

Study Abroad Pre-Departure Handbook



International Center

<http://studyabroad.iit.edu>
studyabroad@iit.edu

2010-11

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Dear IIT Student,

Congratulations, you have been accepted to study abroad! What do you need to do now?

Most students are excited, anxious, and often times “unaware” of the study abroad process. This is why the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) created the *Study Abroad Student and Family Handbook*. The Handbook is designed to provide complete transparency of the study abroad process - for both students and family members alike. The contents of the Handbook include where to start, the study abroad application process, health and safety, finances, what to do while abroad (and not do!), and readjusting to life back in the U.S. upon re-entry. Additionally, as you will see from the information provided, there are many offices at IIT that will help make all the planning and hard work worthwhile – most importantly – for you to have a successful study abroad experience!

On behalf of the International Center at IIT, congratulations on starting the process of studying abroad!

Safe travels!

Emergency Contact Information

International Center’s Study Abroad Coordinator:	312-567-3694
IIT Public Safety Non-emergency:	312-808-6300
IIT Public Safety Emergency:	312-808-6363
IIT Health Insurance Plan—Chickering:	301-656-4152
Worldwide Assistance (call collect)	202-659-7777

Contacts

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Section I: Before You Leave

International Center Documentation

You must leave the following forms with the IIT International Center prior to departure:

- Signed travel abroad waiver;
- Emergency contact details;
- Copy of your passport identification page;
- Copy of your health insurance card *
- Copy of your travel insurance policy;
- Signed pre-departure checklist.

You will also be required to submit your contact information in the host country while you are abroad, including address, cell phone number, apartment phone number and an emergency contact person.

*** Make sure you confirm in writing that insurance coverage extends to international travel**

Documents to Take Abroad

- **This Pre-Departure Handbook**
This very handbook is an essential companion for your study abroad experience. Make sure you read it thoroughly before you go and keep it handy for reference while you are abroad. You will also receive a PDF version of this document before you leave.
 - **ISIC Card**
You can get an International Student Card (ISIC) from <http://www.myisic.com>. It is the only document internationally accepted as proof of your student status. Although you are not required to carry an ISIC card some of the benefits of ISIC are:
 - Access to special student airfares;
 - Student prices on coach, rail and ferry travel abroad;
 - Access to the worldwide student travel office network;
 - Savings on accommodation, sightseeing and entertainment;
 - Access to the ISIC 24 hour free helpline - this can help with health, legal and general emergencies.
 - **Approved Course List (With Bonus Courses)**
For ease of reference, make sure you carry your approved list of courses with you. This will be particularly useful if and when courses you have selected become unavailable and you have to refer to your bonus selections.
 - **Copies of Documents/Spare Passport Photos**
Passport photos will always be required – we advise you to take some with you so you don't suddenly have to find a photo booth in an unknown city! Also take copies of your passport, insurance certificates, birth certificate, etc. as this will help enormously if you need to replace them at any point. A driver's license can also be a useful form of identification and proof of age.
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Researching Your Destination

Make sure you read everything that is sent to you from your host university and IIT - remember that it is more than being physically prepared; you also need to be mentally prepared. The more you know about what to expect at your host institution/country before you go, the easier you will find it to settle in, and the less likely you will be to suffer from culture shock when you get there.

Cultural Education

To learn about the culture of your host country, take advantage of the resources here at IIT and in Chicago. At IIT's International Center, you may ask to be paired with students from your host country. They will be able to introduce you to the culture and language. Their first-hand experience of the host country and institution will be valuable as you prepare to depart.

Student organizations and other cultural programs are also a great way to meet students from your host country. The International Center, the Office of Multicultural Student Services and countless student organizations host many programs each semester. Consult the following sites for a calendar of events:

- International Student Organizations
http://www.iit.edu/student_life/organizations/current_organizations.shtml
- International Center
<http://www.iit.edu/~internat/updates%20and%20resources/updates.php>
- Office of Multicultural Student Services <http://www.iit.edu/omss/>
- Student Life http://www.iit.edu/student_life/
- University Calendar <http://webservices.iit.edu/calendar/>

In addition to participating in international events on campus, take advantage of the awesome opportunities in the diverse Chicago neighborhoods. Attend festivals, ethnic restaurants, and cultural centers, such as:

- German Cultural Center <http://www.dankhaus.com/>
- Alliance Française <http://www.af-chicago.org/app/homepage.asp>
- Goethe Institut Chicago <http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/chi/enindex.htm>
- Chicago Cultural Center
http://www.explorechicago.org/city/en/supporting_narrative/attractions/dca_tourism/Chicago_Cultural_Center.html

To get the most from your study abroad experience, research the culture, language, and laws before departing. Buy a good travel book to research your host country. Lonely Planet Travel Guides <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/> and Let's Go Travel Guides (<http://www.letsgo.com/>) are both excellent resources. You can also find country-specific information published by the United States Department of State at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html.

Language Education

Regardless of your current language proficiency, it is a good idea to strengthen your skills or introduce yourself to the language. Some familiarity with the language will strongly enhance your experience abroad even if your classes are offered in English. The Galvin Library has copies of the Rosetta Stone levels 1 & 2 in Arabic, Chinese, German, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. For full details visit the Galvin Library or see <http://library.iit.edu/language/>.

There are also many language institutes, such as Berlitz, downtown. Local community colleges or cultural centers may also offer language instruction for a lower price.

Other Ways to Research

- Review the host institution's website
- Research the local conditions, laws, legal system, political landscape, weather and culture of your host country
- Read the questionnaires in the Study Abroad Office – these give invaluable hints, tips and feedback from previous Study Abroad students
- Contact any other students who are going to the same university or area as you – meet up before you go, arrange to travel together, help each other with paperwork
- Contact last year's study abroaders – emails are available via returned questionnaires, or the Study Abroad Office can forward emails for you.

Financial Matters

Tuition Fees

- If you are studying as an exchange student for a semester, you pay tuition directly to IIT.
- If you are studying as a study abroad student at a partner institution, you pay tuition to the host university.
- You should make arrangements to pay their tuition fees before they leave.

Financial Aid Award Eligibility

Study Abroad Program (Consortium Agreement) vs. Exchange Program

	Study Abroad Program	Exchange Program
Institutional Scholarships	No	Yes
Federal Grants ¹	Yes	Yes
Federal Loans ¹	Yes	Yes
Federal Work Study ¹	No	No
State Grants ¹	No	No
Institutional Loans	No	Yes
Private Loans ²	Yes	Yes

Notes:

¹These awards are only offered if you have completed FAFSA for the academic year of the study abroad program or exchange program.

If FAFSA has not been completed, this must be done to be considered for any of these awards.

² You must have eligibility in your budget to apply for this loan.

Remember to renew your FAFSA application while abroad (if abroad for the spring semester only). Contact the Office of Financial Aid for more details.

Money Management

This is a very important area that will require some research. Don't leave it to the last minute! Firstly, check the expiry date of all your bankcards. They don't take long to renew, but it would be more difficult to do it from abroad.

A combination of ATM card withdrawals and credit card charges are often the most convenient means of accessing money abroad. You may want to leave your banking account number with your family in the case that you need additional funds transferred to your account. Some people even choose to add a parent to their bank account – in case of emergency, they can add money directly into your account rather than wire money.

Contact your bank and credit card companies to alert them of your travel plans, including the dates and location of your stay abroad. You will want to ensure that you will be able to use your debit and credit cards without holds on your account. You should also inquire as to any limits on your debit card ATM withdrawals or fees per use in an another country.

You should also obtain an international emergency number from the company should your card be stolen while you are abroad. Additionally, make sure that you have a plan to pay your credit card bills while abroad. Setting up online banking before you go is a great way to stay on top of your balances, which can be difficult to check in foreign ATMs.

Traveler's checks are another option for accessing funds while abroad. Be sure to leave the check numbers with family before departing in the case that the checks are stolen while you are abroad. If the checks do get stolen, you will be able to replace them as long as you have the check number. Additionally, keep the receipt separate from the checks for this reason. Be aware that there may be high fees to cash traveler's checks.

You will want to obtain local currency before departing to cover any initial expenses such as food and transportation to your residence. Carrying cash while abroad will be necessary, but you should be careful as you would in any setting to secure it safely at all times.

Banking

If you are spending a long duration abroad, opening a local bank account is another option. You will want to consult your host university and do the research. Make sure that you have set up appropriate transfers and completed the necessary paperwork before leaving and that you bring all necessary documentation with you when you depart.

Ask your bank at home to provide a letter saying what a great account holder you have been and that you would be the ideal person to open an account in a foreign country! It's a standard letter provided by your bank and unless you have a terrible past history of banking, most banks should provide this for their customers. Also, ask your bank if they have any partnerships with foreign banks where it would be straight forward to open an account.

Information about banking may be sent to you along with all the other orientation information from your host university. It is often useful to ask for advice from previous students as to which banks they would recommend. Not all banks will accept you as a customer and you are unlikely to have overdraft facilities on a foreign bank account. It is worth checking if your US bank has any relationships with banks in your host country.

Useful documents to take with you, which may be needed for opening a bank account, are:

- Birth certificate;
- Copies of your passport;
- Passport photos.

Insurance

Travel and health insurance are your responsibilities and you must make sure you have adequate protection. Have you read and understood the small-print and arranged extra cover where necessary?

Health Insurance

It is imperative that you have health insurance that will cover you abroad. If you do not have insurance through IIT, confirm with your provider that the insurance will cover you in your host country for the duration of your stay abroad. Additionally, it is important that your insurance will cover emergencies abroad, including coverage for medical evacuation (not covered by most domestic policies). If your insurance will not cover you abroad, it is strongly encouraged for you to obtain additional coverage. The following providers offer travel and health insurance, but more providers may be found online:

- Cultural Insurance Services International www.culturalinsurance.com
- US Study Abroad Health Plan: www.hthworldwide.com
- CMI Insurance: www.studyabroadinsurance.com

Check with your insurance provider before leaving for detailed procedures and a list of doctors covered in the host country where you are visiting. Note that U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

Travel Insurance

Don't forget to buy cover! Just because you have emergency health insurance it does not mean you will be covered for delayed or cancelled flights or loss of luggage or money while you travel in-country. The internet has competitive travel insurance deals that are usually cheaper than most travel agents. However make sure that you always read the small print before purchasing any cover.

Try to ensure that your insurance covers cancellation of flights due to illness or other unforeseeable circumstances and also emergency repatriation. The ISIC card, mentioned earlier in this guide, offers a modicum of coverage, but you and your family may elect to obtain additional protection.

Accommodation

Host University Accommodation

University housing varies widely across the different host universities, so we advise you to start researching the issue of finding accommodation at least a couple of months prior to the beginning of your program. Some suggestions of how you can find out if your host university offers accommodation are:

- Host university's website;
- Student feedback reports, located in the Study Abroad Office;
- Previous and current exchange students who will be able to offer advice on how they found accommodation and they may also be able to provide contact details of their landlord.

Some students have found it easier to arrive at their host destination a couple of weeks before the term starts and to find accommodation then. Some students prefer to email the current exchange students for their advice on housing matters. Whichever way you decide to go about it, we advise you start the process as early as possible.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to find accommodation, not the responsibility of the host university or IIT.

Once your accommodation has been found, send the Study Abroad Office a quick email with your contact details.

IIT Housing

If you have a contract with IIT Housing, you must cancel your room and board with the IIT Housing office directly to avoid paying 100% of housing fees for the abroad semester.

- Visit: http://iit.edu/housing/choices/cancellation_terms.shtml
- Select “Study Abroad” in the drop down menu, as this will waive the cancellation fees.

You must do this prior to December 1. This is not applicable for fall housing.

Passports

Your passport usually should be valid for six months after your return. If you need to renew it, it can take a number of weeks unless you pay for a rush renewal.

If your passport gets lost or stolen while you are abroad, you will need to contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate immediately. For a list of U.S. Embassies and Consulates, go to <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

For easier replacement of lost or stolen passports, we recommend that you carry copies of your passport in checked luggage. Also, leave a copy with your parents and the Study Abroad Office as back-up. When replacing a passport, if you offer a copy to the embassy, it does tend to speed up the replacement process.

Visas

A visa is a permission to enter and stay in a foreign country. The government of the country you are going to—not the U.S. government—issues visas. Visas are usually stamped into your passport, so you’ll need your passport before you can obtain a visa.

As soon as you receive your acceptance packet from your host university, make sure to check with the foreign consulate of your destination country on their visa requirements for students. You can also do so by using the following link: www.embassyworld.com.

Each country has different rules and charges for visa applications. Some countries may require a medical examination. Fees will vary by country. Please call the nearest consulate in Chicago for specific application and procedures. The International Center provides assistance to students applying for student visas by issuing a visa letter and aiding in the preparation for the visa appointment.

U.S. embassies are generally located in capital cities only; travelers in other locations will have to visit the U.S. consulate in the capital city nearest them.

Country-specific information is available for every country of the world. The website <http://travel.state.gov/travel> includes 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.

Flights

The Study Abroad Office **does not** recommend that you book your flight until you have secured your visa (if required). However, if you do decide to take the risk (e.g. to secure a cheap deal) you are advised to find out how much your airline will charge you for a cancellation/if they'll let you alter departure dates and how much that will cost you. It is possible for you not make your original flight due to delays with visa applications.

Packing Tips

- Lay out everything you plan to take on the bed and cut it in half. You will have to carry everything you pack!
- Carry your passport, flight information, and other important documentation in your carry-on luggage. Do not pack it where you cannot access it at border or customs upon arrival.
- Some international airlines have restrictions on the content and weight of luggage. Verify restrictions with the specific airline you are using, including connecting airlines. These requirements differ by airline and change frequently. Please to consult your airline's web site for the current policy. For federal guidelines regarding carry-on baggage, see <http://www.tsa.gov/>.
- Make sure your covered luggage tabs are labeled with your name, address and phone numbers. Also, place your contact information inside each piece of luggage.
- Don't carry all of your valuables in the same place.
- Leave a copy of itinerary, passport identification page, driver's license, insurance documents, medical prescriptions and credit cards with friends or family. Pack another set of copies in a place separate from where you carry the originals.
- Buy a money belt that can go around your waist or neck to hold important items.
- Have local currency available when you land in your host country. You may need to make immediate purchases of food and local transportation, and some vendors may not accept international credit/debit cards.
- Bed sizes abroad are often different to the USA - don't take bed linen with you - it might not fit.
- Remember that electrical goods may not work on foreign voltage systems. Pack converters and adapters for things you cannot do without – chargers for cameras or cell phones – and consider chipping in with roommates to purchase items like hair dryers or irons when you arrive.
- It is a good idea to take a few small mementos of home with you - photos of friends and family will brighten your room and remind you of what you're temporarily leaving behind. In addition, T-shirts or tokens from IIT or your hometown make nice gifts to new friends in your host country!

Pack List - Carry-on

Check	Item
	Passport and any necessary visas
	Airline tickets
	U.S. and foreign currency (and maybe traveler's checks)
	Copies of all important documents and emergency contact information
	Credit and debit cards
	State driver's license
	International Driving Permit (if driving abroad)
	International calling card (if appropriate)
	Prescription medication in original container, back-up supply and letter from doctor
	Instructions for treating any allergies or unique medical conditions
	Camera (if applicable)
	Laptop (if applicable)
	Cell phone and charger
	Extra change of clothing and undergarments
	Wash cloth and small bar of soap
	Eye glasses or contact lenses
	Books/magazines

Pack List - Checked Luggage

Check	Item
	Extra copies of important documents and emergency contact information
	Seasonally- and culturally-appropriate clothing, undergarments, bathing suit, shoes and accessories
	Toiletries
	Eye glass repair kit*
	Nail clipper*
	Shaving kit*
	Over-the-counter pain relief
	Small umbrella
	Extra sweater and scarf to cover arms and hair for certain holy sites
	Travel alarm clock
	Small purse or pouch
	Travel plug adaptor
	Converter or transformer for 110-volt electrical devices
	Sunscreen
	Small flashlight

* May get confiscated if placed in carry-on baggage for security purposes. Check www.tsa.gov for updates on restricted items.

Section II: While You're Away

Academics

Enrolling for Courses

Some universities will expect you to enroll for classes before you arrive. Other universities have a manual enrollment system and you will not be able to register until you are physically at your host institution. Some universities will not publish the course catalog until a few weeks prior to the academic year starting although you can generally check which courses were running the previous year on the host's website.

You may find that some courses you want to take are full, or have restrictions on them. It is often worth going to talk to the department in person to see if they can fit you in or not. You should ensure you have some backup choices, arranged with IIT's Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, in case you cannot get into your first choice of courses.

You may be pleasantly surprised or incredibly frustrated by the registration process, but in the majority of cases it will soon sort itself out and you can settle down to your studies. If you experience any significant problems with registering and choosing modules (for example if you are still having difficulties registering after week two), you must contact the Study Abroad/International Office at your host university who should be able to help. If not, contact the Study Abroad Office at IIT, who should be able to assist.

Course Changes

If you need to change a course while you are abroad, please email the new course number and description to Greg Welter, welter@iit.edu, at the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs to make sure the credits are transferable.

Transcripts

Your study abroad classes will count as pass/fail transfer credits. Your GPA will not be impacted by your academic performance while abroad. Please make sure that you have arranged for an official transcript to be sent to the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs as soon as you have completed your coursework. Failure to do so will result in a delay in transferring your credits. Once the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs receives your transcript from the host university, and you have attended the re-entry session at IIT, the credits will be added to your IIT transcript. For the majority of programs, the course description on your transcript will read, "exchange" or "study abroad program."

Registering for IIT Classes While Abroad

You are responsible for registering for all of your courses for the following term while you are abroad. You can access the timetables and online registration at www.iit.edu.

Adjusting to the Academic System

Depending on your host country, you may encounter an academic system that is very different from the one you are accustomed to here at IIT. For example, many European university classes are large in size and do not require students to attend all classes. However, you will be responsible for the material in a single test at the end of the term. This will serve as the only assessment of the class. Faculty may not be as accessible as they are here in the States through office hours and personal meetings. These differences can create significant challenges and as such, you are encouraged to research the academic system of your host country and carefully consider if you are prepared for the academic environment at the host university.

Suggestions for succeeding in a new academic system:

- Get to know your peers; they will be able to tell you what to expect and share study tips.
 - Make a plan and manage your time carefully.
 - Research the writing style of your host country's academic style. If it is unfamiliar to you, take advantage of any writing classes that are offered.
-

Code of Conduct

You are a representative of IIT and, as such, are expected to live, work and study accordingly. You also have a duty to your host university to behave responsibly. All rules and procedures stated in the following also apply to students abroad and you should familiarize yourself with these documents if you have not done so already:

IIT's Code of Ethics http://ethics.iit.edu/iitcode/Version_6.2.pdf;
IIT's Student Handbook http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/.

Especially important within the IIT Student Affairs Handbook is the Code of Conduct http://www.iit.edu/student_affairs/handbook/information_and_regulations/code_of_conduct.shtml.

You are also responsible for abiding by the rules and procedures of the host university. Additionally, when you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction. Local laws and penalties are often different from U.S. laws and customs. You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor infractions in the United States, including:

- Drug violations;
- Photographs/videos taken without permission, such as that of government buildings;
- Purchasing antiques controlled by the government.

It is the student's responsibility to know these laws and regulations, as he or she will be subject to them while abroad. Country-specific information can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html.

Academic Difficulties

Should you have any academic difficulties that might prevent the satisfactory completion of the placement, you should inform the Study Abroad Office and the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs at IIT, as well as the host university, as soon as possible.

You are also responsible for keeping a complete record of what you have studied at the host institution, including copies of all written work and any feedback you receive from professors regarding your academic progress.

Notice of Withdrawal

If you decide to withdraw from the period abroad once you have arrived at your host university then you must contact the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs for advice. If you withdraw after just a couple of weeks at your host university it may be possible for you to slot back into the regular IIT semester, however if you withdraw later on in your placement then you need to seek advice about your options.

Feedback Forms

The Study Abroad Office will send you feedback forms via email, which you should complete regarding the experiences you have had before leaving and while you are there – this is valuable information that is passed onto future students also going through the same trauma over decisions as yourself!

Communication

Email

It is important to keep in touch with IIT while overseas. All correspondence from the Study Abroad Office and the various IIT departments and offices will come to you via your IIT email account, so it is vital that you check this account regularly while abroad.

To find email addresses of other students or members of staff at IIT, use: <http://phonebook.iit.edu/>

Phones

The cell phone standard, Global Services for Mobiles (GSM) has been adopted in most countries and therefore using a GSM phone will substantially decrease your expenses. You may purchase a phone and pre-paid SIM card once you have arrived in your host country. You may add to your airtime by purchasing an airtime voucher. If you plan on using your current cell phone, smart phone, or iPhone, check with the carrier to inquire after any applicable fees. Know the country codes and make a plan with family and friends for how you will contact each other. The most affordable means of calling home will be Skype (<http://www.skype.com/>) or GoogleTalk (<http://www.google.com/talk/>), both of which are Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). For both programs, you will need to download the software, but once you do you will be able to call (or video chat to) friends and family at home for free.

Blogs & Photo Sharing

Maintaining a blog while you are abroad can be a great way to process your experiences, share with family and friends, and create a personal record for yourself once you return home.

Suggested sites include Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>), Word Press (<http://wordpress.org/>) and Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com/start>).

Students should also consider photo-sharing sites as a way to connect with family and friends.

Suggested sites, in addition to the blog sites include, Shutterfly (<http://www.shutterfly.com/>), Picasa (<http://picasa.google.com>), Snapfish, (<http://www.snapfish.com/>), Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/>), and Kodak (<http://www.kodakgallery.com>).

Health

Remember to take care of your health while abroad. While it may seem obvious, it can be easy to forget once abroad. Neglecting your health has the potential to negatively impact your study abroad experience. Follow through with the plans you and your physician at home made for you. Remember to get enough sleep and exercise, eat nutritiously and avoid risky behavior. In addition, it will be critical that you are attentive to your emotional needs as studying abroad can create feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

Doctors

Visit your physician before you leave for a check-up and speak with them about your upcoming study abroad experience.

Once abroad, if you are ill or injured, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a list of local physicians and medical facilities. At your request, consular officers will help you contact family or friends. If necessary, a consul can assist in the transfer of funds from family or friends in the United States. Payment of hospital and other medical expenses is your responsibility.

For non-emergency treatment such as a visit to a doctor when you have an upset stomach, go to the doctor and seek treatment. Depending on your health insurance, you may have to pay a fee upfront and then claim a reimbursement from your health insurance provider. A claim has to be reported immediately following treatment.

Emergencies

In case of an emergency, you need to go to a local physician, clinic or hospital without delay and call the following numbers:

- Worldwide Assistance (call collect): 202-659-7777
 - IIT Health Insurance Plan: 301-656-4152 (Chickering)
-

Dental Care

Bear in mind that dental care will not be covered by most health insurance policies and you are going to be away for a significant length of time. Make sure you have a check-up at your dentist before you leave the country.

Eye Care

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, you should also have a check-up at your opticians for an up-to-date prescription.

Prescriptions

You should bring enough of any current prescription medication (including the contraceptive pill) and vitamins to last throughout your stay. For each prescription, including eyeglass prescriptions, carry a photocopy of the written prescription or a letter from your physician stating that you are required to take the medication, in case you get stopped at customs.

If it is a controlled substance, you may need to notify officials at the U.S. Embassy in the host country. Such restrictions can be found online through the U.S. Department of State's website (under Country Travel Information by Region), <http://travel.state.gov/travel>.

Vaccinations

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publishes guidelines for immunizations and other health precautions for travelers. Visit www.cdc.gov/travel for more information. You can also consult with a travel specialist for more detailed assessments in addition to consulting with a medical physician.

Make sure you have had all necessary vaccinations, not only for the country you will be studying in, but also any countries you plan to travel to during the holidays. Speak to your health clinic about the requirements for your destination/s.

Other Health Precautions

- If you have a medical condition that is not easily identifiable (diabetes, epilepsy, severe allergies), you should wear a medic-alert bracelet while you are abroad. If you have a medical problem that could be aggravated by conditions abroad (i.e., asthma), consider carefully how you will deal with the problem abroad and discuss it with your physician before you leave home.
 - Find out if water is safe to drink in the countries to which you will be traveling. Purify unsafe water before you drink it. Make sure water bottles come sealed when you buy them. Remember that ice can also be unsafe, as well as the water you use to brush your teeth.
 - Be aware that AIDS is a major health concern in many countries. Avoid injections and blood transfusions, as well as tattoos and piercings while abroad if AIDS is a concern in the region of your host country.
 - Use protection if you chose to be sexually active.
-

Safety Considerations While Abroad

While abroad, you should take the same safety precautions you would in any city with which you are unfamiliar. Additionally, as a foreigner you may be an increased target to pickpocket scams. Always be aware of your surroundings and your personal belongings. Monitor safety warnings and alerts in your host country and any country to which you plan to travel (<http://travel.state.gov>).

Make sure that you attend any security briefings organized by your host university and pay careful attention to advice given. Discuss safety precautions with local students and always remember that it is better to be overcautious in the first few weeks as you adapt to a new environment. Ensure that your new accommodation is secure and ask your landlord to fit new locks if existing ones are inadequate. Some universities offer students free personal alarms and it is wise to carry one especially at night. Do not make yourself a target by having items such as cell phones and laptops on open display especially after dark and always make sure that you stick to well-lit areas both on campus and off.

Specific safety suggestions for students currently abroad include:

- Register your travel with the U.S. Department of State so that you may be contacted if need be, whether because of a family emergency in the United States, or because of a crisis in the area in which you are traveling. <https://travelregistration.state.gov>;
- Stay informed of local laws and customs;
- Do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry;
- Do not carry large amounts of cash;
- Do not leave your luggage unattended;
- Do not flash large amounts of money when making a transaction;
- Ensure that your credit card has been returned to you after each transaction;
- Keep passport, cash, and credit cards in a secure location such as an inside pocket or a shoulder bag, not in easily accessible pockets or bags;
- Be aware of any group of people who create a distraction;
- Try to act purposeful even if you are lost. Ask individuals of authority for directions;
- Only take taxis clearly identified and confirm the cost of your ride before departure.

Personal Emergencies

In order to prepare for any potential emergencies abroad, you should locate local emergency numbers and carry them with you at all times. If you find yourself in an emergency, call the local police and host university contact before calling IIT. They will be better positioned to assist you. The U.S. Department of State maintains a published list of emergency numbers by country at http://studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/911_ABROAD.pdf. After you have done so, you may reach one of the following numbers:

International Center (office hours):	001 312-567-3680
IIT Public Safety (emergencies outside office hours):	001 312-808-6363
IIT Public Safety (non-emergencies outside office hours):	001 312-808-6300

If you do not have access to your emergency card or if the number is incorrect, **112** is the international emergency number for GSM mobile phones. By dialing this number, you will be redirected to the local emergency responders.

Emergency Plans

You will want to create a plan should an emergency occur while you are abroad. What plan do you and your parents have should you find yourself in an emergency or become ill? How will you contact home? At what point would you return home or would your family travel to your host country? Do your parents have passports should they need to travel to your host country? What is your plan should an emergency occur at home?

Answer these questions before you go abroad:

- What buses or trains can I take to get to the hospital, consulate, or police station?
 - What are the local emergency, police, consulate, and hospital numbers?
 - Who are my personal emergency contacts and how will I reach them?
 - Do my personal emergency contacts know what I want them to do in an emergency?
 - What is my back-up emergency plan?
 - What financial reserves will I have and how will I access them?
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Travel Warnings and National Emergencies

In the event of a political, social, health or natural emergency, the International Center at IIT will be in close contact with the international studies office at your host institution. Be sure to remain in contact with the nearest U.S. Embassy or consulate as well as with the international studies offices.

In case of emergency situations arising such as natural disaster, war, civic unrest and threats to your personal security:

1. Immediately after a situation arises

- Register with the U.S. Embassy in your host country, informing them of your whereabouts and contact details.
- Monitor U.S. State Department travel warnings – www.travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html
- Maintain regular contact with key people – host university, Study Abroad Office at IIT and family in the U.S. or elsewhere – and keep them informed of your whereabouts and movements.
- Monitor email regularly – the Study Abroad Office will make all contact using your IIT email (and any web-based email address you provide us with before departure). If you have a cell phone, inform the Study Abroad Office of your number and keep the Study Abroad Office number programmed into your phone (+1-312-567-3694).
- Keep a low profile and be cautious.

2. Planning a response

- Make a decision in collaboration with embassy representatives, on-site coordinators and the SAO.
- Communicate all decisions to key people once action is decided on.
- If possible avoid traveling alone.
- Keep everybody informed of your whereabouts if possible including your arrival at a safe location.

Legal Emergencies

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction. You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor infractions in the United States, including:

- Drug violations (such as marijuana, cocaine, prescription drugs, etc).
- Photography/video (such as of government buildings, personnel). It is important to ask permission before taking photographs and/or video footage.
- Purchasing antiques that are controlled by the government; ask about or investigate the antiquities laws of your host country before you purchase an antique and export it out of the country.

Should you find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a consular officer immediately. Consular officers cannot serve as attorneys or give legal advice, but if you are arrested, they can advise you of your rights under local laws and refer you to local attorneys.

Do not assume, however, that because you are a national of another country that you are exempt from local laws, or that the embassy can get you out of trouble.

You should also note that the study abroad office prohibits the consumption of alcohol to any student under the age of 21, regardless of local laws.

Making the Most of Your Study Abroad Experience

Travel Plans While Abroad

Traveling throughout your host country is an exciting part of any study abroad experience. However, try not to spend every weekend outside of your host city. You are there to immerse yourself in a culture. Explore the surroundings of your new home, make friends with the locals, and really try to get a feel for the city.

When planning ahead for your travel plans while abroad it is best to keep an open itinerary. By being flexible you will be able to take advantage of many great opportunities that come up as you meet people and experience the culture. You will also be able to take advantage of those important student discounts!

If you travel to other countries while abroad, you must leave a detailed itinerary with your roommate, family, and/or IIT's Study Abroad Advisor.

There are a number of cheap airlines operating in Europe, such as Ryan Air (www.ryanair.com/en), Jet2 (www.jet2.com) and EasyJet (www.easyjet.com/). These are great alternatives to rail travel.

If you plan on driving abroad, obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) from <http://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpf.html>

Don't forget to use your Lonely Planet (or similar) books. Your new friends may also be excellent guides to local attractions – or possibly their own hometowns!

Heritage Seekers

Students with family living abroad may decide to meet or re-connect with these individuals and explore family history while studying abroad. This experience will be greatly enhanced by research conducted prior to departure. Students are encouraged to do the necessary research, contact family members and communicate their plans well in advance.

Competitions

The Study Abroad Office runs an annual "Photo and Essay Competition" with prizes for the top three entries. The Study Abroad Office will send you reminders about this competition throughout the year and the prizes will be awarded upon your return.

Try to get a photo of yourself in IIT gear at a famous attraction or in your host culture. Journaling may also help you spark an idea for a great essay.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is the confusion, anxiety and irritability that often results from time spent in a new culture paired with isolation from the home culture. It is to be expected, so don't worry if it happens to you! Many students are surprised by how homesick they feel in their first few weeks overseas. It can be quite stressful getting used to interacting in a new language, not being able to go home for the weekend and getting used to the often less personal academic environment of the bigger universities.

In actual fact, culture shock is an important step in adjusting to and understanding the new culture. In most cases getting over it is simply a matter of time and nothing to worry about. It is recommended that you get involved in activities planned for exchange/international students at your university and also join clubs and societies. These are the best ways to meet other people in a similar situation and to immerse yourself in the environment of the host country.

Stages of Cultural Adjustment

- **Initial Euphoria:** excitement experienced upon arrival and for initial days.
 - **Irritability:** frustration from differences experienced in foreign city and challenges adapting to a new way of life. The tendency exists to only associate with other Americans.
 - **Gradual Adjustment:** the culture slowly becomes familiar and one becomes accustomed to new cultural norms.
 - **Adaptation and Biculturalism:** you now function comfortably in the new culture and may even feel that you are a part of the new culture.
 - **Re-Entry Phase:** the realization when you return home that you have changed. This is often a change that family and friends do not understand.
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Suggestions for Cultural Adjustment

Remember: there is no "best way" to deal with culture shock; it always depends on the individual. Below are examples of how some students will cope:

- Prepare well for your experience;
- Know how to sort out various practical problems on your arrival and who can help you;
- Make yourself aware of any obvious culture differences;
- Always keep an open mind and do not expect to find things as you have them at home;
- Search out new experiences and friends. Meet local and other international students;
- Remember that you have traveled far to learn about and experience a new culture, and to represent your country and school;
- Do not judge the people of a country by one person or one experience;
- Treat everyone you meet with respect;
- Keep a sense of humor about yourself and the situation;
- Listen and observe rather than merely seeing or hearing;
- Acknowledge that there are different conceptions of time;
- Spend time daily to reflect in order to process your experiences;
- Make use of your host university's support system; i.e. student affairs, study abroad office;
- Stay in touch with family and friends;
- Keep in mind that most people only DREAM about having this experience.

Section III: Returning to IIT

Transcripts

Some institutions will automatically mail IIT a copy of your transcript in the summer after your period of Study Abroad. However, other institutions require you to order these transcripts, or will mail them directly to you rather than to IIT. Please ensure that:

- You pay all outstanding debts to the host university – they will not release your transcript if you have library fines/haven't paid all your health centre bills/owe any money to the accommodation office, etc.
 - You order a transcript to be sent to the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs or you forward an official, unopened copy of your transcript to the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs.
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Reverse Culture Shock

Reverse culture shock is the process of re-adjusting to life in your home country after living abroad. This is often unexpected and difficult, but it is unique to each person. It may be more difficult than going abroad. You may find returning to your friends at home and at IIT quite strange to begin with. Most likely you will have immersed yourself in a different culture, both educationally and socially, and you may find IIT is quite different from what you got used to while abroad. You may find that your friends from IIT are no longer around as they may have finished their courses and there could be more pressure on you as it is your final year. These aren't things to worry about but it's worth bearing them in mind if you feel a little down when you return.

Some symptoms you might be feeling:

- Alienation/withdrawal;
- Boredom, frustration, uncertainty;
- Negativity towards American behaviour;
- Reverse homesickness;
- Feelings of resistance toward family and friends.

Some skills you have gained:

- Personal growth and change;
- New knowledge, skills and behavioral patterns learned while abroad;
- New Relationships with family and friends;
- Different academic system and academic independence.

Stages of reverse culture shock

- 1st stage: excited to return home. Still in host country
- 2nd stage: out of place, irritable and frustrated, depressed, disoriented
- 3rd stage: gradual readjustment to life at home and fall back into old routines

Stay Involved After You Return!

A good way to deal with reverse culture shock is to simply acknowledge your adjustment and maintain a sense of humor (if applicable!). Keeping in touch with friends from your host culture will also help.

Another way to combat any reverse culture shock you may be experiencing is to share your experience with not only your friends, but also prospective study abroad students and study abroad alumni. There will be many venues to do this, including activities within OMSS and the International Center, such as the Study Abroad Fair and International Fest. You can also get to know international students on campus!

It is also very easy to stay multicultural in Chicago, so why not participate in the Cultural Center's activities, volunteer for community service, continue to take language course, join international groups/organizations, and keep up with international issues through newspapers, television, films.

This site has been an excellent resource for other returnees: <http://www.abroadview.org/return/>
Check our appendices for more resources to stay connected your host culture, the study abroad office, and more!

Competitions

The Study Abroad Office runs an annual "Photo and Essay Competition" with prizes for the top three entries. The Study Abroad Office will send you reminders about this competition throughout the year and the prizes will be awarded upon your return.

Who knows? Your work may be featured in future promotions for the International Center, Study Abroad Office, Undergraduate Admissions, or even the IIT Magazine!

Re-Entry Session

All students returning from abroad will be required to attend a re-entry session in the following semester. They are also required to submit a program evaluation.

Career Building

Make sure you use your experience to its full potential by considering the following:

- Market your international experience on your resume and in your interviews
- Work/volunteer overseas
- Consider a career with an international component
- Visit the CMC for resources: www.cmc.iit.edu

Section IV: Appendices

Study Abroad Checklist

Check	Item
	Valid passport
	Visa
	Flight arrangements
	Medical & Travel insurance
	Financial Aid confirmed
	Course selections and approvals
	International Student Identification Card (ISIC)
	Clear all registration holds and make sure outstanding balances are paid
	Registered for EXCH-301 or STDA-301
	Cancel IIT housing by Dec 1
	Make emergency plan
	Research country laws, language, culture, health and safety
	Prepare a financial plan
	Prepare a communication plan for your time abroad
	Leave copies of important documents with family and/or a trustworthy friend at home:
	Passport identification page
	Airline tickets
	Driver's license
	Credit cards
	Serial numbers of any traveler's checks
	Your contact information abroad (addresses & phone numbers)
	Emergency contact information abroad
	Insurance information
	Register your trip at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/
	Check out any appropriate travel warnings, etc. at www.state.gov
	Contact your bank to tell them you are traveling and be aware of your credit limits
	Schedule a complete physical with your physician
	Have a dentist and opticians check-up before you leave
	Have you had all necessary vaccinations?
	Have you got all the prescription medication you will need while abroad, plus a covering letter for Customs officials?
	Be aware of your nearest U.S. embassy: http://usembassy.state.gov
	If you are not a U.S. citizen, consult with an International Student Advisor to make sure your visa and other papers are in order
	Register to vote absentee if you will be abroad during any state or national elections by visiting www.fvap.gov
	If you plan on driving abroad, obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) from http://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpf.html
	Arrange for your phone to work abroad
	Get a small amount of local currency (approx. \$200) in small bills

Online Resources

Abroad View Magazine	http://www.abroadview.org/return/
Blogger	https://www.blogger.com/start
Center for International Education	http://www.cie.uci.edu/prepare/shock.shtml
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/
Chicago Council on Global Affairs	http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/
CMI Insurance Worldwide	http://www.studyabroadinsurance.com/
Cultural Insurance Services International	http://www.culturalinsurance.com/
EasyJet	http://www.easyjet.com/
Embassy World	http://www.embassyworld.com/
Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/
Flickr	http://www.flickr.com/
Global Chicago	http://www.globalchicago.org/
Google Talk	http://www.google.com/talk/
HTH Worldwide	http://www.hthworldwide.com/
IIT Calendar	http://webservices.iit.edu/calendar/
IIT Career Management Center	www.cmc.iit.edu
IIT Galvin Library	http://library.iit.edu/language/
IIT International Center Calendar	http://www.iit.edu/~internat/updates%20and%20resources/updates.php
IIT OMSS	http://www.iit.edu/omss/
IIT Student Life	http://www.iit.edu/student_life/
IIT Student Organizations	http://www.iit.edu/student_life/organizations/current_organizations.shtml
IIT Study Abroad Application Packet	http://studyabroad.iit.edu/forms/Procedures.pdf
IIT Study Abroad Health and Safety Brochure	http://studyabroad.iit.edu/INTL_CENTER_TravelTipsBroch.pdf
IIT Study Abroad Interest Inventory	http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB229MWJAMZV7
IIT Study Abroad Program Types	http://studyabroad.iit.edu/forms/GE3,Partner,Exchange.doc

IIT Study Abroad Scholarships	http://studyabroad.iit.edu/scholarship.php
IIT Study Abroad Semester Program List	http://studyabroad.iit.edu/All.php
IIT Study Abroad Summer Program List	http://studyabroad.iit.edu/summerprograms.php
International Student Identification Card (ISIC)	http://www.myisic.com/
Kodak	http://www.kodakgallery.com
Let's Go Travel Guides	http://www.letsgo.com/
Lonely Planet Travel Guides	http://www.lonelyplanet.com/
Oanda	www.oanda.com
Picasa	http://picasa.google.com
Ryan Air	http://www.ryanair.com/site/EN/
Shutterfly	http://www.shutterfly.com/
Skype	http://www.skype.com/
Snapfish	http://www.snapfish.com/
STA Travel	www.statravel.com
Student Universe	www.studentuniverse.com
Transitions Abroad Magazine	http://transitionsabroad.com/
TSA	http://www.tsa.gov/
United States Department of State	http://travel.state.gov
United States Department of State – Country Specific	http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html
United States Department of State - Students Abroad:	http://studentsabroad.state.gov/
United States Department of State – Emergency Numbers	http://studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/911_ABROAD.pdf
United States Department of State - Pack List	http://studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/Packlist.pdf
United States Department of State –Embassies	http://www.usembassy.gov/
United States Postal Services	http://www.usps.com/passport/welcome.htm .
Wordpress	http://wordpress.org/