



## ***CONGRATULATIONS!***

You are about to embark on an adventure guaranteed to change your life. Each year, more and more WMU students study abroad, and we continue to be excited for each and every one. By choosing to study abroad, you have shown your desire to experience a culture completely different from your own. In this upcoming term abroad, you will have the opportunity to see many places and meet a variety of new people. Take full advantage of this opportunity and experience all you can!

This handbook is a collection of resources. It will provide you with useful information for planning and spending your time abroad, and we urge you to read it carefully. We strongly recommend you use this collection and also consult other recommended resources in preparation for your study abroad. Talk with students who have already studied abroad as well as natives of your respective host country. Acquaint yourself with current issues in the part of the world you will be visiting. Read books by the country's native authors. Listen to the traditional music. In other words, **BE INFORMED.**

Remember, *accept*. Do not *expect*. You will naturally compare the country you visit to the United States, but do not be judgmental. Life in other parts of the world is not necessarily better or worse than life here: it's just *different*.

**Enjoy your time abroad and your travels!**

-Your WMU Study Abroad Office

# Table of Contents

Statement of Responsibility	2
Health and Safety Information	6
Living and Traveling Abroad Safely	7
Stages in the Cultural Adjustment Process	11
Culture Shock	12
Intensity Factors	13
Study Abroad Resources	14
NAFSA: Providing resources for outbound students	15
Time Saving Tips	17
Final Checklist	18

## Statement of Responsibility

THIS IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT THAT INCLUDES A RELEASE OF LIABILITY. READ IT CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING.

In consideration for being permitted to participate in the Study Abroad Program for which I have been accepted (Program), I hereby understand, agree and represent that:

### 1. Program Arrangements

The University will attempt to implement the Program as described in the provided documentation. It reserves the right, however, to change the Program at any time and for any reason if necessary to promote Program objectives; for emergency, health or safety issues; or due to institutional needs. If cancelled, I may not have any fees or expenses refunded.

### 2. Travel and Accommodation Arrangements

I am expected to adapt to differences in physical accommodations, which may be perceived as inconvenient or uncomfortable by U.S. standards. Changes in accommodations may be necessary, in the best interest of the Program, or the best interest of the University. The University does not represent or act as an agent for, and cannot control the acts or omissions of any host, travel, accommodation, tour, or other provider of goods or services related to the Program.

### 3. Financial Obligations

I shall be solely responsible for all financial obligations or liabilities that I may incur while participating in a study abroad Program, including living and transportation expenses.

I have reviewed the Withdrawal and Refund procedures, and I agree to abide by these policies. After accepting a placement in a program, I understand I will be charged a non-refundable Program Commitment Fee.

Events and circumstances beyond WMU's control may require fee adjustment at the time of Program commencement or at the time of receipt of billing for services provided. I am financially responsible for such changes. However, if fees increase by more than 20%, I may withdraw from the Program with no cancellation fees.

I agree to remain enrolled full time during my study abroad experience. I understand that I may be required to repay part or all of my financial aid immediately if I drop below full-time status at any time during the term of the Program.

I understand while some financial aid may be available for my study abroad experience, I might need additional funds to cover costs that exceed tuition and Program fees. Disbursement of financial aid may not coincide with the start date of the Program. I acknowledge that I have sufficient personal funds, or have already been awarded sufficient financial aid, to support my participation in the Program, including the costs associated with airfare and living expenses.

### 4. Withdrawal or Dismissal

I will provide written, dated, and signed notification to WMU Study Abroad if I decide to withdraw from the Program after committing. I agree to be subject to additional fees based upon the timing and amount of notice of withdrawal that I provide to WMU Study Abroad.

After departure, I shall be solely responsible for any and all costs arising out of my voluntary or involuntary withdrawal or dismissal from the Program for any reason.

If I am expelled from the Program, I will be sent home at my own expense with no refund of fees or expenses. Expulsion from the Program may also include failure of courses, and I may be subject to further disciplinary,

civil and/or criminal action upon my return to the country or the University.

### **5. Communication**

Maintaining contact with program leaders, University officials and other program participants is important for safety, health and emergency purposes. Program staff and University officials will primarily use the University email system to communicate with me regarding the Program and while I am abroad. I will check my official University email account often during the Program, but no less than once a week. If University e-mail is not accessible while I am abroad, I will inform the Study Abroad Office of that fact and establish an alternate means of communication. I will provide the Study Abroad Office with a phone number at which I can be reached while abroad.

### **6. Independent Travel and Activities**

Neither the University, nor any University employee, representative nor agent is responsible for any injuries, loss, or damage I may suffer when I am traveling independently or am otherwise separated or absent from the Program. This limitation applies even if a faculty member or other University employee, representative, or agent accompanies me in independent travel or non-University-sponsored or -affiliated activity. If I lose contact or become detached from the Program group, I will, at my own expense, contact and rejoin the Program group.

In the event that I undertake independent travel during, immediately before, or immediately after the Program dates, I will update my itinerary with the Study Abroad Office and provide a copy, with revised emergency contact information, to my Program's faculty director or other on-site University representative.

### **7. Health and Medical Issues**

Travel abroad may expose me to certain conditions, diseases or illnesses. I have been advised to acquire all the immunizations recommended by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and all other inoculations necessary for safe travel in the areas I am visiting. I will make reasonable efforts to acquaint myself with health factors and issues endemic to these areas and to prepare myself accordingly.

I will make an appointment to be seen at the Sindecuse Health Center International Travel Clinic or by another health care professional at least six weeks prior to departure to discuss any required or recommended immunizations and vaccinations. I have been advised to consult with a medical doctor or comparable health care provider with regard to my personal health status and needs.

I am required to be enrolled in health insurance through the University's vendor to cover my travel and study abroad activities. The University is not obligated to pay for any medical treatment or hospital care during my participation in the Program. The University is not responsible for the quality of such treatment or care. I will be responsible for all my own medical costs (including transportation/evacuation and repatriation) not covered by my insurance. I will pay such costs in a timely manner. Insurance coverage prior to and following the official Program dates is my own responsibility.

If I am injured or become ill, the University or its agents may secure hospitalization and/or medical treatment for me and I shall be responsible for paying all expenses related thereto. The University or its agents may release my medical and other personal information to other persons who need this information to assist me in securing such treatment.

If I become sick or injured and lose contact with the Program group, I will, at my own expense, contact and rejoin the Program group.

### **8. Standards of Conduct**

Each country has its own laws and regulations and has standards of acceptable conduct in the areas of dress, manners, morals, religion, social customs, politics, alcohol use, drug use and behavior. I recognize that behavior or conduct that violates those laws or standards could harm my health and safety, the health and

safety of other Program participants, the Program's effectiveness or the University's relations with the countries in which the Program is located. I take full responsibility for my behavior and conduct regardless of whether I am under the direct supervision of the University, University employees, agents, or Program officials.

I will make reasonable and good faith efforts to become informed of and comply with all laws, regulations, and standards for each country to or through which I will travel during my time abroad.

I am subject to University policies, procedures, rules, standards and instruction, including the WMU Student Code of Conduct, at all times during my participation in the Program. I will comply with any supplemental rules or standards adopted by the University for the Program. The University may expel me from the Program and related activities for violating any policy, rule, regulation, or order of University employees or of any other lawful authority.

I will not use or possess narcotics or any other illegal substance while on the Program. Using or possessing such is cause for immediate expulsion from the Program, and may subject me to prosecution in the host country. The penalties for use or possession of illegal substances in other countries may be much more severe than in the United States. The University and its agents will not assist me if I violate host country laws or standards.

I recognize that, due to the circumstances of foreign travel and foreign study programs, a due process hearing may not be practicable or available until after the trip or Program has ended and I have returned to the United States. I explicitly waive any claims based on alleged inadequate procedural rights.

I agree to the responsible use of alcohol as outlined by the Study Abroad Office and the Student Code.

I must reside in the housing location designated by the program, if relevant. Students must abide by host program or host family's policy pertaining to house guests and obtain permission to host overnight guests in their housing.

Acceptance to the Program is conditional upon my remaining in good standing with the University for the academic term prior to participation in the Program.

I have read, understand, have been given the opportunity to ask questions about, and agree to abide by [WMU Study Abroad's procedures](#) and any Program-specific materials I received from the University or its agents. I have been advised to share those materials with my parent/legal guardian/next of kin. I also agree that I have informed my parent/legal guardian/next of kin that I will be participating in the Program.

I agree that the University has the right to enforce all of the standards of conduct, rules and regulations described above and in any other materials provided or available to me. If disciplinary action is necessary, the Program director and the Study Abroad Office will use their discretion regarding what interim disciplinary action to take, including removing me from the Program and sending me back to the United States. I am responsible for all damages caused by my actions or conduct.

I understand that I am fully responsible for any criminal or legal matters that may arise. I also agree that I am responsible for any encounters that I have with any foreign government, law enforcement, or any individual. The University is not responsible for providing any assistance under such circumstances.

### **9. Indemnification, Acknowledgement of my Responsibility and Assumption of Risk**

I fully understand that this Program will expose me to risks associated with foreign travel and participation in a program abroad. I assume responsibility for all risks associated with this Program, known and unknown, to my property, and me and I am voluntarily participating in reliance upon my own judgment and knowledge of my experience and capabilities. I agree to release, hold harmless, and indemnify Western Michigan University, its

trustees, officers, employees, and agents from any liability, losses, costs, damages, claims, causes of action, or expenses, of any kind or nature whatsoever, arising from, proximately caused by, or in connection with:

- emergencies, accidents, illnesses, injuries or other consequences or events arising from my participation in the Program,
- any cause, event or occurrence beyond the direct control of the University or its agents including, but not limited to, travel changes or interruptions, natural disasters, wars, civil disturbances, terrorist acts or the negligence of other persons, and
- events or occurrences caused by my behavior or conduct while traveling or participating in the Program.

There are safety risks and inherent dangers associated with the Program and travel incident thereto that no amount of care, caution, instruction or expertise can eliminate. The University is not responsible for any such risks, injuries, damages, or loss outside of its direct control. I am responsible for avoiding illegal, dangerous or unsafe activities, and for any injury or loss that may result from engaging in such activities.

This acknowledgement, hold harmless agreement, release, indemnification and assumption of risk shall be binding on me, my heirs, my assigns, members of my family, my executors and administrators and my personal representatives.

#### **10. Voluntary Acknowledgement**

My agreement to the provisions herein is voluntary. Prior to signing this agreement, I was informed that I had the opportunity and right to ask questions and to consult with the advisor, counselor or attorney of my choice.

#### **11. Interpretation of Agreement**

The laws of Michigan govern this agreement. Michigan shall be the forum for any lawsuit, hearings or adjudications filed under or incident to this agreement or to the Program. Should any provision or aspect of this agreement be found to be unenforceable, all remaining provisions of the agreement shall continue to be valid, enforceable, and binding.

**I have carefully read, understand and fully agree with the statements and responsibilities outlined in this agreement. This agreement represents my complete understanding with the University concerning the University's or its agents' responsibility and liability for my participation in the Program. This agreement supersedes any previous or contemporaneous understandings I may have had with the University or its agents, whether oral or written. I represent that I am at least eighteen years of age or, if not, my parent or guardian has signed this agreement on my behalf.**

Approved by WMU general counsel May, 2018.

## Health and Safety Information

*Travel Warnings/Consular Information Sheets and Public Announcements*

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

When you get the opportunity, and at least two weeks before your departure, go to the above website and view the informational pages for the countries to which you will be traveling. This information is put out by the Department of State.

- Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. Countries where avoidance of travel is recommended will have Travel Warnings as well as Consular Information Sheets.
- Consular Information Sheets are available for every country of the world. They include such information as location of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties. If an unstable condition exists in a country that is not severe enough to warrant a Travel Warning, a description of the condition(s) may be included under an optional section entitled “Safety/Security.” On limited occasions, we also restate in this section any U.S. Embassy advice given to official employees. Consular Information Sheets generally do not include advice, but present information in a factual manner so the traveler can make her or his own decisions concerning travel to a particular country.
- Public Announcements are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are made any time there is a perceived threat and usually have Americans as a particular target group. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with short-term coups, bomb threats to airlines, violence by terrorists and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events.

*CDC Travelers' Health*

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

This site is the number one source for travelers' health information for the region to which you will be traveling. Go to this site to find recommended immunizations as well. Just select the region of the world on the drop down menu and print the information.

*Sindecuse Health Center*

<http://www.wmich.edu/healthcenter>

Sindecuse Health Center has a Travel Health Clinic available to all students for an appointment. While a meeting with a Travel Health nurse at Sindecuse is not required, this is an excellent resource for students to discuss health-related considerations related to international travel.



## Living and Traveling Abroad Safely

We want you to be aware of some basic precautions for your traveling safety and convenience. As we have said before, travel to another country is not inherently dangerous. However, no matter where you go, you inevitably stand out as a stranger and therefore could be target of local crime. You cannot rely on your instinctual knowledge of danger as you do at home. You do not know enough yet about the new environment. Keeping this in mind, we offer some thoughts and advice. Most of these consist of using common sense and staying alert.

The more useful things you can do are:



**Be Informed.** Read current newspapers and listen to TV or radio news; know what is going on in the world. Check with program staff before you travel regarding possible travel advisories and read up on the customs and political situation of every country you plan to visit. Talk to international students and program alumni from the place you intend to visit before you go. Their insights will prove very helpful and could provide you information about areas and means of travel to avoid.

**Watch and Learn from the Locals.** If they do not go out after 9p.m. without an escort, then you should not either. Ask questions of your host family, fellow dormitory residents, or your program director. If they do not make eye contact with strangers, then you should not either. Talk to hostel or hotel owners, program staff, tour guides, and fellow travelers to find out which scams are in vogue with local thieves.

**Be Inconspicuous.** Don't look too "North American." Don't speak loudly and draw attention to yourself. Learn a few basic language phrases for each country where you plan to travel. To avoid looking like an American tourist, don't wear t-shirts, sweatshirts, or baseball caps with North American logos. Don't wear your camera or passport around your neck. Remember that your map can also give you away. Especially in heavily touristed cities, look at city maps and metro guides before you leave your hotel or check these resources discretely off the street.

**Be Aware** of your surroundings at all times. These often means keeping your eyes up and off your mobile device. Use the precautions that are customary in any major city in the world today. Travel with a friend. Plan your route and walk confidently. If you are being followed, feel threatened, or you are lost, go into a store, restaurant, or other public area. You know what feels comfortable and what doesn't. If your instincts tell you a situation is "not right", trust them and move along.

**Use common sense.** Use your common sense and your street smarts. If you would not camp out in a city park at home, then do not consider doing this abroad. Avoid walking alone at night. Stay in well-populated, well-trafficked, and well-lit areas. Be especially cautious if you have been drinking. Avoid arguments and remove yourself from confrontational situations. Be confident and alert and you will encourage thieves to pick another target.



**Stay Healthy.** Eat well and get sufficient rest. If you become ill, get proper care. Do not hesitate to tell your host family or onsite director if you are ill and do not be afraid to visit a doctor or hospital just because you do not speak the language fluently. All program participants are covered under international health and emergency insurance, so if you have questions about your coverage, but sure to inquire with WMU Study Abroad.



**Guard Personal Belongings.** Pickpockets can be extremely adept. Do not carry your passport or money in a hip pocket, open purse, or outside pocket on your backpack. Pickpockets mingle widely in tourist crowds, especially in airports, travel agencies, and American Express offices. A money belt or neck pouch is a good idea. If you need to sleep while in transit, use your pack as your pillow. On crowded city subways, always carry your daypack in front of you. Always have a hand or foot in a loop or strap of your luggage when you set it down to avoid having it snatched away while you are not looking.

**Packing Valuables.** Do not carry valuables in a backpack, never leave bags unattended, and never carry large amounts of cash. Take and use a lock. Take only as much luggage as you can carry and never let it out of your sight. Do not pack valuables (passports, documents, contact lenses, medications, and electrical equipment) in checked luggage.

**Organize Your Funds.** Organize your funds into two separate packs each consisting of a credit card and currency. When in-country, one of these packs should usually be left at your residence as a back-up. Keep the cash you are using separate from the rest of your money. Try to avoid reaching into your money-belt in public places.

**Copy Documents.** Before leaving, make two copies of all your important documents (passport, visa, traveler's checks, and travel itinerary). Keep these in a safe place, leaving a copy at home in the U.S. When you don't need your passport, carry the copy. Get a police report documenting any losses. Bring four extra photos in the event that you need to replace your passport or obtain visas.



**Airport security.** At airports, you should be prepared for lengthy check-ins since thorough security checks can take time. Accordingly, be sure to arrive early and pack your bags with care. Carry-on luggage will be X-rayed and possibly hand-searched. Do not accept packages from people you do not know well or carry packages for other travelers.



**Jet Lag.** You should expect to feel jet lag on arrival overseas. It will take a few days for your system to adjust to the time and climate changes, so pace yourself. Get plenty of sleep before your trip and drink lots of fluids before and during the flight to prevent dehydration. Avoid caffeine and alcohol and eat light meals on the plane.

**Traffic and the Road.** According to the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT), statistics indicate that the single greatest cause of death and serious injury abroad is road accidents. These far exceed the number of deaths resulting from disease, violence, or terrorism. Avoid car or bus travel at night. Discuss the safety of local transit with trusted local people prior to us. Always use a seatbelt when one is available.



We strongly recommend that you not own or operate a motor vehicle of any kind during your time abroad. Driving regulations and habits in many countries are different from those in the U.S. and driving overseas can be potentially dangerous. Your family's liability insurance may not be valid abroad. Pedestrians are also at risk, so be especially careful in crossing the street. Never assume that you have the right of way.

Pay particular attention to all of the following, which are common on the roads of many countries:

- Passing on the right and cutting in front of other vehicles from the right side.
- Unexpected stops or turns without signaling for any apparent reason.
- Stopping in unexpected locations to pick up or let off passengers, including main highway entrance ramps, intersections and along major highways.
- Trucks parked at night without lights on the highway rather than on the side of the road.
- Disabled vehicles parked without warning signs.

### **Do Not Hitchhike**

**Caution to Women.** Lean quickly those situations where you might be harassed. You have not only the normal burden of sexism, but in many places you also have to contend with the notion that as a Western woman, you might be considered promiscuous. Observe the behavior of the local women. Find out about non-verbal messages (eye contact, tone, gestures, and dress) to avoid or adopt. If you are verbally harassed on the street, the best path is to ignore it unless you are touched or your safety is threatened. Again, be very careful about alcohol consumption and avoid traveling alone, particularly at night.



### **Learn the Word for Help**

**Avoid Demonstrations,** especially in politically volatile countries. What appears to be a peaceful situation could suddenly become dangerous and you could become caught in the middle.

**Leave Your Travel Itinerary with Friends.** Provide a copy of your travel itinerary to your family or friends while traveling. Always tell someone where you are going, where you are staying, and when you anticipate returning to your host location.. Draft a list of important telephone numbers and addresses of the locations you are to visit and the telephone number of your nearest embassy or consulate. Leave a copy with your contact person.



**Cellular Telephone.** In some locations, you might be able to sign up for cellular telephone service. This can be very useful and can save a great deal of trouble.

### **Socializing Safely**

One of the truly wonderful aspects of study abroad is making friends with people who have grown up in a different culture. It can be exhilarating to be able to exchange ideas and find

common ground with people who speak a different native language and come from a different background.

Socializing abroad can be risky, however, because of cultural differences and misperceptions about North Americans. Some North American behavior that is acceptable at home may be viewed as provocative overseas. On the other hand, foreign tones of voice, gestures and perception of personal space may cause North Americans to feel threatened by people who mean them no harm. What is seen in the U.S. as casual dating may be seen in some countries as one step away from a lifetime commitment.

Take time to learn about cultural norms regarding relationship roles and dating. Use discretion and common sense in your behavior and in the clothing that you wear. Strive to blend in and thus avoid becoming a target for harassment. It is usually best to avoid making eye contact with strangers on the street. Above all, be aware of the unconscious messages you may give out through your posture, gestures, tone of voice, clothing, and eye contact. Identify a local you trust and discuss cultural norms of behavior to ensure you are communicating messages consistent with your intentions.

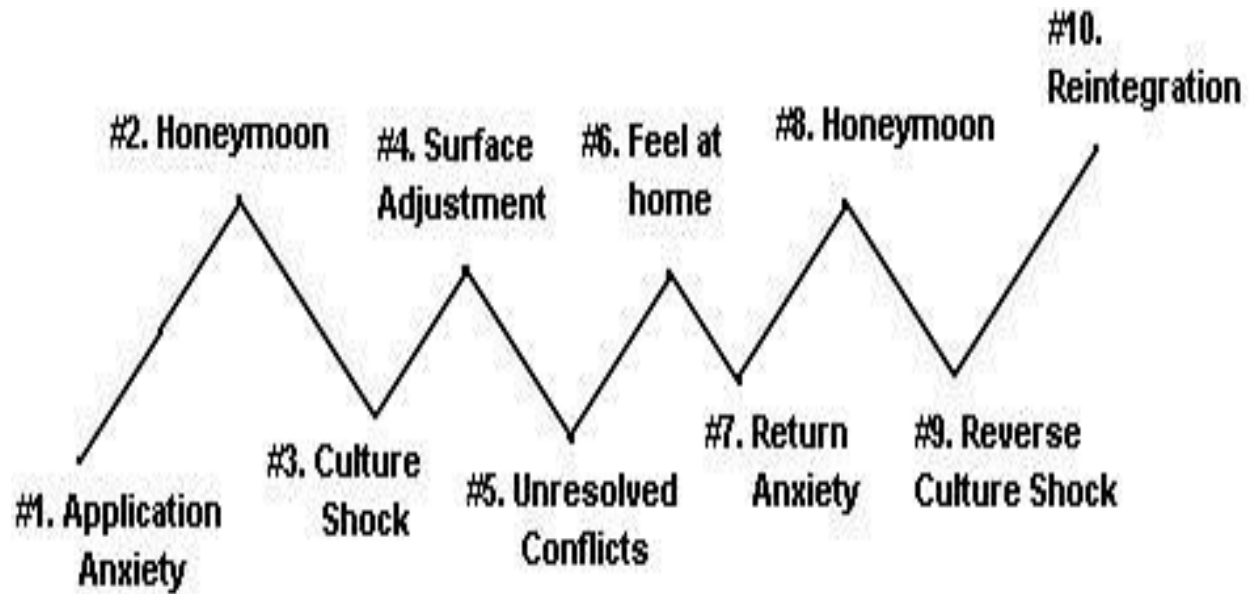
If you find yourself in an encounter that makes you nervous, do not worry about being the ugly American. State your views clearly and get out of the situation. Ignore catcalls and move purposefully.

As for relationships (both male/female and same sex), you may not know enough at first about appropriate behavior. Given the additional challenge of possible language problems, or unfair stereotypes, you could unwittingly set yourself up for trouble. Adding alcohol to this could cloud your judgment and you could find yourself in a dangerous situation, including the potential for sexual assault. Keep the sexual picture in focus. Remain in control and watch your alcohol intake.

Talk with locals who you trust to find out more about appropriate behavior. To quote a student writing in *Transitions Abroad*, “The fact is that sex and love are problematic in every culture, but how they are problematic varies greatly from country to country. And when you throw in linguistic challenges, the potential for disappointment or disaster goes off the charts.”

The bottom line is that you should enjoy your time abroad, but always use your head. If you temper curiosity with good sense, your trip will be a safe and enriching experience.

## W Curve of Cultural Adjustment:



Adopted from Central Washington University

## Culture Shock: Process of Cultural Adjustment

The process of cultural adjustment goes through various stages and at different rates for people. Not all study abroad students will experience all stages or experience them for the same duration or in the same sequence, but being aware of them ahead of time can help prepare participants for some of the challenges they present. Becoming completely bilingual and bicultural does not happen overnight; it is a long, on-going process.

Stage	Situation	Approaches	Reactions
<b><i>Honeymoon</i></b>	First contact with the new culture	Observe, use preconceptions, stereotypes to understand the new culture.	Excitement; curiosity; slight anxiety.
<b><i>Initial Confrontation</i></b>	First intensive interaction with the culture, must solve some basic survival problems.	Respond behaviorally as one would in own culture, solve problems in familiar ways.	Surprise and confusion; concern that we don't have an answer for new problems; can't understand why our own behavior doesn't produce the desired results; puzzled about others behavior.
<b><i>Adjustment Crisis</i></b>	Ongoing confrontation with the new culture; problems intensify.	Respond now with a mix of old and new ways of doing things; some tentative experimentation with new behaviors.	Becoming judgmental about new culture; feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, frustration, anger; confusion about own identity.
<b><i>Recovery</i></b>	Accommodation with the new culture replaces confrontation; sense of belonging to culture emerges.	Creative use of a variety coping strategies (see above) to help one function effectively.	Regain confidence; feeling that the culture is understandable; very positive sense of personal accomplishment; enjoy many aspects of this culture.

### Coping Strategy Chart

The following coping strategies may help you accommodate to the culture:

Coping Strategy	Effective Form	Ineffective Form
<b><i>Avoidance</i></b>	Temporary, occasional withdrawal to overcome "cultural fatigue."	Frequent or complete withdrawal; no interaction with the culture.
<b><i>Participation</i></b>	Working to learn the ways of the culture (assertive behavior).	Fighting against the culture (aggressive behavior).
<b><i>Utilizing Resources</i></b>	Using resources to promote learning and self-reliance.	Becoming totally dependent on resources.
<b><i>Utilizing Stereotypes</i></b>	Using only as tentative guide to the culture; constantly challenging them.	Using as a complete guide to the culture; never testing them.
<b><i>Studying the Culture</i></b>	Striving to acquire cultural insights; learning new perspectives.	Fitting new culture into own framework; rejecting new insights, perspectives.
<b><i>Utilizing the Culture</i></b>	Developing effective coping strategies; enlarging skills; maintaining own identity.	"Going native" - totally adopting the culture as one's own; losing own identity. Most cultures don't want you to "go native" - they want you to learn and respect their culture.

## **INTENSITY FACTORS**

Issues that can make the experience in a new culture more intense:

**CULTURAL DIFFERENCES:** The degree of actual difference between two cultures and how negatively the sojourner evaluates those differences influences the sojourner's attitude and the ability to adapt.

**ETHNOCENTRISM:** The more ethnocentric the sojourner is, the more difficulty he or she will have in accepting the other culture, and, conversely, the less accepting of difference the host culture is – the more ethnocentric it is – the more difficult it will be to become engaged with natives of the culture.

**LANGUAGE:** The less language ability one has and the more essential language is to functioning well in the host culture, the more difficult it will be to function in the culture.

**CULTURAL IMMERSION:** The more the sojourner is immersed in the culture, the higher the anxiety.

**PRIOR INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE:** If this is the first time the sojourner has been out of his or her own culture, the intensity of the experience will be higher.

**EXPECTATIONS:** If the sojourner's expectations are unrealistically positive – disappointment can be a serious factor.

**VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILITY:** Being physically different from the host nationals and thus being very visible can make the experience more intense. Conversely, having to keep parts of one's identity, such as homosexual, hidden, can also increase the intensity.

**STATUS:** Feeling that one is not getting appropriate respect can raise the intensity. Conversely, receiving attention that does not seem warranted is equally distressing.

**POWER AND CONTROL:** When sojourners feel they have no power and control in intercultural situations, especially over their own circumstances, the intensity of the experience rises. This consistently emerges from the research as a major problem.

Source: Paige, R. Michael. "On the Nature of Intercultural Experience and Intercultural Education, in Education for the Intercultural Experience (Michael Paige, Ed.) Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press. Inc., 1993

## Study Abroad Resources

WMU Office of Study Abroad Website: [www.wmich.edu/studyabroad](http://www.wmich.edu/studyabroad)

### Useful Travel-Related Websites

AESU Travel Information:	<a href="http://www.aesu.com">www.aesu.com</a>
BusAbout Europe:	<a href="http://www.busabout.com">www.busabout.com</a>
Center for Disease Control:	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a>
Dept. of State Travel:	<a href="http://www.travel.state.gov">www.travel.state.gov</a>
Embassies:	<a href="http://www.embassy.org">www.embassy.org</a>
RailEurope:	<a href="http://www.raileurope.com/us">www.raileurope.com/us</a>
Foreign Currency Exchange Transactions:	<a href="http://www.xe.com">www.xe.com</a>
ISIC Cards:	<a href="http://www.isic.org">www.isic.org</a>
Lonely Planet Online:	<a href="http://www.lonelyplanet.com">www.lonelyplanet.com</a>
Mobility International:	<a href="http://www.miusa.org">www.miusa.org</a>
STA Travel:	<a href="http://www.statravel.com">www.statravel.com</a>
Student Universe:	<a href="http://www.studentuniverse.com">www.studentuniverse.com</a>
Travel Document Systems:	<a href="http://www.traveldocs.com">www.traveldocs.com</a>
World Health Organization:	<a href="http://www.who.int/ith/en/">www.who.int/ith/en/</a>

### Useful Books

Getting the Most from Study Abroad (Students Helping Students) by Michael Gallant, Natavi Guides

Study Abroad 101 by Wendy Williamson

Study Abroad: A Parent's Guide: For Parents of College and University Students Contemplating a Study Abroad Experience by William Hoffa

Study Away: the Unauthorized Guide to College Abroad by Mariah Balaban, Jennifer Shields

Study Abroad: How to Get the Most Out of Your Experience by Michele-Marie Dowell, Kelly P. Mirsky

The Insider's Guide to Study Abroad by Ann M. Moore

### Health and Safety/Logistics

Promoting Health and Safety in Study Abroad	<a href="http://www.nafsa.org/students.sec">www.nafsa.org/students.sec</a>
SAFETI Clearinghouse	<a href="http://www.globaled.us/safeti">www.globaled.us/safeti</a>
Safety Monitoring Websites	<a href="http://www.nafsa.org/students.sec">www.nafsa.org/students.sec</a>
Electronic Embassy	<a href="http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html">www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html</a>
Travelers' Health	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/travel">www.cdc.gov/travel</a>

## **NAFSA: Providing resources for outbound students**

*The following is taken from a handbook, **Ready, Set, Go** developed by the University of Guelph (Canada) at all outbound students receive. For more information, see [www.quic.queensu.ca/information/booklet\\_engl.html](http://www.quic.queensu.ca/information/booklet_engl.html)*

### **Being Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgendered Abroad**

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (glbt) people experience oppression throughout the world, though there are different levels of acceptance in different countries. Before you go, it is important to reflect on the culturally based ideas and definitions of sexual identity and consider carefully how your identity as a glbt person may affect your relationships with host nationals, your cultural adjustment and your overall education abroad experience. Part of your pre-departure preparations should include reflecting on the larger context of acting on your glbt identity while abroad. What role as a visitor do you/ should you have in the host culture? Does your right to be glbt in the foreign country conflict with your host country's religious or cultural values and traditions? How will you reconcile your human rights with the cultural values of your host society? Are there safety considerations which you should be aware of?

#### **Before leaving, consider the following:**

- Cultures vary in terms of what is considered appropriate behavior and how sexual identities are defined and understood. Learn as much as possible before you leave about the culture-specific norms of friendship and dating, styles of behavior and general attitudes. Behavioral signals (such as eye contact, a smile, touching) may lead us astray in a foreign culture. For example, in several Middle Eastern countries hand-holding among males is a custom of special friendship and respect and does not imply homosexuality. Is it possible for you to contact (through email, etc.) other glbt folks from the host country to ask them specific questions?
- Obtain country specific information on the support systems (meeting places, organizations, etc.) available in your host country. Are these appropriate for you? Do you visit similar places in your home community?
- Familiarize yourself with the laws of your host country. Homosexuality is illegal in many countries, and carries the death penalty in some. In some countries, safety may require you to hide your sexual identity. Inform yourself about country-specific laws on age of consent, traveling with print or other materials on sexual orientation, etc. If necessary, are you willing to hide your sexual orientation? Finding out about the laws of the host country, would you re-consider your options? See Resources.
- If you are "out" in USA, reflect on what it means to leave behind a support system of friends and family. Being glbt abroad has been described as some as a second coming out. How will you re-establish your identity overseas?
- For further information, talk with other people who have been in your situation abroad, preferably in your host country. See the resources section for books that pertain to glbt travel.



A sojourn abroad is a time of personal growth and discovery. Many transformations in personal development and self-awareness can occur, prompted by the fact that the restrictions of the home culture have been removed. Returning home is therefore a time of transition that can be difficult.

**Before re-entering, consider:**

- If you chose to come out while abroad, how will this affect your return to friends and family? Will you be able to re-integrate these relationships upon your return or will you need to find a different supportive community?
- Be aware before you come back home of the ways in which you may have changed both independent and as a result of your coming out.
- Consider the implications of coming out when back home. Often family and friends may want to dismiss your sexual orientation as a temporary due to the experience abroad, rather than acknowledge a lifelong identity.

## Time Saving Tips

### Before the Airport:

**Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport.** Visit [www.TSATravelTips.us](http://www.TSATravelTips.us) for a complete list.

**Leave gifts unwrapped.** They may need to be opened for inspection.

**Avoid wearing clothing, jewelry, and accessories that contain metal.** Metal items may set off the alarm on the metal detector.

**Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage.** Checked baggage screening equipment will damage the undeveloped film.

**Carry-on baggage is frequently limited to one carry-on bag plus one personal item.**

Personal items include laptops, purses, backpacks, briefcases, or camera cases. *Remember 1 + 1*

**Place identification tags in and on all of your baggage.** Don't forget your laptop computer.

### At the Airport:

*Before you get in line...*

**Do NOT bring drinks or other liquids to the security checkpoint** unless they are in paper or polystyrene (e.g. Styrofoam), sealed or seal-able/spill-proof containers

*Once you get in line...In, Out, Off*

**Put metal IN your carry-on bag.** This includes jewelry, loose change, keys, mobile phones, papers, and PDAs.

**Take OUT your laptop computer.** Place it in a bin, separate from its carrying case.

**Take OFF your outer coat.** Place it in a bin. Suit Jackets and blazers do not have to be removed, unless requested by the screener.



*This information brought to you courtesy of  
Transportation Security Administration  
[www.TSATravelTips.us](http://www.TSATravelTips.us)*

## **Final Checklist of Student Responsibilities**

### **Pre-Departure:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Please be sure you turned everything in to your study abroad specialist before departure (Copy of Passport, Copy of Acceptance Letter to host institution, Course Approvals, etc.).
- \_\_\_\_\_ For informational purposes only, please provide a copy of your travel itinerary to the Office of Study Abroad before you leave. This may be uploaded in Broncos Abroad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Drop any non-study abroad courses in which you are currently registered for during the term(s) of study abroad. In addition, make sure your account is free of any “holds” so that the Office of Study Abroad can enroll/register you for Study Abroad credits.

### **During Study Abroad:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Within a week of your arrival, fill out and submit the Address Abroad questionnaire that will deploy in your Broncos Abroad application (this is not required for students on faculty-led programs).
- \_\_\_\_\_ You can take certain courses for CR/NC if those courses do NOT count for WMU major or minor requirements and ONLY IF you notify your study abroad advisor of your desire to do so by the time frame outline on your course approval form.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Registering for WMU classes is your responsibility while abroad. If for some reason you cannot register online, then try to find a friend or relative to do it for you (it is advisable to make arrangements with a family member or friend in advance of your trip, as Internet access/reliability is sometimes difficult from overseas). You may also contact your academic advisor with requests for enrollment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Maintain and routinely check your WMU email address, which will be used by the Office of Study Abroad to make contact with you while overseas. If you cannot communicate from your WMU email address for any reason, YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST inform your study abroad advisor as soon as possible.

### **Upon Return:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ You are responsible for ensuring that the Office of Study Abroad receives an official transcript from the sponsoring/host institution and that the listed courses match the courses and approved equivalencies on the *Course Pre-approval Form*. Courses you take at the host institution for which you did not secure approval with transfer as ELECTIVE CREDIT at WMU, unless you inform the Office otherwise and secure the appropriate course approvals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The official transcript from the sponsoring/host institution must indicate a grade for every course taken, otherwise it will not transfer to WMU.