

# PRE-DEPARTURE HANDBOOK



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# International Programs Staff

## Center for International Programs

Foy Hall 301

Office Phone: (518) 786 - 5047

Fax: (518) 783 - 4950

Email: [international@siena.edu](mailto:international@siena.edu)

**Br. Brian Belanger, OFM, Ph.D.**

[bbelanger@siena.edu](mailto:bbelanger@siena.edu)

*Director*

**Abi Cavazos, MBA**

[acavazos@siena.edu](mailto:acavazos@siena.edu)

*Associate Director*

**Matt Schiesel, MA**

[mschiesel@siena.edu](mailto:mschiesel@siena.edu)

*Associate Director*

**Angela Youngs**

[ayoungs@siena.edu](mailto:ayoungs@siena.edu)

*Office Coordinator*

*Whatever your academic major or career aspiration may be, a study abroad experience leads to a first-hand understanding of world affairs, languages, cultures and eco-systems that is invaluable in today's interconnected world.*

*As a result of his travels across borders and among peoples of diverse cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religions, Francis of Assisi came to a deep respect for the inherent dignity of all. Inspired by his example, Siena Abroad aims to develop within students the knowledge, generosity and skills which will contribute to the building of a more peaceable and just world.*

# Section 1: Pre-Departure Information

## PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST - BEFORE YOU LEAVE



- ☐ I have read thoroughly all materials sent to me by my study abroad program and by Siena's Center for International Programs, including this Handbook.
- ☐ I have completed all forms and paperwork as required by my program provider and by Siena.
- ☐ I have made sure my passport is valid for at least six months beyond the end of my program.
- ☐ I have obtained all the required visas (if applicable) for my program and the countries I plan to visit. This process can take months to complete, so I will not wait until the last minute!
- ☐ I have reviewed the [State Department's Travel Information Sheet](#) for each country I plan to visit.
- ☐ I have discussed with my physician or counselor any relevant concerns, such as a medical condition, or medications or counseling, and I have communicated with my program abroad about any health or other special need which may require assistance or attention.
- ☐ I have checked with the [Center for Disease Control](#) to see which immunizations are recommended for my program site, if any.
- ☐ I have researched the culture, history, customs and politics of my host country.
- ☐ I know how I will handle money-related matters. I will exchange a small amount of money (\$100-200), so that I will have some local currency when I arrive in-country.
- ☐ I have enrolled my study abroad trip in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) through the U.S. Department of State.

# PRE-DEPARTURE LOGISTICS

As you have probably realized, there is quite a bit to do before you depart. Aside from health, safety, and finances, there are some very practical items you need to handle as well.

## Passport

Your passport should remain valid for at least 6 months (and preferably one year, which is required by some countries) after the end date of your program. It is a good idea to make several photocopies of your passport and keep them in separate locations. This way, if you lose your passport, you will have a record of your passport number and other information that will help to expedite replacement. Leave one copy of your passport with someone in the U.S. and keep another copy with you but separate from your actual passport.

If you need to renew or get a passport, the earlier the better. Once you submit your application, it can take from 3-8 weeks to receive your passport from the U.S. government. For more information on getting a renewal or new passport, visit the U.S. Department of State website.

## Visas

A visa is a stamp/sticker in your passport that allows you to enter a country for a specified period of time to do a specific thing, i.e., study for a full semester. Your program provider/university will inform you about visa requirements and application procedures, as well as the information provided in the study abroad Canvas course. Without this stamp, you could be turned away at the border.

The application process for a visa can be long and unpredictable, so it is a good idea to plan ahead and start early. The visa process varies from country to country, so be sure to follow all instructions carefully and completely. The consulate can reject your application for a visa and there is not anything Siena or your study abroad provider can do to help if this happens. **It is your responsibility to carefully and thoroughly complete your visa application.**

If you will travel to other countries while you are abroad, you should find out about visa requirements before you leave the U.S. In general, Western European countries do not require visas for stays of less than 3 months for U.S. citizens. However, many other countries will require a tourist visa.

## Packing

Packing for an entire semester or year can be baffling. You want to pack everything you need, but don't want to arrive at the airport with bags that are over the weight limit. Know the weight and size limits for luggage on your flights. A general rule of thumb is to take only half the amount you would like to bring. Lay everything out you *think* you *should* bring, and then reduce by half; this is what you actually *need* to bring. You will also want to pay attention to the most up to date [TSA Guidelines](#) for your carry-on luggage.

The best way to figure out what you really need is to read the suggestions provided by your program or to talk to someone who has participated on the program in the past. It is important to consider what clothing and other items will be necessary, acceptable and appropriate in your new environment. Additionally, students outside the U.S. will need a travel converter/adaptor in order to accommodate the difference in electrical plugs, as well as different voltage systems that may exist (such as in Europe).

Check out these resources on packing for extended study abroad travel:

- [The Abroad Guide](#)
- [Go Overseas](#)
- [Minimalist Travel](#)

## Flight Information & Arrangements

Whether or not you travel with a group, reservations for international flights should be made well in advance of your departure date. It is also important to understand the restrictions of your ticket before buying it. Once the ticket is paid for, you will be responsible for working within those rules.

Check with your program provider for specific instructions regarding flights to and from your program location. Most programs will not have group flights and will expect all participants to buy their own tickets and arrive on-site by a specific date and time. These programs will provide you with detailed information about how and when the group should meet up in-country.



A few programs may offer a group flight option. They are offered as a benefit to participants and are usually a good idea but can be expensive. If your program offers a group flight, but you arrange your own travel, make sure to let your program provider know your arrival plans.

Also, talk to your program provider about the program calendar (and make plans accordingly) and what you should do when you arrive. With some programs, the Resident Director will meet the group flight. If you are not on the group flight, you may have to find your own way to your family or to the orientation site or program center. All of this can be overwhelming after a long flight. Therefore, make sure you have clear instructions concerning how to proceed upon arrival. Should anything happen to change your travel plans or arrival time, you will be able to contact the program director for additional instructions.

There are several types of tickets available: one-way, round trip with a fixed return date, and round trip with an open return date. Usually, the round-trip ticket with a fixed return date is the least expensive type. In most cases, the return date may be changed for a fee and within a certain window of dates. If you are taking regular classes at a foreign university, you will probably need some flexibility in your return date. Exam schedules are not normally published until a few weeks into the semester and will affect the date on which you may fly home.

When booking flights, always ask if there are student discounts. There are many booking websites to choose from including Kayak, Expedia, and Travelocity. Booking sites such as [Student Universe](#) are good resources for discounted student flights. Booking directly with the airlines is also an option, and many times can end up saving you money and make things like ticket changes and/or cancellations easier and less costly.



## Entering Host Country

When you arrive at your destination, you will pass through Customs and Immigration. Customs is a country's method of regulating the goods and currency brought into or taken out of that country. Immigration establishes that you are legally entitled to reside in that country for a period of time. At many airports, customs and immigration are handled simultaneously, but occasionally you may be asked to go through immigration procedures separately. Remember, honesty is still the best policy in the customs business - do not try to bring into a country items that are forbidden. If you have any questions about what items might be prohibited, check out the [U.S. Department of State website](#).

## Travel While Overseas

Although travel within each country of destination will vary according to services available when you arrive, there are some questions that many of you will have when trying to plan your personal travel while overseas. The following resources might be useful as you plan your travel - you may want to follow them on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter as well:

- ✈ [Rough Guides](#) (Destination specific information designed for more adventurous and independent travelers)
- ✈ [Lonely Planet](#) (Destination guides for adventurous travelers)
- ✈ [Let's Go](#) (Unique travel information and tips for college travelers)

## Absentee Voting

Being gone for an extended period of time may mean that you will miss local/national elections. It is easy and free to register for absentee voting while you are gone, so that you don't miss out on your civic duty! You should make sure to register prior to leaving the country. Here are some websites to help students register to vote absentee while studying abroad:

- ✈ [Federal Voting Assistance Program](#)
- ✈ [U.S. Vote Foundation](#)



## Mail Forwarding

Since you will be gone for a few months, at least, make sure that you arrange to have your Siena mail forwarded to your home, or somewhere where it can be checked while you are out of the country. This will

insure anything important - such as bills or other mail - get to a place where it can be opened and taken care of while you're gone.

## Learn About Your Host Country

Educate yourself! This is the single most important thing you can do before departure to ensure that your experience will be the most interesting and rewarding possible. Read and study about your country's history, political system, and customs. Gather information about

economics, industry, education, popular culture, family and social structure, religion, and human and natural resources in your country. The more you know about your country, the better prepared you'll be.

- ✦ Read the New York Times or a similar paper to get an idea of current goings-on in your country. The Economist is a great way to get a grip on your host country's political and economic life.
- ✦ [The Lonely Planet Guide](#) is an excellent way to get some basic background on your country.
- ✦ Check out a movie made in your host country on Netflix, Hulu or other streaming sites
- ✦ [BBC News Country Profiles](#)
- ✦ [The World Factbook](#)
- ✦ [Country Reports website](#)

Can you answer the following questions about your host country? If not, work to find the answers!

- ✦ How many people who are prominent in the affairs (politics, athletics religion, the arts, etc.) of the country can you name?
- ✦ Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language? What are the social and political implications of language usage?
- ✦ What is the predominant religion?
- ✦ What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How regularly do people participate in them?
- ✦ What are the common attitudes toward drinking, drugs, smoking, and gambling?
- ✦ What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
- ✦ What are the minority groups in your host country? Are you a minority in that country?
- ✦ How do men treat local women? Are American and local women treated differently?
- ✦ How is homosexuality viewed? How are gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals treated? Is it appropriate and safe to be open about sexual identity?
- ✦ What is the history of the relationships between this country and the US?



## For International Students

There are a few logistical aspects for international students studying abroad to keep in mind:

**Student visa:** Regulations and application processes for obtaining a student visa for non-US students will vary greatly and may be more expensive and/or cumbersome. Make sure to

allow plenty of time to research the process and apply for a student visa with lots of lead time to allow for processing.

Make sure that your passport and F-1 visa will remain valid until your planned return to the US. Make sure to work with [Susan Ambrose](#) in International Programs on any specific details and instructions.

## Code of Conduct/Siena Life

Students studying abroad are expected to adhere to the same social and academic policies in place at Siena College. Students who break Siena's Code of Conduct and/or the code of conduct used abroad may face disciplinary action by their study abroad program and by Siena College. Students who face disciplinary action may be responsible for sanctions imposed by Siena in addition to those applied by the study abroad program. In the case of conflict among policies the more stringent policy shall apply. Students are responsible for understanding Siena Life as well as any code of conduct used by their study abroad provider.

"Learn a few things about your host country before you go. Don't pretend to be an expert in their culture but knowing a few things may lead to more conversations and help you understand the culture. And always be open to learning more!

-Sarah, *Queen's University Northern Ireland*, Fall 2019



# FINANCIAL MATTERS

## Program Costs and Billing

For a semester or academic year abroad, you will be charged normal Siena College tuition and fees, plus standard room and board. You are additionally responsible for airfare, visa(s), books and personal expenses. If a meal plan is not included in your study abroad program, you will not be charged board. If you are a commuter student, you will be billed as a residential student for your semester(s) abroad.

You will be billed directly by Siena College Business Services. Any questions about your Siena bill should be directed to their office. If you receive a bill from your study abroad program, you should contact your study abroad advisor or Business Services as soon as possible.”

Short-term faculty-led travel courses and service programs have added fees associated with them. You will be billed directly by Siena College Business Services for these travel fees. For winter and summer study abroad programs, students do not pay Siena at all but rather are billed by and pay their study abroad program directly.



## Financial Aid

Siena students participating on semester-long approved programs may use their financial aid to offset the costs of the program. If you currently receive financial aid, you might make an appointment with the Office of Financial Aid to review the use of your financial aid package. You must do this before you leave for your study abroad program.

If you are a scholarship athlete, you must check with the Athletics Department regarding your eligibility for scholarship monies to be applied to study abroad.

For summer and winter study abroad, you do not pay Siena and therefore your financial aid is not applied. There may be scholarships available directly through the programs to help offset the cost. Students should inquire about this directly with the study abroad program providers.

## Refund/Withdrawal Policies

Refund policies will vary by program and depend on when a student withdraws. Once you apply to and are accepted by a program, and commit to going, money starts being spent on your behalf even if you haven't yet paid for the semester abroad. If you withdraw from a program, whether it is before or during the semester, you may likely incur some financial loss. In most cases, if you withdraw from a program once you have begun, you will be responsible for payment, in full, with no refund. At a minimum, students are responsible for any non-recoverable cost.

In the event that you decide to leave your program before completion, it is important that you confer with both your study abroad program staff and the Center for International Programs about the financial and academic options available to you.

## Foreign Currency

Although it seems obvious, please remember you will be dealing with a foreign currency while abroad. This money will look odd and seem like fake Monopoly money for a while; but, trust us, it is real. Some countries deal mainly in coins and have coins worth almost \$10. Once you arrive you may be tempted to exchange all of your money into foreign currency and then start to spend. Please wait! It will take you a few weeks to really figure out how the exchange rate works and what everything is actually worth in U.S. dollars. Take the time to get to know the currency before you spend all your cash.

These currency converters are easily accessible through computers and as apps on your smartphone, and can help you keep track of how much things ACTUALLY cost in a foreign currency:

- ✈ [OandA.com](http://OandA.com)
- ✈ [XE.com](http://XE.com)
- ✈ Valuta+ (app)
- ✈ Callista (app)



## Accessing Money Abroad

One of the most important things to remember when traveling abroad: **DO NOT** travel with a lot of cash. You should, however, exchange a small amount of U.S. dollars into the local currency of your destination before you depart - enough local currency to cover the first few days in your new country. Currency can be ordered ahead of time through your bank (best exchange rates) or exchanged at the airport prior to your departure (less favorable exchange rate).

ATMs are widely found in most locations, making it easy to access your bank funds abroad. Check with your home bank to be sure you understand any fees or surcharges applicable to the overseas use of your debit card. **Debit cards** that link to your bank account make it easy to pay for items without needing to carry cash, and if you need additional funds your family can deposit them directly into your account in the U.S. You may want to look into [Debit cards with low/no foreign transaction fees](#) for your time abroad such as Charles Schwab.

Credit Cards are another source of money which is widely accepted throughout the world. If you do decide to get a credit card for your trip, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are the most widely accepted names (note: Discover cards are not widely accepted outside of the U.S.). Credit cards can also be used for cash advances in case of an emergency. We do not, however, recommend that you use them for this purpose unless it is truly an emergency! Cash advances carry tremendous fees and interest charges, which, if not paid immediately, add up to huge expenses. It is a good idea to check with your credit card carrier for details before you depart.

If you have a “chip-enabled” credit card, this is especially helpful while abroad. Foreign transaction fees typically hover around 3% per transaction with credit cards when used overseas. You may want to look into a [credit card with low/no foreign transaction fees](#) for use while abroad.

**Important:** Make sure to call your credit card company and/or bank in advance to let them know when you will be abroad and where you are going. If you do not notify them, they will likely assume the card has been stolen and they will deactivate it, leaving you without access to your money/credit!



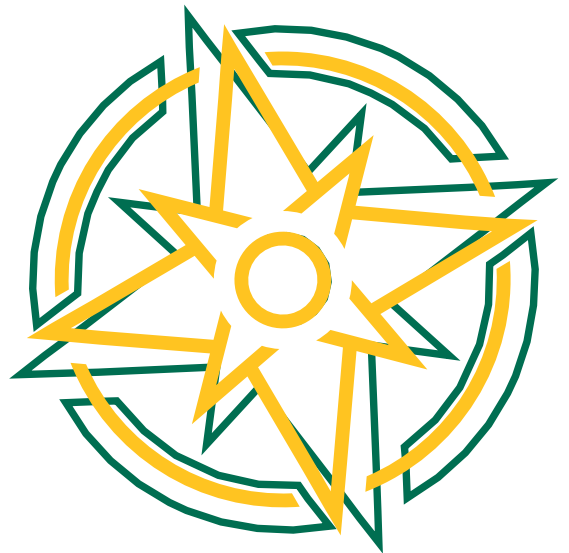
## Budgeting

It is important to understand the total out-of-pocket expenses you will incur so that you can budget appropriately. Otherwise, you could end up running out of money half way through the semester. You should discuss this information with your parents in order to establish a realistic budget. Be sure to include expenses such as daily transportation, books, extra meals, entertainment, laundry, and travel during breaks, etc. Before you leave, talk with students who have participated in the program to learn more about realistic budgeting. Check out our [study abroad budget sheet](#) for help with this process.



“If possible, see if you can get a world credit card. It will save you from extra fees and can be used in any country you go to.”

-Tessa, *CYA Greece*,  
Spring 2020



## ACADEMICS

### Credits/Grades/Transcripts

Siena students earn grades when they study abroad. Students must pass the course with a D or above in order to earn credit for the courses they take. If a course will be used for major/minor/certificate requirements, then students must get a grade of C- or above in the course. Students cannot take courses on a pass/fail (P/F) basis when studying abroad, they must take courses for graded credit.

You must enroll in a full course load, i.e., the equivalent of 14-16 U.S. credits. If there is a personal or medical reason that forces you to drop below a full load, you must receive approval from the program in which you are enrolled, the Assistant Dean of your school at Siena, your academic advisor at Siena, and the Center for International Programs.

If you check your registration on-line you may see a simple 15-credit “placeholder” for the semester abroad. Do not be concerned. This is a computer function and indicates simply that you are in the system as a full-time student. Credits are evaluated and added to the CAPP upon your return.

Upon completion of your program, transcripts should be sent to the Center for International Programs. If you plan to apply for graduate school or post-graduate fellowships, an original transcript from your program abroad is sometimes required as part of the application. Siena cannot get you an official transcript from your host university.

When Siena receives your transcript from abroad, the Center for International Programs will process the transcript and then send it to the registrar where the credits will be posted to your Siena transcript. Students earn credit for their courses, and the grades will post to the transcript with an asterisk \* next to it (i.e. A\*). These study abroad grades do not factor into your overall Siena GPA.

“Try to learn the language! Studying abroad can be intimidating as it is, and even more intimidating when you travel to a country where you do not speak the language. It can be challenging and stressful, but you will feel so accomplished!”

-Cassidy, *API Paris*,  
Spring 2020

### Language Requirement

Students studying in a country where English is not the official language are required to take a course in the local language while studying abroad.

## Course Changes While Abroad

No matter what type of program you are on, all of your courses must be pre-approved with the Assistant Dean of your School. If your course selections change while you are abroad - especially courses going toward your major, minor or other requirements - you must check with the Assistant Dean to make sure that new course(s) are appropriate. When you correspond with the Assistant Dean, include the name of the class and a course description/syllabus. Course descriptions are often available online.

## Registering for the Next Semester At Siena College

At the appropriate time, the Registrar will contact you via email with information and instructions about course offerings and registration times.

You should correspond with your academic advisor about which courses you intend to take before leaving to study abroad. Your academic advisor will provide you with your PIN via email and you will register at your allotted time.

Sometimes a university will have a firewall that may not allow you access to Banner/Web for Students. If this is the case, a local internet café usually works. If you still have problems, contact the Assistant Dean of your School or the Center for International Programs.

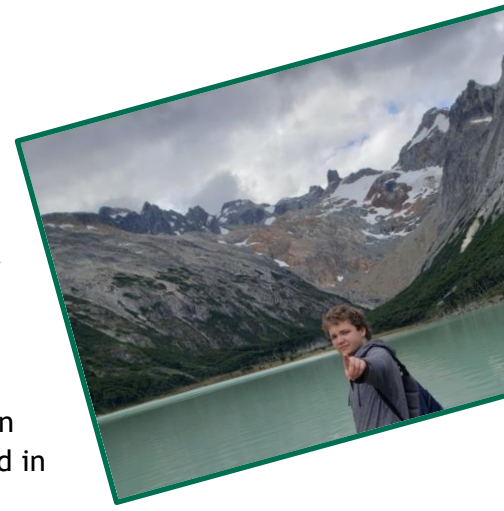
Be sure to factor in any time difference between your location and the time for registration at Siena. You may have to get up in the middle of the night/rise very early in the morning to register at the correct time.

## Academic Environment Abroad

It is a good idea to make yourself aware of the academic system of your host country before you immerse yourself in it. Learning how to adapt to a new academic system is one of the first challenges you may face once you begin classes. Professor/student relationships are not always the same as in the U.S. Try to discover what is expected of you early on. It may appear that students from the host country are not doing much work, and the time spent in class may be less than what you are used to. Do not let this fool you. There could be the expectation that you will conduct more independent research, and students may simply be used to studying during the day.

It is important to know that the academic culture of other countries vary widely, as do grading systems and policies. Do your best in your classes and do not be too upset if you find that your grades are slightly different than what you are accustomed to.

Finally, foreign libraries offer another adaptive challenge to U.S. students. Library systems vary from country to country. For example, in some countries, libraries are only open during daylight hours and closed in the evening. Some libraries may not allow books to leave the building. Likewise, computer and Internet access may not be as available or as widely used as in the United States.



## Academic Accommodations Abroad

Siena College cultivates an inclusive and supportive learning community and values the diverse learning styles of our students. We are committed to providing students with disabilities meaningful access to study abroad. Students are strongly encouraged to contact Siena's [Accessibility Office](#) as early as possible to discuss their needs for studying abroad. For further information, stop by the Accessibility Office in Foy Hall (109) or call 518-783-4239. Commonly requested academic accommodations include:

- ✦ Extended test time
- ✦ Test taking in a distraction reduced location
- ✦ Books in alternative format (electronic)
- ✦ Supplemental note taking
- ✦ Test reading
- ✦ Converted class and test materials (enlarged, audio-taped etc.)

Requests for accommodations and documentation of the disability should be provided to your study abroad program as early as possible. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and every effort will be made to work collaboratively with eligible students to facilitate an accommodation. However, please keep in mind that in-country conditions and resources do vary by site, and certain program locations have limited accessibility.



## Extending Your Stay

Many students who plan to study abroad for only one semester enjoy it so much that they decide to stay for a second. We are always pleased to help a student extend her/his stay. To do so, start by talking with your program provider to be sure that you understand their policies and procedures. You then contact the Center for International Programs at Siena. It is generally an easy process to extend your stay abroad, and we in the study abroad office will contact all administrative offices concerned on your behalf. It is your responsibility to correspond with your academic advisor, and with the Assistant Dean for course approval. Failure to do so could jeopardize your ability to stay abroad or to graduate on time.



## Section 2: Arrival and Adjustment

### CROSS CULTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### Living Abroad

Your program should provide you with information about your day-to-day living arrangements while you are abroad. Should you have specific questions about your living situation, housing and meals, on-site support, excursions and activities, or the opportunity to travel independently, please consult pre-departure materials provided by your program or contact your program advisor.

#### Living with a Host Family

Living with a host family is your chance to transcend the tourist's visit and become a participating guest and member in a family and neighborhood community. Homestays often can be the most meaningful part of your international living experience. The success of your homestay depends a great deal on how you approach the situation.

Most students find that a good way to break the ice is to bring gifts from home for your host family. Local jams or jellies, local wine, coffee-table books, and other regional items are always a good idea. If you're going to a country where gift giving is an important part of the culture, you may want to stock up on small items like novelty pencils, pens, or other college-logo items to give as "friendship" gifts. Before giving flowers in a foreign country, be sure to find out if they hold any cultural significance. For example, you wouldn't want to present your host with chrysanthemums in France, as they are associated with mourning and funerals.



#### Other Living Situations

In some cases, you may not be living with a host family. You may be in an apartment or dormitory, with other students from your program or with students from your host culture. Living on your own comes with a unique set of pros and cons. While it lends to a greater amount of independence, it also places greater responsibility on you to take care of your daily needs and integrate yourself in the host culture. Grocery shopping, doing laundry, and

cleaning can be a challenge and are time-consuming. Discuss how these things will be handled with your roommates early on. Things that you take for granted (like using an electric clothes dryer to dry your laundry) may become a big deal if you have roommates from the host culture. For example, because the cost of electricity is quite high just about everywhere, students forego using the dryer in favor of air-drying clothes outside - even in the middle of winter.



## Housing at Siena Upon Return

For information regarding on-campus housing upon your return to Siena, please visit the Office of Community Living's webpage: <https://www.siena.edu/offices/community-living/returning-student-housing-selection/study-abroad-specifics/>.

You can direct all campus housing-related questions to [housing@siena.edu](mailto:housing@siena.edu).

## Culture Shock and Adjustment

In its simplest form, culture is the unique characteristics that unify a society. It is important to think about what influences a country's culture and values such as politics, history, language, religion, and economics. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that within a country's borders, cultural differences exist.

Culture often manifests in two ways. The first is visible, apparent, or objective like art, music, popular culture, literature, food, and fashion. The second is often the hidden dimensions of culture that influence daily life like communication (verbal and nonverbal), values, social norms, and etiquette. To prepare for an education abroad experience, take the time to learn about the host culture and try to understand what cultural characteristics and influences remain hidden beneath the surface. Also, consider your own core values and beliefs and your home country's culture. How do you expect these to influence your opinions and interactions while abroad?

Know that everyone experiences culture shock when they are transplanted into a foreign setting. This is a normal and very real reaction to a new environment where you are no longer 'in control' as you have been at home. People can experience a range of emotions when adapting to a foreign culture, from excitement and interest to frustration, depression and fear of the unknown. **Culture shock** is a term used to describe what



happens to people when they encounter unfamiliar surroundings and conditions and feel a sense of isolation.

People differ greatly in the degree to which culture shock affects them, but almost everyone is affected by it in one way or another. The symptoms of culture shock vary, but can include

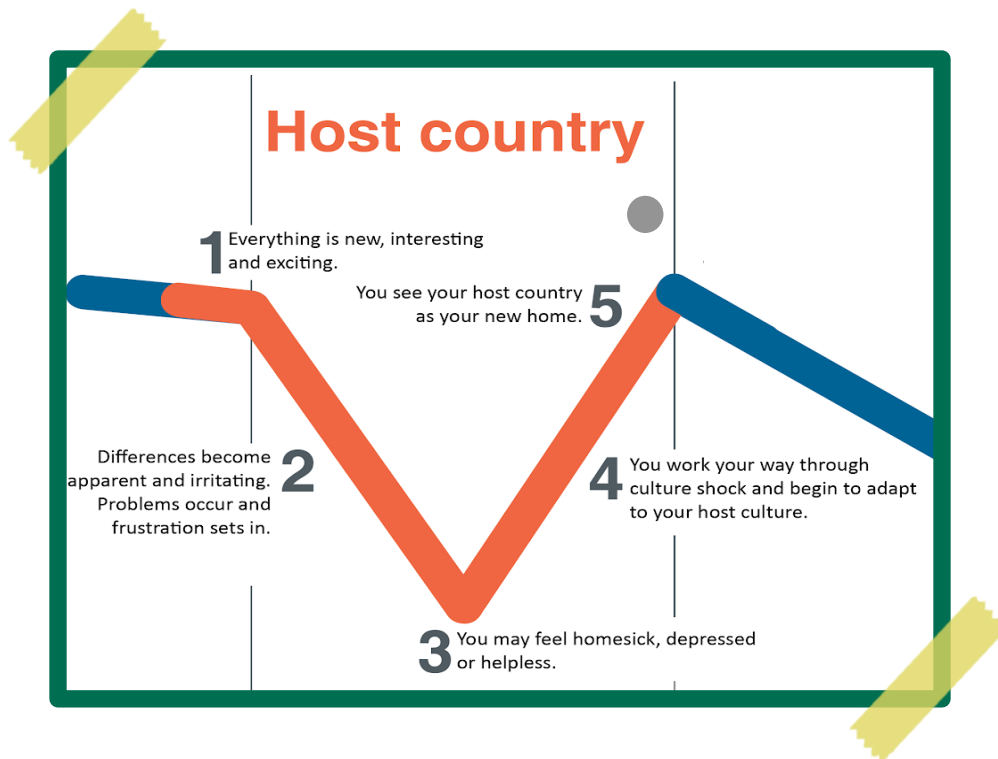


- ✦ boredom
- ✦ withdrawal (e.g., spending excessive amounts of time reading; avoiding contact with host nationals)
- ✦ feeling isolated or helpless
- ✦ sleeping a lot or tiring easily
- ✦ irritation over delays and other minor frustrations
- ✦ suffering from various body pains and aches
- ✦ longing to be back home
- ✦ unduly criticizing local customs or ways of doing things

The five stages of culture shock are as follows (see graphic below):

1. **The Honeymoon Stage:** You are very positive, curious, and anticipate new exciting experiences. You may even idealize the host culture.
2. **Irritability:** You may start to feel that what is different is actually inferior. The host culture is confusing, or the systems are frustrating.
3. **Hostility:** It is a small step from saying that they do things in a different way to saying that they do things in a stupid way. You will often blame your frustrations and emotions on the new culture (and its shortcomings) rather than on the process of your adaptation to the new culture. You may feel extremely homesick and/or depressed, wondering why you made the decision to study abroad at all.
4. **Gradual Adjustment:** You develop coping strategies and begin to feel more relaxed and develop a more balanced, objective view of your experience.
5. **Adaptation:** There is a new sense of belonging and sensitivity to the host culture.





#### Treating culture shock:

1. Remember 'This too shall pass' and acknowledge these feelings are temporary, not permanent.
2. Talk with other study abroad participants and staff. Provide support for other students who may be feeling the same.
3. Take self-care measures: Get enough sleep, eat good foods, exercise (walking/running), maintain your sense of humor.
4. Resist the urge to withdraw and only communicate with family and friends back home.
5. Engage with the culture and set some goals for yourself for your time abroad.

#### Fitting in While Still Being a Tourist:

- ✈ Make every effort to immerse yourself in your new culture. Adapt to their way of life; don't try to change it. (That doesn't mean you need to compromise your own moral standards, but you might want to think about how something like, say, vegetarianism will appear to people for whom meat is a sign of health, wealth, or welcome.)
- ✈ Be attentive to how people behave around you to learn about cultural expectations.
- ✈ Try not to wear clothing that identifies you as a US college student.
- ✈ Don't be insulted or make a judgment until you have had time to think the situation over and discuss it with someone, preferably someone local.

For more information on this, find the recommended reading in the appendix section.

## Gender Issues Abroad

As you may soon discover, gender roles can be different in many parts of the world. Your program may have a discussion of gender issues and cultural behaviors as part of your on-site orientation. Try to keep in mind during your adjustment to your host community that you do not have to accept an attitude to be able to adapt to it in everyday life.

Many issues that concern women concern men as well. Because you'll be living in a different culture, understand that perceptions and assumptions regarding men and women (especially Americans) will often be significantly different from what you're used to, or what you expected to find. You should be aware of and be respectful of local customs regarding dress, relationships between men and women and realize things might be different than in your host country like you do at home. However, if you feel in any way that a line may have been crossed, speak with your program director.



## LGBTQI+ Students Abroad

Acceptance of queer lifestyles and queer values varies greatly from country to country. More importantly, however, it varies greatly within a given country or culture. Therefore, sweeping generalizations about the queer experience abroad are often misleading and can lead to stereotypes about the host culture that can be counter-productive to the study abroad experience. Keeping an open mind is essential to overcoming cultural stereotypes and creating a uniquely personal experience in which you can relate to your host culture as an individual.

That said, there are a few things to keep in mind to make your experience abroad more comfortable and more compatible with a queer identity. Firstly, remember that studying abroad is a time of great personal change and development, in which many personal values and beliefs are questioned and reconsidered. This time of self-questioning and self-discovery can encompass all facets of the coming-out experience.



Secondly, identify resources available to you while abroad which can help you deal with the stresses involved in coming out or living in an environment which may not be welcoming of queer culture. Your program should be able to help you locate such resources.

Safety abroad is a highly complex issue for the queer student. It is essential that you learn all you can about the legal and social aspects and consequences of assuming a queer identity in your host culture before leaving the States. Resources such as [Diversity Abroad for LGBTQI](#) students and the [US Department of State information for LGBTQI](#) travelers are good places to find more information.

## Students of Color Abroad

Expect issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and class to continue to be present, but potentially be significantly different abroad from what you're used to at home. These issues are extremely complex, and you'll be at a disadvantage in understanding them within the context of your host culture, as you won't know the rules or the dialogue. So, general advice is to be prepared for anything, and resist making judgments.

Once again, keeping an open mind is essential to overcoming cultural stereotypes and creating a uniquely personal experience in which you can relate to your host culture as an individual. Educating yourself about relevant issues in your host country before leaving the States is an excellent idea. Some good resources include [Diversity Abroad](#), [WeAreBlackAbroad](#) and the [PLATO Project Underrepresented Students](#) website.



## Sustainable Study Abroad

Energy- and resource-reducing actions you already take in your everyday life should be applied as much, if not more so, in your host country. Simple green habits that you can start developing now include taking shorter showers, turning the water off while you shampoo and soap up, shopping with reusable bags, and unplugging computers and appliances when not in use.

Check out some of these resources on sustainable and responsible travel:

- ✈ [Article: “Leaving Light” by Karen Leggett](#) (*International Educator*, May/June 2012)
- ✈ [Article: “Sustainable Travel and Study Abroad”](#) by Astrid Jirka (*Transitions Abroad*)
- ✈ [Transitions Abroad’s Responsible Travel Handbook](#)
- ✈ [The International Ecotourism Society](#)
- ✈ [Global Footprint Network](#)

## SAFETY AND SECURITY ABROAD

Your safety and security are always important when traveling and living overseas. As you know, the world situation is constantly changing. Therefore, we offer the following safety precautions for students studying abroad. In addition to these guidelines, please rely on your on-site support staff, as needed.

### Everyday Safety Tips

- ✦ When possible, travel with local citizens; they will have knowledge of landmarks and areas that you might not get from a guide, blog, or tour book.
- ✦ Remember that you are a guest in a foreign country; make an effort to use the local language, dress as the locals do, and engage with other cultures while you are abroad. Not only will this enhance your study abroad experience, but it will also make you stand out less.
- ✦ Be especially vigilant whenever you are in areas frequented by travelers, including but not limited to tourist attractions, airports, train and bus stations, or hotels; these areas tend to have heightened criminal activity (such as petty theft).
- ✦ Be aware of your surroundings. Remove yourself from situations that seem suspect or uncomfortable.
- ✦ Make sure that you have the address and contact information for any place that you are staying, particularly in an unfamiliar city.
- ✦ Make a photocopy of the first two pages of your passport and keep the photocopy in a safe place.
- ✦ Be aware that pickpockets operate almost everywhere. Keep your wallet in an interior pocket, or in a zippered purse worn close to your body. You can also use a money belt or a pouch that hangs around your neck.
- ✦ Keep a list of credit card numbers and bank emergency phone numbers. It is a good idea to leave a copy with your parents.
- ✦ If you attend a sporting event, wear home team or neutral colors; even if you are in the 'away' section, you are still travelling through the other fan base as you leave the stadium.
- ✦ It is best to meet people in public places. As in the U.S., do not leave a bar or club with someone you have just met. Have another person accompany you.
- ✦ When traveling away from your program, leave a detailed itinerary with your family, your host family, and with an official from your program.

### Resources in Case of an Emergency

You should always know whom to contact in case of an emergency, medical or otherwise. Your first contact should be the Resident Director or International Office of your program overseas.

Please keep this person's/emergency phone number on you at all times. If you are living with a host family, they will be an important resource for you as well. You should also be aware that in the event of an emergency abroad, the Center for International Programs may need to verify your safety and/or whereabouts. Please monitor your email and mobile messaging apps (i.e. WhatsApp) for communication from Siena College and respond as quickly as possible.

In addition to your on-site support system, the U.S. Department of State offers important information in case of a global emergency. Travel Information Sheets and Travel Advisories are issued by the U.S. State Department; consult their [website](#) when planning a trip, and follow links to local agencies as well, so that you can have the most accurate picture of current safety conditions.

Siena College requires all study abroad students to register with the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), which allows you to receive travel updates from the State Department, and allows the State Department to reach out to you in the event of an emergency; this service should be used for your full program abroad and any extended (overnight/weekend) trip outside of your host country.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs, a branch of the State Department, can help you find medical treatment, legal counsel, or financial assistance in emergency situations. Their advice: In an extreme medical emergency, first get medical treatment from local sources. If immediate medical treatment is not necessary, call the nearest Embassy or Consulate to get advice about what to do next, including notifying local police or finding English-speaking doctors. Of course, you should always contact your resident director and keep her/him informed of your health and well-being.



## Emergency Contacts

Copy down all names, phone numbers, postal and e-mail addresses of people with whom you might need to have contact while abroad. We suggest that you put all your emergency contacts and information in one place, so it is handy when needed. You can save these contacts into your cell phone as 'Emergency' or as 'ICE' - In Case of Emergency - so they are easily accessible at any time.

The Center for International Programs will also connect with you through WhatsApp via our emergency phone, if necessary. You should make sure to remain in contact with the office through WhatsApp (update your number with us if you get a local cell number!) as we will use this to communicate with you in the event of an emergency. Siena College Public Safety has a 24-hour emergency line that you can always reach out to if you need to report an emergency abroad - but this should be after local resources have been contacted. Their contact is 001-518-783-2999 or [publicsafety@siena.edu](mailto:publicsafety@siena.edu)

## Drugs and Alcohol

As a visitor in your host country, you are subject to the laws and regulations of its judicial system. Refusing to obey local laws, especially those that concern illicit drugs, will get you dismissed from your program and could get you thrown into jail. Do not assume that laws are more lenient abroad or that foreign governments are more tolerant; in many cases they are much stricter and can carry hefty prison sentences. Do not assume you are protected as an American. If you are arrested, there is very little your program, Siena College, or the U.S. Embassy can do for you. In fact, the U.S. Embassy has absolutely no jurisdiction to intercede in the host country's judicial system. We cannot reiterate strongly enough not to use, possess, or distribute illegal drugs of any kind while you are abroad. In addition to the legal concerns surrounding drug use, you must strongly consider the safety issues involved. Although you may think you are not at risk and that you can handle yourself in any situation, this is just not the reality when overseas. You do not know the culture. You do not know how to read local behavior. Do not under any circumstances put yourself at risk by participating in drug-related activities.



Alcohol is a more difficult matter to deal with. Your host culture will exhibit a very different attitude toward alcohol than is typically known here in the U.S. In your host culture it is likely that getting drunk is considered vulgar and unacceptable. Make sure you are aware of cultural norms surrounding alcohol consumption. Concerning your safety, you are much more at risk if you have been drinking, by becoming an easy target and by impairing your judgment. Most study abroad safety and health incidents happen when students are under the influence of alcohol. You will have to decide what to do for yourself but be sure that alcohol does not interfere with your studies or with your safety while abroad.

## The Law and Jurisdiction

While you are abroad, you are subject to the laws of the country you are in, not those of the U.S. or your home country. If you are arrested, your home country embassy can only ensure that you receive equal treatment under the terms of local law and procedure. It is important to note that U.S. Consulates cannot demand release of U.S. citizens abroad, cannot intervene in a foreign country's court system, and cannot give legal



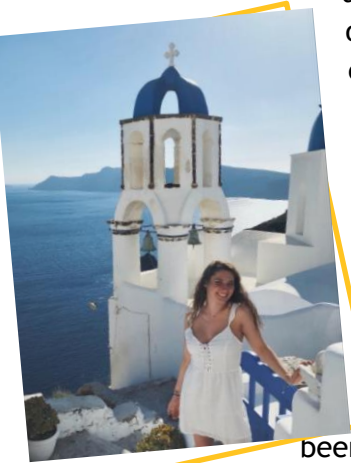
advice. Once you leave the U.S., our laws and constitutional protections are no longer in play. Do not expect that Siena College or your home country's embassy can exert any pressure to extricate you from a situation which results from your own inattention to, or disrespect for, the laws of another country. You should always, in all circumstances, treat the police with respect and produce any document they may request, without confrontation or issue.

# YOUR HEALTH ABROAD

Staying healthy while abroad is important to having a successful experience. We strongly recommend that you read all the information your program provides on health issues in your host country.

## Before You Go

Before you leave for your program you should have a routine physical. (You might also want to have a dental checkup.) Make sure your health records are up-to-date and that you discuss any medical issues you have that may affect your experience abroad. Take copies of your medical records with you abroad, especially if you have specific medical conditions or if you expect to need medical care abroad.



Please be aware that the stress of travel and adjusting to a new culture can exacerbate physical or emotional conditions that may be under control at home. Therefore, if you have a physical or emotional condition, it is important that you meet with a professional to discuss how studying abroad could affect your situation. Addressing your health issues prior to studying abroad will help you to identify those resources that will and will not be available at your program site. Also, if you have particular health issues that people overseas should be aware of, please make sure you inform them before you depart. You have already been accepted to your program. Therefore, any information you share with them should in no way affect your participation. It is critical that your program provider be aware of any special needs you have. Only with this knowledge can they be prepared to deal with any health emergencies that might arise.

## Prescriptions

If there are any prescription medications that you need to take while abroad, get them filled shortly before you leave. We highly recommend bringing enough medication for your entire semester, if possible. You should talk with your doctor about this early on, as it could take weeks or months to get authorization from your insurance provider for an advance supply of medication. Keep them in their original, labeled containers and pack them in your carry-on luggage, not in checked luggage. Take the actual written prescription with you in case you need to show them at Customs or have an emergency and need additional medication. Syringes and needles necessary for medications must be accompanied by a doctor's letter.

Students with a chronic medical condition will want to consider wearing a medical alert style bracelet. If you wear glasses or contacts, it is a good idea to get your eyes checked and your prescription updated. Take extra eyeglasses or contacts and contact lens solution in case you cannot purchase your regular brand abroad. Also, contraceptives may be in short supply or of poor quality in certain countries. Do **NOT** plan on getting medications sent to you once you are abroad. This is illegal in most countries, and customs regulations can cause prescription medications to be severely delayed if sent in the mail.

## Immunizations

You should be sure that all of your routine immunizations are up to date. Your program sponsor should tell you about any needed vaccinations or medications particular to your program location. Other immunizations are rarely required for travel to most of Europe, Australia, or New Zealand. However, travelers going to many developing countries may need additional immunizations. If you will need them, start your immunizations early. Some cannot be given at the same time as others or may require a series of shots over several months. No matter where you are going, make sure your immunizations for tetanus, polio and measles, mumps, rubella, are all up to date. You should make sure to set up a Travel Medicine appointment with your primary care physician or with [Siena Health Services](#) to find out more about immunizations that may be needed for your time abroad. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) can also be a valuable resource.



## Dietary Restrictions

If you have allergies to foods, please inform your program. It is especially important that your host family (if applicable) knows about your allergies. If you are a vegetarian, make sure you let the program director know early on so that you can be placed in an accommodation that is suitable for you. Vegetarianism is less common in other parts of the world than in the U.S., and it may not be possible to stick to a completely vegetarian diet.

You should be prepared to remain as flexible as possible, particularly when dining out and participating in group activities. Gluten-free options are becoming more popular in some countries, but still aren't standard everywhere. Working with your program provider on any dietary needs will help them prepare and alleviate stress surrounding food restrictions once you are onsite.



## Health Insurance

Siena College requires all students studying abroad to have international health insurance. Students must follow instructions on how to purchase this coverage through the study abroad Canvas course. Some countries/programs also require students to purchase their national insurance in order to get a visa (for example, Australia). This insurance will also cover you for routine care while on site. It is important that you understand HOW your U.S. based health insurance coverage works overseas, WHAT types of illness and emergency care your insurance covers, WHERE you will go to receive your health care abroad, and WHY you should have coverage that provides for medical evacuation and repatriation.

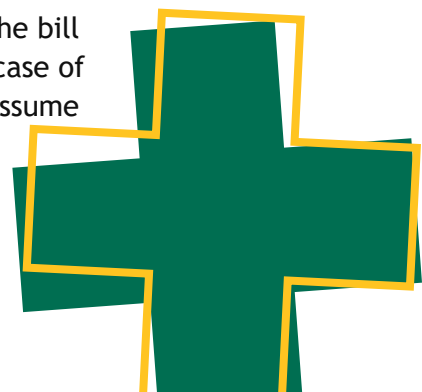


At a minimum you should understand the following about your insurance before you leave the United States:

- ✦ Will you be covered for an office visit if you get sick and need to see a physician while you are abroad?
- ✦ Will the cost of any prescription medicine be covered? What information do you need to provide to your health insurance provider to be reimbursed for these expenses?
- ✦ What happens if you require emergency care or need to be hospitalized? Does overseas hospitalization need to be pre-approved? How would this work? If pre-approval is not required, when does the insurer need to be notified about the hospitalization and by whom?
- ✦ Will your insurance cover medical evacuation? What about repatriation in the event of death? (This last question can be very difficult for students and parents to address but it is necessary).
- ✦ Will your insurance cover you if you travel independently of your study abroad program?
- ✦ If you intend to travel before or after your program, does your health insurance cover you while you are not formally registered for the program?

Supplemental travel and health insurance may be available through your program provider. Please contact them to learn more about additional coverage.

Your host country may provide free (or heavily subsidized) health care to students. Refer to pre-departure materials from your program for more information on country-specific health care service and support. Regardless of the type of insurance you have, if it is an international plan then **doctors and hospitals will likely require payment at the time of the visit**. You can seek reimbursement from your insurance company only after you have paid the bill and can produce the receipt. You should have access to emergency funds in case of hospitalization or other emergency medical care, as Siena College does not assume



these expenses for students. In general, you will find medical care, particularly in the public sector, somewhat less expensive than in the U.S.

## Healthcare Conditions Abroad

Be aware that cultural and regional differences also extend into health care. Doctor-patient relationships, the nature of health care delivery, which medications are available, notions of privacy during a medical visit and many more attributes are likely to differ to some degree. Because of cultural differences, travel, and other adjustment concerns, you will need to continue to pay attention to your health (both physical and mental) when you arrive and throughout your program. Be sure you know how to get medical help should you need it, including routine healthcare, as well as emergencies. Make sure you make your medical needs known to anyone in your host country who can be of assistance. It is critical that your program provider is aware of any special needs you have. Only with this knowledge can they be prepared to deal with any health emergencies that might arise.

## Pandemic Illnesses Abroad

Pandemic illnesses such as COVID-19, H1N1 or avian flu can impact your study abroad experience. While symptoms may vary, you are advised to take extreme caution if you experience any symptoms reported to be associated with any current pandemic illnesses or outbreaks. Some countries have instituted monitoring techniques of travelers arriving from areas affected by a pandemic outbreak, which may delay travel. Please consult the embassy of the country, or countries, in your travel itinerary for information about entry screening procedures.

Find more important information on the CDC's Travel Information page:  
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/traveler-information-center>

## Mental Health and Counseling Abroad

Managing your mental health - whether or not you have a history of anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions - is something every person must think about when going abroad. Being away from usual stress at home can sometimes be a relief when abroad; experiencing new adventures can be a useful distraction. You will also



have times when you feel confused, uncomfortable, annoyed, and many of the same emotions that you manage in your daily life at home. Make use of the mental health resources we have on the Canvas course.

Here are some suggestions for understanding your mental health abroad:

1. Recognize that some of what you will experience overseas is just part of the intercultural adjustment cycle (also called “culture shock”), and it is common to all study abroad participants.
2. Realize the low points are not necessarily attributable to a mental health diagnosis (e.g., home sickness, anxiety about understanding or speaking a foreign language, loneliness, fear of being robbed, etc.)
3. Be aware that feeling very good is often just the high point of the cycle, which may make you feel that you no longer need medications (if you use them). Keep taking your meds and consult with a doctor first before making any changes.
4. Set benchmarks to see how you are feeling as time goes on; the first days and weeks can be stressful for some and these can be normal feelings but if you are feeling down or overwhelmed at any point in the program, reach out to others.
5. Give it time; many of the problems that you could experience overseas will seem minor compared to the good experiences that you will have. However, if you feel that your health or safety is deteriorating, make sure to seek help from professionals and your program support staff.



Not all countries have mental health support services similar to what we are accustomed to in the U.S. Thus, students may not have easy access to mental health services in some countries. In many countries or cities, psychological health services may be excellent but may only be available in the local language. It may not always be possible to find an American or English-speaking counselor. Whether students have utilized mental health services in the past or not, it is important for students to know if, what, and where those services are available in their host country. Students will have resources/support (including virtual appointments) from the Counseling Center at Siena if necessary.

## Relationships Abroad

While abroad, we hope you will have the opportunity to make friends and form lasting relationships with locals. This is one of the most enriching experiences you can have. Your friends will help you learn about the culture and discover the city and country where you are studying. Therefore, we encourage you to be courageous and meet people while you are overseas.

However, learning to distinguish between culturally acceptable behavior and culturally inappropriate behavior abroad can be difficult. This becomes especially difficult when it comes to dating. During your orientation on-site, ask what types of relationships exist between men and women. Are platonic friendships possible? In some countries, culture prohibits men and women from developing friendships. How do people date? Do students usually go out in groups? What is the perception of Americans as far as social relationships are concerned? Are there preconceived ideas about American women that would make it difficult for a female to be friends with a male?

Educating yourself will help you distinguish between true friendships, and relationships you'd be better off without.

If you identify as LGBTQ, make sure that you research/understand the attitudes and cultural practices related to LGBTQ issues/persons in your host country. Your study abroad program will be an excellent source of information on this topic.

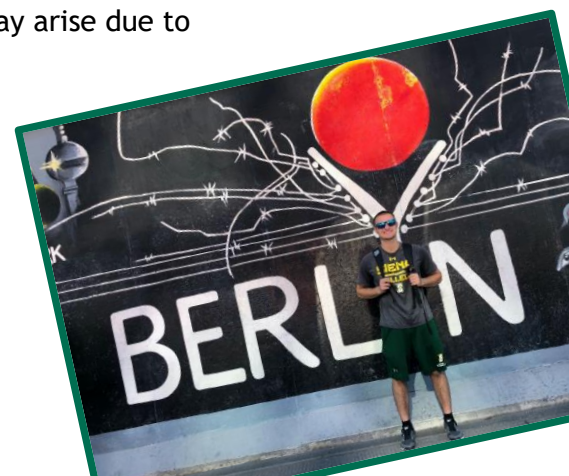


## HIV and Other Infections

No place in the world is immune from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or the HIV/AIDS virus. Despite what you may hear expressed by locals in your host country, HIV exists everywhere. Abstinence is the only way to be certain that you will not contract the HIV virus or other STD. Those who choose to be sexually active while abroad are encouraged to remain cognizant of the risks and act accordingly. If you choose to be sexually active overseas, it is best to bring a supply of contraceptives from the U.S.. Information concerning STDs, HIV, and AIDS prevalence in different countries may be found at the [Center for Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov) website.

## Sexual Misconduct While Abroad

You are entitled to an environment free from sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment (i.e., unwanted sexual advances), dating violence, stalking, and other gender-based offenses. Most of the time, these problems may arise due to misunderstandings of cultural cues on both sides. However, this should not stop you from speaking up. While we encourage you to learn to accept and respect cultural differences, the desire to be culturally sensitive should never be at the expense of your personal safety.



You maintain all of your rights and responsibilities under the Siena College Sexual Misconduct Policy while you are studying abroad. If you are a survivor of sexual misconduct while abroad, we can help.

Immediate Emergency Services: Your study abroad program contact, usually a Resident Director or Student Life administrator, should be able to assist you with seeking immediate emergency services (i.e., medical care, requesting safe housing, pursuing criminal charges). Contact the Center for International Programs for assistance with determining the appropriate local contact if you are unsure.

Emergency and Ongoing Resources: Our Title IX Coordinator, Public Safety Officers, Counselor on Call and others on campus are available to assist you while you are abroad and when you return to campus. We can connect you to resources, reporting options and services that can help (i.e., reporting to law enforcement, counseling services, medical services, academic accommodations, etc.).

Confidential Resources:

- ✦ Center for Counseling and Student Development: 001-518-783-2342; [npruitt@siena.edu](mailto:npruitt@siena.edu)
- ✦ Office of the Chaplain: 001-518-783-2332, [landerson@siena.edu](mailto:landerson@siena.edu)
- ✦ Health Services: 001-518-783-2554; [chogan@siena.edu](mailto:chogan@siena.edu)

Private/Non-Confidential Resources:

- ✦ Public Safety: 001-518-783-2999; [publicsafety@siena.edu](mailto:publicsafety@siena.edu)
- ✦ Title IX Coordinator: 001-518-782-6673; [lgoland@siena.edu](mailto:lgoland@siena.edu)
- ✦ Dean of Students: 001-518-783-2328; [jbebb@siena.edu](mailto:jbebb@siena.edu)
- ✦ Center for International Programs: 001-518-786-5047; [international@siena.edu](mailto:international@siena.edu)

We want you to be safe and we are here to help you get support. For more information, please visit Siena College's [Sexual Violence Prevention Website](#).



# COMMUNICATION

## Keeping in Touch with Home

Going abroad is a moment that you have been preparing for, and, though you may be a bit nervous, you are now ready for the adventure. Your family, however, may have a different mindset. While you are worrying about what to pack and how to survive jet lag, your parents are worrying about whether you will be able to call them in case of an emergency, who will take care of you if you get sick, and whether you have enough clean underwear! Here are some suggestions about how to deal with your family to help put them at ease.

**Communicate openly.** Tell your family your own feelings, hopes, and fears. Don't hide what you're experiencing to try to "protect" them. By opening up to them, you will allow them to open up to you. It will also show them you have thought hard about this decision and are prepared to take on this challenge.

**Schedule an hour or two each week to talk to your parents/family.** This will prevent you from feeling like you need to constantly update them (which detracts from your overall experience) and will allow you to have plenty to talk to them each week. You may also want to create a blog that you share with your family and update regularly or use a social media site such as Instagram to share your adventures and keep family and friends updated.

**Remind your parents that they shouldn't believe everything they read or hear through the news and other media.** The media has a tendency to sensationalize, especially with international news stories. On the other hand, there is some truth in what the media reports. The problem is that your parents are not abroad with you and do not know what is really happening where you are. With this in mind, make sure you stay in touch with your family and friends if there are any news-worthy incidents.

**Reassure your parents that you have chosen a program that offers on-site support who will be available to help you with any personal or academic issues.** You are not alone! There is someone overseas to help take care of you. Not that you need to be taken care of, but to your parents you are still their son or daughter, and their peace of mind is important.



Consider limiting how often you are on social media and texting with friends and family throughout the day. It is important to stay in touch with home and to share what you're learning about the new country and culture you're living in, but be careful not to spend so much time on social media so that you miss out on interacting with the people you're meeting in this new country.



## Methods of Communication Abroad

International calling is big business and can be confusing and expensive. It is worthwhile to research this well before you leave the U.S. You may want to contact your cell phone company for information on how to get an international calling plan while abroad. Rates on plans vary and can be expensive. An option many students choose is to get a local phone once on site with a local number and calling/data plan for the time they are abroad. Cell plans overseas are often cheaper than in the U.S. and a more affordable option than an international calling plan. Some students get a local 'SIM' card with a local number and data plan that works with their U.S. cell phone. Make sure this will work for you and that your phone is 'unlocked' (call your cell provider!) before buying the SIM card and plan. No matter what, it is important that you have phone access and calling ability while abroad in case of an emergency, and many programs will require you to have a working cell phone in-country. Read carefully through the information provided to you from your program. Suggestions for phone use on a country-specific basis will be included in your pre-departure materials.

These days calling over the internet is cheap and easy, and likely your best bet for frequent communication. WhatsApp, Messenger, Zoom, and many other apps have voice and video calling functions that can help you stay in touch using Wi-Fi and for little/no cost.

If you will reside with a host family, please realize that local calls often are not free and may be charged by both time and distance. If you must use your host family's phone, always ask for permission and offer to pay for your call. Don't be offended if they ask you to use your own phone or only allow you to receive but not place calls. In some countries itemized bills are not available making it impossible to know the actual cost of your call.

The internet is now widely available abroad (generally speaking), so you shouldn't have trouble connecting while studying abroad. That being said, sometimes the connections could be limited depending on where you are, especially in more rural and residential areas. If your program has you out in the field or in more remote locations, you could go without having internet for some days. You can check with your program provider about access and availability of the internet for your program. And always remember that while being disconnected may be



frustrating in the short term, one of the reasons you chose to study abroad is to experience a different culture.

## Homesickness and Communication

Of course, you will keep in touch with home, but too much contact with home can have negative effects on your experience abroad. The temptation to reach out to your friends and family at home on Zoom or social media is great, but if your mind is always thinking of your family and friends in the U.S., you will scarcely have time to absorb your new life in a new country. Try to restrict calling your parents and friends to once or twice a week, rather than every day.

## Checking Your Siena Email

Email can be a mixed bag when it comes to studying abroad. While email is an inexpensive and convenient way to stay connected with family and friends back home, beware of the temptation to spend too much time chatting with friends in the U.S. The time you spend chatting and surfing the net is time you are not interacting with the new culture.

Please remember that Siena will be communicating with you via email regarding housing, course registration, and other important matters. Missing these messages could mean missing out on getting housing or courses for your next semester!

## Section 3: Returning ‘Home’

### COMING HOME: WHAT TO EXPECT

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
-T.S. Eliot*

"Coming home?" You may be thinking, "I haven't even left yet!" While this may be true, we'd still like to highlight a few things for you to consider before leaving that can help make your eventual journey back to the United States a smooth one.

#### Immigration and Travel Home

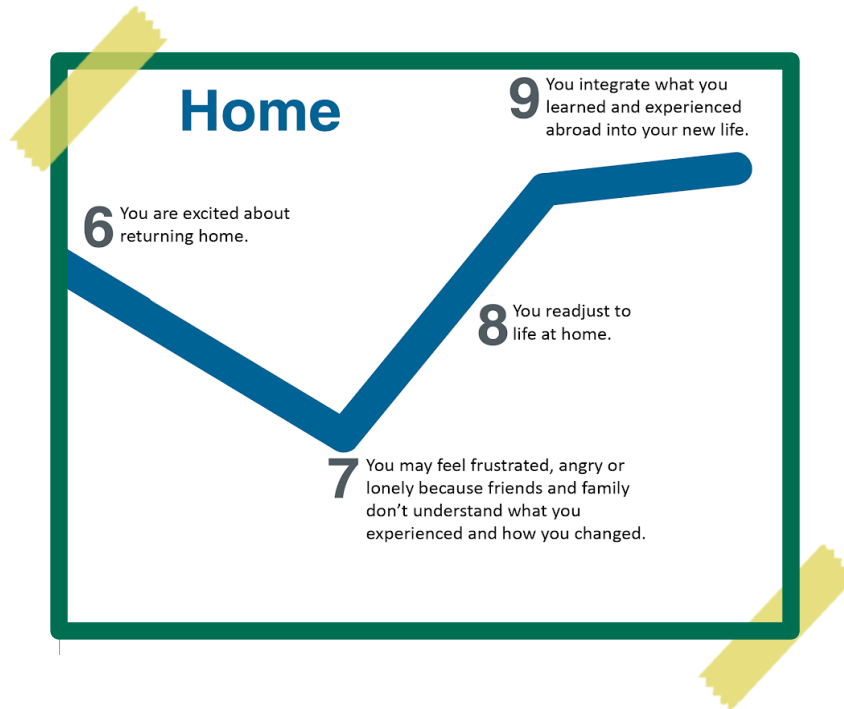
When you leave a country, you will go through customs and immigration again. Your visa will be cancelled, and you will declare what goods you have purchased while abroad. When you reenter the U.S., you will go through U.S. customs at your port of entry (airport). Typically, each person is entitled to transport only a certain amount of goods into the United States 'duty free', although it does vary depending on which countries you have travelled to. Purchases exceeding that amount are subject to duty taxes. If you plan to buy a lot of items while abroad, you should retain all of your receipts as proof of what you paid. More information about 'duty' taxes and allowances can be found on the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) website.

#### Re-Entry and Reverse Culture Shock

Returning to the United States and Siena College can be a huge adjustment from the life you will have experienced abroad. Returning home may even be more difficult than going abroad. You probably won't return to the U.S. the same person you were when you left. This can be a surprise to your unsuspecting family and friends. The extent of the changes you've gone through abroad probably won't be as apparent to you until you return home and realize that you're seeing things through a new set of eyes, and maybe even a new set of values. You may have experienced a challenge to your beliefs, convictions, values and worldview while you were immersed in a different culture. You may



have also experienced more academic freedom and personal independence while abroad. You may feel that you have matured and become more self-confident. You have undoubtedly changed in many ways. One of the greatest challenges of re-entry is adjusting your “new” self to your “old” home. It is very common for returnees to experience loss of identity during this time.



## What to Expect and What You Can Do

The signs of re-entry adjustment are similar to what you went through in adapting to your new culture. You may become critical of home and friends and their apparent disinterest in foreign affairs or your international activities. You may feel disconnected with those closest to you or become irritable for no reason. Or you may simply experience a feeling of homesickness for your overseas home. Just like culture shock, the re-entry adjustment period will pass. Be patient and give yourself time to adjust. Much of the impact of study abroad comes after you return home and have had time to reflect upon your experiences and the insights you have gained.



Here are some of the most common things returnees experience that contribute to the reverse culture shock experience:

- ✈ Boredom
- ✈ Finding it hard to explain your abroad experience
- ✈ Feeling like no one wants to hear about your time abroad
- ✈ People misunderstanding your experience
- ✈ Feeling alienated or like you don't 'fit in' anymore
- ✈ People thinking you've changed - and maybe not for the better



✈ Realizing your relationships with others has changed

Many refer to the process of re-acclimating as ‘unpacking’ your study abroad experience. Much like your adjustment when you arrived abroad, it is something that takes time and patience - with yourself and with others.

There are plenty of resources for you to learn more about this process - see the appendix for some great reading! The [Counseling Center](#) at Siena is also a great resource if you find yourself struggling with these re-entry feelings upon return.

## Returnee Events and Opportunities to Stay Involved

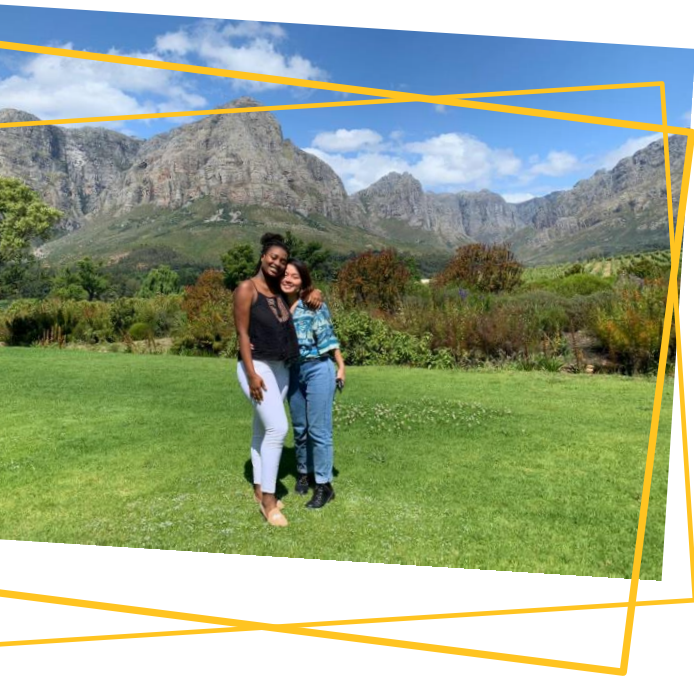
Study abroad doesn't have to be a singular experience. Instead, look at it as just the start of a lifetime of international experiences. When you get back to Siena, there will be ways in which you can keep your study abroad experience alive. Be sure to check out our [Returnee Toolkit](#) for Siena Saints! Here are some ways you can stay involved and keep your international experience alive and thriving:

- ✈ Volunteer through the Center for International Programs to tell prospective students about your study abroad experience and your host country.
- ✈ Minor in International Studies to incorporate your abroad experience into your academics.
- ✈ Stay in touch with your friends and host family abroad.
- ✈ Continue your foreign language studies, if relevant.
- ✈ Look for community service activities to teach English to local refugees.
- ✈ Make an appointment in the Career and Internship Center to discuss how to maximize and market your study abroad experience for future career opportunities.
- ✈ Consider pursuing international graduate study, English-teaching abroad, an international postgraduate fellowship, or a work/volunteer experience abroad.
- ✈ Follow Instagram accounts from your host country and join Facebook groups for students who have studied abroad or for expat groups who can relate to the experiences you've had.
- ✈ Write about your experience. Start a blog, keep up with a journal, or find another way to continue processing your experience and getting your feelings out.
- ✈ Stop in and say "hello" in the Study Abroad Office. We love hearing about your adventures - honestly, we never get tired of it! - and we are certain there will be many adventures to share!



## Going Abroad Again

Many students, once they have studied abroad, dream of their next chance to live and learn abroad. For most, this means pursuing something in their post-graduate years. From fellowships abroad, to teaching abroad, to graduate school abroad, to working abroad - there are many options to consider! The [Center for International Programs](#) can help you think through these options and discuss which may be the right path for you.



# CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND STUDY ABROAD

## Before You Leave

It may seem odd to think about careers and study abroad before you even go, but thinking ahead can set yourself up for success while abroad. If you have in mind the skills and competencies you will be gaining through study abroad before you arrive, and how these will relate to your future career, you will be in a perfect position to strengthen them while abroad!

For more resources on career development and opportunity, visit the Career and Internship Center on campus as well as their Career Preparedness Guides on our Canvas page.

- ✈ Make a plan for how you may search for summer internships or jobs while abroad, especially if you are going in the spring term.



## While You Are Abroad

- ✈ Network, network, network! The people you meet abroad will be invaluable in the future, especially if you decide to work abroad.
- ✈ Get involved. If you can volunteer, do it. If you can join some clubs and activities, do it. Take advantage of the opportunities you have!
- ✈ Consider asking your professors abroad for letters of recommendation in the future. If so, make sure to approach them about this before you leave.
- ✈ If you think you may be interested in graduate school abroad, take time to visit some schools while abroad! It's a great way to know if a school may be a good fit for you and begin your grad school search.

## When You Return

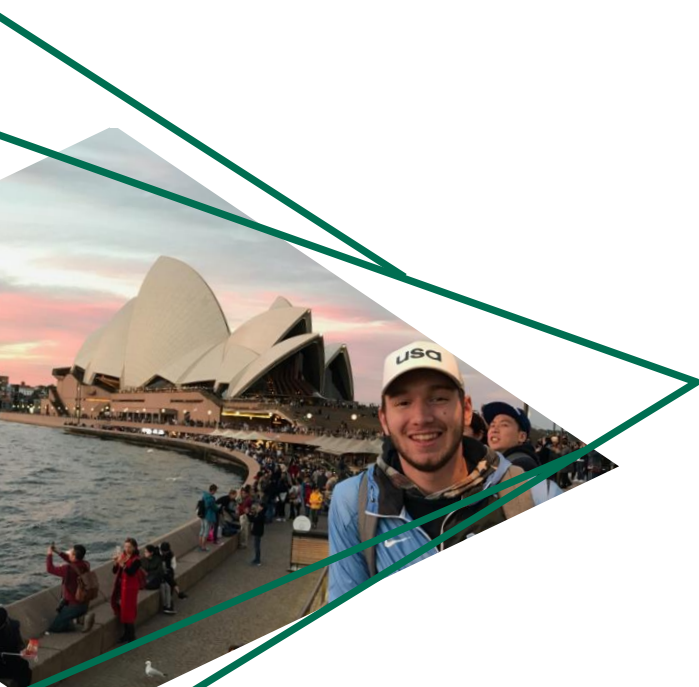
Attend professional development workshops and events offered by both CEPD and the *Center for International Programs*. These events help students process and articulate their study abroad experiences and leverage the experience to gain a professional edge

Make sure to include study abroad on your resume and cover letter, and don't forget to mention it in interviews! The Career and Internship Center can help you with this task.

Develop your study abroad '[elevator pitch](#)'. In about a minute or two, you should be able to articulate your study abroad experience and what you got from it in a meaningful way to use with employers and others. This goes beyond saying 'it was awesome!'.

Questions to ask yourself about your experience:

- ✈ To what extent did you actively interact & build relationships with people who hold different interests, values, perspectives during your study abroad?
- ✈ How did your study abroad experience contribute to your understanding of cultural differences in work or organization settings?
- ✈ How did your study abroad experience help you learn to adapt to situations of change or tasks that were unfamiliar to you?
- ✈ Describe a situation while you were abroad that challenged your ability to work with others in a group setting. What did you learn from this experience?
- ✈ How did your study abroad experience stimulate you to identify problems and develop alternative solutions to problems?
- ✈ What was the most significant thing you learned about yourself from your study abroad experience? How can you apply this knowledge to new situations and contexts?



# Appendix I: Recommended Reading

## BEFORE GOING ABROAD

### World Newspapers

Read world newspapers to get up to speed on the politics of the country in which you will be studying, as well as U.S. policy affecting that country. Many world newspapers are accessible through the Siena [Standish Library](#) website.

### Websites

[“What’s Up With Culture”](#): an interactive website developed for students to make successful cultural adjustments both before going overseas and upon returning home from studying abroad

[“Culture Matters”](#): Online workbook developed for the Peace Corps for helping participants to acquire the skills and knowledge to work and live abroad successfully.

[Study Abroad Student Guide](#): A Study Abroad Guide Written by a Student for Students.

### Further Reading

Berdan, Stacie, Allan E. Goodman, and Sir Cyril Taylor (2013). A Student Guide to Study Abroad. Institute of International Education.

Butler, Paige E. (2019). The cultural transitions model: Moving beyond culture shock to enhance student learning abroad. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 30(4), 67-93.

Paige, R. Michael, Andrew D. Cohen, Barbara Kappler, Julie C. Chi and James P. Lassegard (2002). *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student’s Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

Story, Shelley (2016). *Prepare for Departure: A Guide to Making the Most of Your Study Abroad Experience*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

**Culture of Safety: A practical guide to study abroad (video)**

**Know Before You Go: Preparing for safe study abroad (video)**

- ✈ Interexchange: [Dealing with Reverse Culture Shock](#)
- ✈ Small Planet Studios: [Reentry Roadmap](#)
- ✈ Study Abroad Blog: [Reverse Culture Shock](#)
- ✈ Transitions Abroad: [Coming Home](#)
- ✈ [10 Tips](#) for When You're Feeling Depressed After Study Abroad

*This document is adapted in part from the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) Emergency Preparedness Plan and from pre-departure materials of Skidmore College, Middlebury College, University of Georgia, Colorado State University, and Colby College.*