they affect you. Prior to departure, consider creating an emergency plan in the event you experience a reaction while abroad. As this will vary by the allergy treatment you use and where you study abroad, the best piece of advice is to work with your doctor, Study Abroad Advisor, and/or Access Coordinator to create your personalized plan of action should you need it - and always remember to bring your essentials in your carry-on luggage.
- Most importantly, be respectful of the people and culture of the country you're visiting. In some countries, refusing food can seem offensive, and not everyone understands the type of dietary restrictions that come with food allergies or intolerances. Keep a good attitude while explaining your dietary needs, and be ready to provide an explanation.

Steps for preparing for your trip:

1. **Learn about the local cuisine** and how foods are typically prepared in the area(s) you will be travelling to.
2. **Learn how to explain your allergy** in the local language(s).

Advice from a past student – “I didn't speak any Italian before heading off to Italy, so I set aside some time to learn the basics, as well as the translation for ‘I'm allergic to egg.’ It was also crucial to learn key, allergy-specific vocabulary words like traces of egg, mayonnaise, and yolk.”

For anyone traveling with a food allergy to a place where you don't speak the language, my advice is to get really comfortable with your pronunciation of key words and phrases:

- Your allergy
- Ingredients related to your allergy

- Food preparation related to your allergy
 - “I cannot eat...”
 - “I am allergic to....”
 - “Does this contain...?”
3. **Carry a Chef Card** explaining your allergy in the local language(s).
No matter how much you practice your translation, there will be times where you’re not 100% confident you were actually understood. By carrying a card with your allergy perfectly translated, you’ll always have this option in your back pocket to share with restaurant staff, chefs, street vendors, etc.
Use an index card or a quarter sheet of printer paper to briefly explain your allergy and dietary needs. Consider including points like the severity of your allergy, specific foods you cannot eat, or how you need food to be prepared. Whatever you choose to include on this card, be sure to remain polite.
4. **Bring some non-perishable snacks** with you on your trip.
There are going to be times during your study abroad trip when your classmates might grab a quick bite from a street vendor, and you can’t find anything that fits your diet. Think ahead and bring some non-perishable snacks (things like granola bars, trail mix, or fruit snacks...depending on your allergy!) in your bag.
5. **Look at the menu ahead of time**
If you’re going out for a meal at a restaurant or café, look at the menu online beforehand. Translate the words you don’t know, and be prepared with a few options and how to ask any questions you might have about them.

Resources:

Chowhound.com - Chowhound was started in 1997 as a message board for people to trade information about where to find good food. Years later, Chowhound now offers a dynamic resource for making reliable everyday food and drink decisions by sharing a deeper narrative that goes beyond just taste and technique. Users can search the Community forums by location to pose questions or find answers about cuisines in a variety of destinations.

HappyCow.net - HappyCow was founded in 1999 as a public service to assist travelers and people everywhere on finding plant-based/vegan options and healthy food. We are vegan-run, from a vegan perspective, and staffed by vegans and vegetarians. Today, our online community has grown to include members from around the world who are passionate about the vegan lifestyle as a healthy, compassionate, and environmentally sustainable way of living. More than simply a restaurant and

health food store guide, HappyCow is an ever-evolving online hub that serves millions worldwide each month.

GlutenFreeEatingDirectory.com.au - Australia's #1 Gluten Free Food & Eatery Guide

If you have coeliac disease, gluten intolerance, or prefer a gluten free diet, this directory is for you! Find eateries & shops, products, online shops, recipe books & services, and overseas locations.

CeliacTravel.com - If you have Celiac (coeliac) disease or need gluten-free food for any reason, use CeliacTravel.com to get essential facts, tips and tales to help maintain your special diet anywhere in the world - plus our super-popular (free) gluten-free restaurant cards in 54 languages.