Please share this booklet with your parents AND direct them to the information on our website:

www.studyabroad.illinois.edu
# Table of Contents

## STUDY ABROAD OFFICE WELCOME

1. **Paying for Study Abroad**
   - Costs .......................................................... 2
   - University of Illinois Tuition and Fees ........................................ 3
   - Billing .......................................................... 4
   - E-Billing, Authorized Payer ...................................................... 5
   - Power of Attorney ......................................................... 6
   - Financial Aid ......................................................... 7
   - Withdrawal and Refund Policy .............................................. 7

2. **Health and Insurance**
   - Preventative Health Care .................................................. 9
   - Health, Medical Emergency and Repatriation Insurance (IL-CISI) .... 9
   - U of I Student Health Insurance Plan .................................... 11

3. **Safety and Well-Being Abroad**
   - Travel Precautions ...................................................... 13
   - Emergency Phone Numbers ................................................ 13
   - Recommended Guidelines for Students Abroad .......................... 14
   - Using Credit Cards Abroad .............................................. 15
   - Drugs Abroad ......................................................... 17
   - U.S. Consuls Help Americans Abroad ................................... 19
   - Privacy Act .......................................................... 20
   - Travel Warnings & Advisories ............................................ 20

4. **Cross-Cultural Information**
   - What I Wish I Had Learned Before I Left Illinois ...................... 21
   - Dealing with Culture Shock .............................................. 22
   - Stages of Cultural Adjustment: Honeymoon, Hostility, Humor, and Home 24
   - Discrimination and Sexual Harassment .................................. 25
   - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Students Share .................................. 26
   - Cultural Differences and How to Handle Them .......................... 27
   - Special Note to Women ................................................ 29
   - Racial & Ethnic Concerns ............................................... 29
   - What Happens When I Come Back? .................................... 30

5. **Other Important Matters**
   - What the Study Abroad Office Can and Cannot Do for You While Abroad 31
   - Keeping in Contact While Studying Abroad ............................. 32
   - When You Return ..................................................... 34
   - Transcripts and Credit ................................................ 34

6. **Recommended Reading**
   - Literature on Intercultural Issues ...................................... 36
   - Diversity Issues in Study Abroad ........................................ 38
   - For the Committed Vegetarian ............................................ 39
   - The Values Americans Live By .......................................... 41
   - Notes ............................................................................. 47
Congratulations! You have made the decision to study abroad and to participate in an experience that students often describe as life-changing. Now what?

Before you depart, you have many preparations to make. This handbook is designed to help by guiding you through important aspects of the planning process and University of Illinois procedures. In addition to reading the handbook, we encourage you to conduct individual research to discover more about your host country and the specific program you will be engaging in. While we admit that there is a lot of information to cover, we believe the time you spend now will enable you to get the most out of your experience while you’re studying abroad.

After reviewing the contents of this handbook, please contact our office with any questions that arise. We hope you will have a truly rewarding study abroad experience.

Sincerely,

The Study Abroad Office
115 International Studies Building
910 South Fifth Street
MC-480
Champaign, IL 61820
Phone: 217-333-6322
Fax: 217-244-0249
Email: sao@illinois.edu

Please note: This handbook is a guide, not a contract. It may be revised at the discretion of the Study Abroad Office.
I. PAYING FOR STUDY ABROAD

This information is for Illinois students participating in programs sponsored by the Study Abroad Office. Please familiarize yourself with the important University policies outlined below concerning costs, billing, financial aid, and withdrawal procedures for study abroad programs.

COSTS

Your costs for study abroad fall into two categories: those billed by the University of Illinois to your Student Account through UI-Integrate (“billable”) and those paid by you directly (“non-billable”).

BILLABLE COSTS

There are typically two costs in this category: a Student International Academic Affairs (SIAA) Program Fee and University of Illinois Tuition and Fees.

SIAA Program Fee

The SIAA Program Fee is also divided into two categories. The SIAA Program Fee amount varies depending on your study abroad program, but the list below contains charges that are often included in this fee. For program-specific details, please refer to your Confirmation of Participation (COP) form.

Program Instruction and Fees

- SIAA Administrative Fee
- Program-specific Participation Fees
- Host Institution or Program Provider Instruction and Fees

Miscellaneous Program Expenses

- IL-CISI International Health Insurance
- Room and Board
- Orientation, Excursions, and Activities

SIAA Administrative Fee

The SIAA Administrative Fee covers the costs of study abroad advising, your participation in a pre-departure orientation, the photocopying of your application and orientation materials, 24-hour emergency access to the Advisor-on-Duty, study abroad credit processing services, returnee programming services, and other costs that are necessary to attend to your health, safety, and academic concerns while you are studying abroad.

Some or most of your fees, including host or provider instruction and fees, room and board, orientation, etc., may be billed to you directly by your host institution or program provider rather than by the University of Illinois. In this event, these fees are considered “non-billable,” and will be addressed below.
The minimum SIAA Administrative Fees are as follow (fees subject to change):

- $600 per semester
- $600 per academic year
- $350 per summer

**University of Illinois Tuition and Fees**

As you are participating in an academic experience for which you will earn Illinois credit, you will be registered as an Illinois student for your term abroad and will pay corresponding tuition. In addition to earning Illinois credit, remaining registered and paying tuition will entitle you to obtain pre-approval on course equivalencies, to receive pre-departure advising including attending an orientation, to receive support while you are abroad, and to participate in programming upon your return. Remaining registered at the University also ensures that you are properly enrolled in an international health insurance plan and have access to emergency response support before and during your study abroad program. Furthermore, remaining registered allows you access to financial aid (as applicable), Illinois email, academic advising, and other important services while you are abroad.

The amount (or “Range”) of tuition and fees you pay depends on several factors: the kind of study abroad program you have chosen, the term of your study abroad program, your Illinois college and curriculum, and when you first entered Illinois. Note that when you are on campus and enrolled in 12 or more hours, you pay Range I Tuition. Range I Tuition is for full-time students and reflects full-time student costs. Range IV Tuition is for Illinois students who are not receiving Illinois instruction. There is no difference between Resident and Non-Resident costs for Range IV Tuition. For a breakdown of credit hours and Tuition Ranges, visit the Registrar’s website at [http://registrar.illinois.edu/financial/tuition_details.html](http://registrar.illinois.edu/financial/tuition_details.html).

**Illinois Tuition is based on the kind of study abroad program in which you participate.**

1. **Fall, Spring, Academic Year, or Calendar Year Study Abroad**: In most cases, students in this category pay Range IV Tuition and Fees.

2. **Summer Study Abroad**: If you are participating in a summer study abroad program that is NOT faculty-led, and that does NOT include the word “course” in the title, you will pay Range IV Tuition and Fees.

3. **Summer Faculty-led Courses Abroad**: Since you are taking an Illinois course with Illinois instruction, you will pay either Range II or Range III Tuition and Fees (Range III is the most common), depending on the number of credit hours you are earning in the course. In rare cases, Range IV Tuition may be applied to Courses Abroad Programs.

4. **Law Exchanges at any time**: You will pay Range I Tuition and Fees, just as if you were studying on campus.

**Tuition Chart**

To determine the amount of tuition you will pay, please visit the website below and select your Illinois College from the listing under the “Tuition” section below the “Undergraduate Students” heading. Tuition rates vary according to which year you entered Illinois, whether you are an Illinois resident, and which college you are enrolled in:

[http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/financial/tuition.html](http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/financial/tuition.html)
Tuition rates for fall and spring semester in an academic year are the same, and the tuition rate is usually updated during the summer. Tuition for summer is typically available in mid-spring.

In addition to determining your tuition, please also look at which fees you will pay according to your Range (fee information is available at the website above by clicking on “Campus Fees” under the “Undergraduate Students” heading). Usually, students who are studying abroad will pay the General Fee, AFMFA Fee, Library Fee, and Illinois Student Health Insurance Fee (unless you have exempted out of it).

**Tuition for Winter Break study abroad is included with fall on-campus tuition; in most cases, this does not constitute an additional cost if you are enrolled full-time on campus during the fall semester (although it may increase your tuition cost if you are not enrolled on campus full-time during the fall semester).**

**NON-BILLABLE COSTS**

Sometimes called “Estimated Costs,” non-billable costs include a combination of two or more of the following:

- Any costs that will be billed directly to you by your program and not by the University of Illinois
- Books and supplies
- Round-trip flight
- Local transportation
- Passport and photos
- Immunizations
- Personal expenses

For some programs, some or most of your costs may be billed to you directly by your host institution or program provider rather than by the University of Illinois, including host or provider instruction and fees, room and board, orientation, etc. In some cases, these charges must be paid in advance, and in others, you will pay upon arrival.

**BILLING**

You will be billed for study abroad in two or three segments, depending on which study abroad program you are participating in.

**ADVANCE FEE**

If the Study Abroad Office nominates or accepts you to the study abroad program you have applied for, the Study Abroad Office will bill your Illinois student account a non-refundable $305 advance fee to hold your place on your program. **Provided that you participate in the study abroad program, this fee will be deducted from the final cost of your program fees; however, please note that this fee is not refundable should you decide to withdraw from the study abroad program** (this fee is refundable if you are not ultimately accepted into your program). In general, if you are studying abroad during winter break or spring semester, this fee will appear on your November E-Bill. If you are studying abroad during summer, fall, or academic year, this fee will generally appear on your April E-Bill.
DEPOSIT

If you are participating in a program sponsored by a third party such as Arcadia, IES, University of Minnesota, etc., you will likely be asked to pay a program deposit directly to the program sponsor (CIEE, AUC, and CIC will not ask you for a deposit.)

All Advance Fees and Deposits are applied to the overall program fee, and do not reflect additional costs.

SIAA PROGRAM FEE AND ILLINOIS TUITION AND FEES

These fees are billed to your Illinois student account around the same time that the term begins at the University of Illinois. In general, if you are studying abroad during the spring semester, these charges will usually appear on your February E-Bill; if you are studying abroad for an academic year, you will generally see these charges on your September and February E-Bills; if you are studying abroad during the fall semester, these charges will usually appear on your September E-Bill; if you are studying abroad during the summer, you will generally see these charges on your June E-Bill; if you are studying abroad during winter break, these charges will usually appear on your December E-Bill.

Billing Questions?

If you have questions concerning billing, please call the Study Abroad Office at (217) 333-6322.

E-BILLS

At the beginning of each month, University of Illinois students receive email notifications in their official University email accounts stating that their E-Bills are available online. When you study abroad, you will continue to receive E-Bills from Illinois and to follow the same payment practices you adhere to while studying on campus.

Accessing your E-Bill

To access your E-Bill, log into UI-Integrate Self-Service at https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/index.html and complete the following steps:

- Select "Account Billing Information."
- Select the "UI-Pay" link.
- Select the "E-Bill/Online Payment," which will connect you to UI-Pay.
- Select "View Accounts" to view an HTML version of your E-Bill.
- Select “View PDF” to print your most recent E-Bill.

Allowing Others to View Your E-Bill and Make Payments

In addition to receiving an E-Bill in your university email account, you may designate two additional email addresses to receive the E-Bill in order to allow for a parent/guardian or other individual to receive E-Bill notifications and to make online payments on your behalf.

To authorize others to view and pay your E-Bill, log into UI-Pay through the UI-Integrate Self-Service Web site at: https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/index.html.
After logging in, complete the following steps:

- Select "Account Billing Information."
- Select the "UI-Pay" link.
- Select "E-Bill/Online Payment," which will connect you to UI-Pay.
- Select "Authorize Payers."

The Authorized Payer page allows you to set up a login name and password for a designated payer. An email will automatically be sent to the new Authorized Individual with the new login name and the Authorized Individual link. You must provide the new password to the Authorized Individual.

**Access**

After someone has been set up as an Authorized Individual, the Authorized Individual may log in to the UI-Pay Authorized Individual website at: https://quikpayasp.com/uillinois/campus/tuition/authorized.do

**Features**

Authorized Individuals are able to:

- View, download, and print your current and past billing statements;
- Pay your account online; and
- View online payment history.

**Payment Options**

Please visit http://www.usfsco.uillinois.edu/Payments.html#Due for instructions on how to pay your E-Bill. This website includes information about the University’s Payment Plan.

**PLEASE AUTHORIZE THE PAYING PARTY TO ACCESS YOUR ACCOUNT.**

Because of FERPA regulations, the Office of Student Accounts and the Study Abroad Office cannot release any information concerning your account to anyone other than you without your permission. In your study abroad online application, you will find the form Request to Release Account Information where you may designate a person to be in charge of your financial matters while you are abroad. The Study Abroad Office will be able to assist only the person or persons you have designated with questions related to your account.

**POWER OF ATTORNEY**

A Power of Attorney is a legal document that allows you to give someone the authority to sign your name on your behalf. We recommend you designate a Power of Attorney before you go abroad, in case you are in some way incapacitated and unable to sign on your own behalf. This can be necessary in cases of signing financial documents, such as financial aid, signing a housing lease for next year, and more.

To obtain a free Power of Attorney go to The Student Legal Service, 324 Illini Union. Information is available at: www.odos.uiuc.edu/sls/
FINANCIAL AID

If you anticipate using financial aid (including grants, scholarships, loans, etc.) to pay for study abroad, you must submit a copy of your study abroad program budget to the Office of Student Financial Aid. Your study abroad advisor will email this to you at the same time as the COP.

Please be aware that most, but not all, financial aid is applicable for study abroad. Illinois tuition waivers, MAP grants, and similar scholarships typically only pay the University of Illinois Tuition and Fees. Often, they cannot be used to pay the SIAA Program Fee, even when that includes host institution or provider program instruction and fee charges. Many students are offered additional loans to make up the remaining balance. If you have questions about your financial aid package during your term abroad, please take a copy of your official budget (or an estimated budget, if the official budget is not yet available) to the Office of Student Financial Aid for advising. To find a copy of your program’s estimated budget, visit the program page by conducting a “Program Search” online at www.studyabroad.illinois.edu. On the program page, you can view your program’s budget estimate by clicking on the link corresponding to your term abroad within the “Budget Sheets” section of the grey box located at the top of the program page.

Your Illinois financial aid and/or Illinois study abroad scholarships will be applied to your student account shortly before the beginning of the semester at the University of Illinois and around the same time that you will be billed for the SIAA Program Fee and Illinois Tuition and Fees. Your bill, financial aid, and study abroad scholarships will cancel each other out. If you still owe money, your account will reflect the balance owed. If you have aid or scholarship funds left over, they will be deposited into your direct deposit account (If you have not yet set one up, you may do so in the “Account Billing Information” section on Enterprise) to help you pay for other study abroad-related expenses. Note that occasionally financial aid or scholarships may credit to your account before all charges have been posted, causing you to get a larger direct deposit than you are owed. Please don’t spend that money until you know you have paid your study abroad bills in full.

UI INTEGRATE ONLINE SELF-SERVICE

You may check the status of your financial aid application, your financial aid awards, and the balance on your Student Account online at UI-Integrate Self Service. If you are expecting financial aid but it has not yet credited to your Student Account, you may be able to determine the reason by checking UI-Integrate Self Service at www.osfa.uiuc.edu or you may speak with a member of the Office of Student Financial Aid staff at (217) 333-0100.

Please note that summer financial aid requires a separate application process and is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more important information about financial aid and study abroad, please visit http://www.osfa.uiuc.edu/aid/special/study_abroad.html

WITHDRAWAL AND REFUND POLICY

WITHDRAWAL

If you decide to withdraw from your study abroad program, you must officially notify the Study Abroad Office, in writing or by email (sao@illinois.edu), of your decision to withdraw. It is not sufficient to withdraw your application online.
In addition to notifying the Study Abroad Office, if you are a University of Illinois student, you must also withdraw from your study abroad registration or course in UI Integrate, must notify your College of your decision to withdraw, and must notify your study abroad program provider or host institution of your withdrawal (if applicable). If the University of Illinois course-drop deadline has passed, or if you are dropping your last/only class for the term, you must also contact your College’s office to drop your study abroad registration. The Study Abroad Office cannot do this on your behalf.

If you withdraw from a study abroad program and do not return to the University of Illinois for that term, you must contact your College’s office and follow the established procedures pertinent to your circumstances so that you will be allowed to register for the following term.

**REFUND**

Whether you withdraw yourself or you are withdrawn from a study abroad program, the date on which the Study Abroad Office receives/sends the written or email notification of withdrawal is the date by which any refund will be calculated (regardless of the date of withdrawal of an online application). If a balance is due at the time of withdrawal, that amount must be paid to the University of Illinois according to established policies, in order to cover expenses incurred for you up to that point.

*Withdrawal Prior to Departure*

If you withdraw or are withdrawn from your study abroad program the day before the advertised starting date of the program, you will receive a refund of all program fees minus:

- Non-refundable advance fees;
- Any non-refundable portion of the airfare;
- Any non-refundable in-country payments made on your behalf.

*Withdrawal After Starting the Program*

You cannot receive a refund of any kind once you have arrived at the program site and have begun the program, except in the case of an extremely serious and verifiable health matter. In that event, recoverable costs after the non-refundable advance fees may be refunded.

Note that the University of Illinois publishes a list of deadlines corresponding to the percentage of Illinois tuition and fees that will be refunded to you if you withdraw. This list can be found at http://registrar.illinois.edu/financial/refunds.html

You cannot receive a refund if you complete the program.
II. HEALTH AND INSURANCE

It is critical for you to learn about any health risks you may face in your host country and to plan accordingly before you leave. Please review the resources below.

HEALTH ABROAD

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

You have been asked to attend a Health and Safety pre-departure orientation. Please speak with your study abroad advisor if you have health and safety-related questions. We recommend reviewing the PowerPoint information before departure:

http://www.studyabroad.illinois.edu/resources/health_safety/index.aspx

PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE

McKinley Health Center has an Immunization and Travel Clinic that offers recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control for countries around the world. We strongly recommend that you visit this great resource. Some countries require specific immunizations for entry, and certain immunizations require a series of shots or spacing between shots for proper protection, so please allow as much time in advance as possible to receive the appropriate immunizations.

You can only receive services at McKinley Health Center during the terms you are registered at Illinois and paying the McKinley Fee (you don’t pay this fee during the term you are abroad). Immunizations are typically not covered by the McKinley Fee. In addition to getting your country-specific immunizations prior to departure, please be sure to verify that your Tetanus and other standard immunizations are current as well.

MCKINLEY HEALTH CENTER
Immunization and Travel Clinic: www.mckinley.illinois.edu/Clinics/ITC/ITC.htm

You can also get country or region-specific health information at:

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL
(877) 394-8747 or 877-FYI TRIP or www.cdc.gov/travel

PANAMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION: www.paho.org

INSURANCE FOR STUDY ABROAD

Please share this information with your parents or guardians if they participate in your insurance or billing decisions.

IL-CISI International Health, Medical Emergency, and Repatriation Insurance

The University of Illinois requires that all students participating in study abroad programs have international study abroad insurance coverage through IL-CISI (Cultural Insurance Services International). Since most U.S. health insurance carriers do not adequately cover the range of issues facing students abroad, the University has selected an excellent international health insurance provider and negotiated bulk rates for study abroad students. As a Study Abroad Office program participant, you will be enrolled automatically in IL-CISI, and the insurance premium will be added to your Study Abroad Program Fee. More information
IL-CISI can also be found at: http://www.studyabroad.illinois.edu/resources/health_safety/insurance.aspx

IL-CISI Policy Brochure and ID Card

You will receive your policy brochure, claims form, and ID card with your orientation packet. If you need a new copy, you can come to 112 International Studies Building (Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.) to pick one up. You can also download the brochure and claims form from the website above. Be sure to enter your name and the dates of your program on your ID card. Your IL-CISI insurance ID number is on the back of your insurance card. Both students and parents/guardians should read the IL-CISI brochure so that all are aware of the services, policies, and exclusions.

Using IL-CISI

If you require medical attention while abroad, either contact IL-CISI for a referral at the telephone number or email address listed on the back of your insurance card or use the doctor or hospital of your choice. In the case of a medical emergency, call 1-800-472-0906 if in the U.S., call (713) 267-2525 if outside the U.S. (collect calls accepted), or email customerservice3@aig.com.

Many hospitals or medical centers may require payment at the time of service. If this occurs, you will be responsible for contacting IL-CISI for reimbursement. You must contact IL-CISI directly for any claims for medical expenses. If hospitalized, please have IL-CISI contact the hospital to arrange for direct payment.

Arriving Early or Extending Your Stay

If you are arriving early or extending your stay abroad after the completion of your program, you are urged to purchase additional health insurance coverage. You may purchase one additional month of coverage directly from IL-CISI. Information on how to extend your coverage through IL-CISI may be obtained at www.culturalinsurance.com/uil0047/. Note that the University of Illinois will generally report your coverage beginning 5 days before your official departure date from the U.S. through 5 days beyond your official departure date from the study abroad program, unless doing so would push your insurance into a higher cost category (for many short-term programs, we do not report extra days as doing so would increase costs). In general, however, if your extended stay falls within those 5 days, you do not need to seek additional coverage.

Exempting from IL-CISI

If you have alternate coverage and wish to be exempted from IL-CISI Insurance, you may consider making an exemption request. Most U.S.-based insurance policies, however, do NOT provide enough coverage for University Risk Management to approve the exemption. Closely compare your alternative policy to the IL-CISI policy, paying particular attention to emergency medical evacuation and repatriation of remains clauses, in order to determine whether to petition for an exemption; your policy must provide coverage that is equal to or greater than that provided by IL-CISI in order for you to qualify for an exemption. You may email sao@illinois.edu to request a copy of the exemption form, which your insurance company will need to fill out. It is your responsibility to have your insurance company complete the exemption form and return it to the Study Abroad Office.

Students participating in study abroad programs with the following providers will use the PROVIDER’S INSURANCE instead of the Illinois IL-CISI insurance: ACTR, Alliance, Arcadia
University, DAAD, IES Abroad, the University of Georgia, the University of Minnesota, and the University of North Carolina.

**U.S.-Based Insurance (Family Plan or Illinois Student Plan)**

You are currently covered by health insurance either through the University of Illinois Student Health Insurance plan or by your family’s plan (if you previously exempted out of the Illinois Student plan). We urge you to continue carrying your U.S.-based coverage while you are abroad, for several reasons. Please read the IL-CISI policy for more details. [http://www.culturalinsurance.com/uil0047/](http://www.culturalinsurance.com/uil0047/)

1 - IL-CISI has limited coverage for pre-existing conditions (including medication). If you might need care for a pre-existing condition, you are advised to continue coverage with the insurance company already covering you for that condition.

2 - IL-CISI pays for up to $5,000 of treatment in the U.S. In other words, if you should get injured or become ill while abroad and need to come back to the U.S. for follow-up care, IL-CISI will cover only the first $5,000 of your medical expenses. If your care costs more than $5,000, you will have to rely on your primary U.S. insurance to cover the difference. Otherwise, you must pay for any additional expenses out of pocket. For example, imagine that you go hiking, slip on some rocks, and break a leg while abroad. Pretend that your leg needs surgery, and that you will also need several follow-up surgeries over the course of the year. If IL-CISI is your only insurance, you will either have to stay in your host country for the duration of your surgeries (regardless of the quality of that country’s healthcare system), or return to the U.S. and pay for the surgeries out of pocket. *Note for international students: the $5,000 limit applies to the U.S. OR your home country.*

3 – Most study abroad programs have start and/or end dates that do not coincide completely with your U.S.-based insurance exemption, leaving you uninsured for a period of time between plans.

**Exempting from the University of Illinois Student Health Insurance Plan**

Although we strongly encourage you to maintain your U.S. coverage while abroad, if you are presently covered by University of Illinois Student Health Insurance, you may temporarily exempt from it for your term(s) abroad by filling out the *Limited Exemption Form*, available by emailing sao@illinois.edu, and returning the completed form to the Study Abroad Office before classes start at the University of Illinois for your term abroad. This will suspend your Student Health Insurance Plan for the term that you designate. Your Student Health Insurance premium will be charged upon reinstatement, so, if you elect to submit this form, be careful to designate a reinstatement day that coincides with the term that you will be back on campus, while still ensuring that you have adequate insurance coverage during breaks. The University encourages you NOT to exempt out of Illinois insurance unless you also have a secondary, U.S.-based insurance plan.

**If you do not exempt out of your Illinois Student Health Insurance by filling out the limited exemption form before classes start at the University of Illinois, your premium will automatically be billed to your student account.**

**Location-Specific Insurance**

Some study abroad programs or host countries require additional, local insurance coverage. You are welcome to try to exempt from that, but in most cases exemptions are not possible. These plans often provide coverage that is similar, but not identical, to that offered by IL-CISI.
Theft, Trip Cancellation, and Other Insurance

We recommend that you consider buying supplemental insurance coverage addressing trip interruption or cancellation and theft. These may be two different insurance policies. You can search for these policies through your personal travel agent or online. Sometimes the credit card with which you purchase airline tickets will provide some coverage. The University of Illinois is not able to provide coverage for such losses.
III. SAFETY AND WELL-BEING ABROAD

TRAVEL PRECAUTIONS

Ultimately, you must make the decision whether to study abroad in a particular region of the world in consultation with your family. It is regrettable, but true, that nowhere in the world, including in many of our own cities, can you expect a completely safe environment. It is impossible for anyone to predict future events or to provide guarantees about the course of events in the world.

Your safety and well-being while abroad is of utmost importance. Please read the travel precautions, recommended guidelines, legal information, and emergency services instructions below for information essential to maintaining your safety while abroad.

Each year, the Study Abroad Office receives telephone calls from families concerned about the safety of their students. We would like to share with you information about and advice from the Department of State for all U.S. citizens around the world.

Prior to departure, you must ensure that you are registered with the United States Government’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Please register yourself at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html. Upon registration, you will be informed of any official State Department travel restrictions or recommendations. It is essential that you ensure that the Department of State knows where to get in touch with you in the event of an emergency.

Because of recent events, we feel it is particularly important to remind you of safe travel practices. While not wishing to alarm you unduly, we urge you to exercise caution in partaking in any international travel during periods of tension, and to pay attention to any travel advisory information provided to you by program directors and U.S. government officials.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

If family members have questions concerning your safety abroad, they can reach the Study Abroad Office 24 hours a day, any day of the year. If calling after office hours, there will be a recorded message that will forward them to the Advisor-on-Duty.

EMERGENCY STUDY ABROAD OFFICE 24-HOUR NUMBER: (217) 333-6322

In the event that you or your family wishes to contact the U.S. State Department in Washington, DC, to obtain information about travel, the following phone numbers and web address will be useful. You can call these numbers prior to departure or during your term abroad.

OFFICE OF OVERSEAS CITIZEN SERVICES PHONE NUMBERS:
Mon.-Fri., 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST toll free U.S. hotline 1-888-407-4747
Mon.-Fri., 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST outside U.S. hotline 202-501-4444
Emergencies, after hours, holidays & weekends 1-888-407-4747

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE WEBSITE
http://travel.state.gov
Includes travel warnings, consular information sheets, passport information, U.S. embassies, consulates and more.
RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS ABROAD

The University of Illinois requires that students who are U.S. citizens be registered with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. If you are an international student, you should likewise inform your country of nationality’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs or State Department-equivalent of your travel plans.

If you have a problem while abroad, contact your Resident/Program Director or your study abroad office first. In case of emergency, U.S. citizens should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate (international students should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate of your country of nationality); if there is no U.S. presence in the city you are visiting, go to the Australian, Canadian, or British Embassy or Consulate where you can get informal assistance and guidance. If bad news about your host country becomes international news, call your parents to update them and reassure them that you are OK.

Our office is in contact with the U.S. Department of State in Washington concerning international travel recommendations. Currently, as long as the U.S. Department of State does not warn against travel to a particular place, the University of Illinois generally does not warn against travel, but may issue advice regarding safe travel practices. Illinois will try to notify its students immediately, should a Department of State travel warning be issued. In accordance with Department of State advice on safe travel, we advise you of the following standard safety precautions:

• Dress conservatively; avoid flashy dress and obviously American-style clothing, particularly American sweatshirts, T-shirts, and jeans. Avoid American logos on your belongings and clothing. Do not listen to your iPod when you’re walking. Avoid carrying big suitcases or heavy luggage. Keep a low profile; try to blend in with the host country’s surroundings as much as possible. Find safety in numbers and help to look out for others in your program, but try not to stand out as a group or individual.

• Be aware of your surroundings, noticing people that are near you and their behavior. Avoid being drawn into political exchanges, debates, protests, or conversations that might become incendiary or overly emotional. Be wary of people who seem overly friendly or interested in you. Be cautious, too, when you meet new people, and don’t give out your address or phone number. Be alert to your surroundings and the people with whom you have contact. Vary your travel routes and times, as well as varying other habits. Avoid taking shortcuts until you know they are safe. Also, be alert to anyone who might appear to be following you, or to any unusual activity around your place of residence.

• In large cities and other popular tourist destinations, avoid or spend as little time as possible in potential target areas for terrorist activity, especially places frequented by Americans such as: bars, discos, and fast-food restaurants associated with the U.S.; branches of American banks; American churches; and American Embassies and Consulates. Avoid American military installations or bases as well as national military bases and personnel.

• In train stations and airports, do not hang around ticket offices or airline counters; go quickly to your train or to the lounges beyond passport controls.

• When traveling outside your home base, leave a daily itinerary of your whereabouts with the host university liaison or your Resident Director so that you can be contacted immediately in case of emergency.

• Prior to your departure, print photocopies of your credit card, ATM card, passport, etc. Keep the originals with you, keep one set of copies in your luggage, and keep one set of copies in
the U.S. with a trusted friend or relative. You will also need to inform your credit card and ATM companies that you will be travelling internationally.

- Use a money belt to carry your passport, tickets, some money, credit cards, etc. Avoid visiting ATMs at night. Store money in various places. Know how to cancel your credit cards. If you leave town for a couple of days, take airline tickets, your passport, and credit cards with you for use in an emergency. Leave a copy of your passport with your host university liaison.

- When traveling outside of your program site, select your accommodations carefully. The most inexpensive lodging may not provide adequate security and it may be located in an unsafe area.

- Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Do not borrow suitcases and make sure nobody puts anything in your luggage. Do not leave your bags or belongings unattended.

- In case of emergency, remain in contact with the Resident Director or Program Liaison Coordinator of your program. Have sufficient funds on hand or a credit card to purchase a return ticket to the U.S. if it becomes necessary.

**Using Credit Cards Abroad**

Study abroad takes a great deal of planning and careful thought regarding finances. Here is Melibee’s top 5 list on using credit cards overseas.

1) **Read the credit card agreement.** Most people never bother to do this, so have no idea what policies apply to using your card, domestically OR abroad. The agreement will cover transaction fees, late fees, APR (annual percentage rate), credit limits and more. You should also visit your local bank to know if you can use your debit card abroad and if there are associated fees. In my experience, this can often be the most cost effective way to pay for services abroad and to obtain cash. However, read on, as there can be issues with these too!

2) **Have a plan for when you will and won’t use the credit card.** Will it be for emergencies only? Will it be for specific purchases such as souvenirs or hotels? Know the cost/benefit of using the card in these cases. For example, if your credit card comes with a rewards program and you plan to use the card to obtain airline miles (or that “gift” electronic gadget that you’re only 1000 points away from scoring), realize that it could easily cost you the same amount, or more, in transaction fees to reach these reward program goals. It is necessary to take the time to understand the consequences of purchases abroad. You will need a strategy! For example, what service fee will be charged? (It is often a % of the purchase amount vs a flat fee.) Charging purchases in the adrenaline rush of international travel and study can quickly snowball into a staggering bill and years of payments when not managed properly. Not managing the budget can result in issues with credit scores (in the US) – which is a lifeline for future credit. Take it seriously!

3) **Notify the credit card company of your upcoming study abroad and tell them where you plan to study and travel.** Your card can and often will be frozen if there is an unusual pattern of purchases. Carrying a 2nd, back up, card can help if this does happen even after calling your card company. You can ask for a back up copy of your main credit card, but don’t activate it abroad unless your first card is frozen. And have a back up plan in case the card isn’t available – keep a reasonable supply of cash on you. A reasonable amount will depend on where you are studying and traveling. Ask whether you’ll need to show ID (such as your passport) when using the card abroad. This is often the case in some locations or venues.
4) **Chip cards with a PIN (personal identification number) cards can often be more efficient abroad.** Many other countries will not be able to process credit (or debit) cards that only have a magnetic strip, which is the type of card that the US likes to issue. The US is very behind in this area and it has caused many woes for travelers abroad. In these cases, there is often no ability to manually punch the card number into the machine either. And be forewarned that some establishments (in the US and abroad) will not accept the American Express card (chip or no chip) simply because their processing fees are higher than Mastercard and Visa.

5) **Sign up for on-line bill payment.** This will allow you to quickly see your purchases and associated fees, as well as receive emails with the due date of your payments. This will help you to avoid any late fees and allow time to adjust your budget, based on your spending patterns, if needed.

This information was compiled by Missy Gluckmann and is available online at [http://melibeeglobal.com/2010/08/top-5-tips-for-using-credit-cards-for-study-abroad/](http://melibeeglobal.com/2010/08/top-5-tips-for-using-credit-cards-for-study-abroad/).

**Road Safety**

- Road travel is the single greatest risk to Americans abroad.
- We recommend that you do not drive while abroad.
- Be aware of traffic patterns and road culture in your host country.
- Avoid riding with drivers under the influence.
- Avoid traveling at night.
- Plan how to get home before you go out.
- Don’t assume pedestrians will be given the right-of-way.
- Do not hitchhike.
- Know local taxi and bus safety guidelines.

**Specific Concerns for Women**

- Avoid smiling in public if the local culture is wary of that action. Smiling may have different connotations in different cultures and may attract unwanted attention.
- In many countries, it is not proper for men to approach unknown women, so be particularly suspicious if a man approaches you.
- Be aware of common stereotypes about American women and be prepared to respond.
- Watch what local women do and where they go. Follow their example.
- You can contact the Office of Women’s Programs for counseling and support at 217-333-3137 or gain more information at the Women’s Resources Center ([http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/diversity/women/index.html](http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/diversity/women/index.html)).
**Students with Disabilities**

- You are not required to disclose your disability to the Study Abroad Office. However, in order for us to help prepare accommodations for you while abroad, you must be registered through the University’s Disability Resources and Educational Services Department (DRES) and you must discuss your needs with your study abroad advisor.

- Do not assume that accommodations will be made available on your study abroad program unless you have made arrangements in advance.

- For more information, visit the DRES website at [http://www.disability.uiuc.edu/](http://www.disability.uiuc.edu/), call 217-333-4602, or email sheft@illinois.edu.

**LGBT Points to Consider**

- Cultural mores and laws differ from place to place.

- Depending on where you study, attitudes range from full acceptance of identities to severe homophobia.

- Observe, be sensitive to local customs, and express yourself appropriately and respectfully.

- For more information, please refer to the following resources:
  - Rainbow SIG ([http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/](http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/))
  - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Resources Office ([http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/diversity/lgbt/index.html](http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/diversity/lgbt/index.html))

**DRUGS ABROAD**

- Each year, thousands of Americans are arrested abroad. Many of the arrests are on drug-related charges. Many of those arrested assumed, that as U.S. citizens, they could not be arrested; they are finding out the hard way that drug possession or trafficking equals jail in many countries.

- There is very little that anyone can do to help you if you are caught with drugs.

- It is your responsibility to know what the drug laws are in a foreign country before you go, because “I didn’t know it was illegal” will not get you out of jail.

- In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women arrested abroad. The rise is a result of women who serve as drug couriers or “mules” in the belief that they can make quick money and have a vacation without getting caught.

- A number of Americans arrested abroad on drug charges possessed marijuana. Many of these possessed one ounce or less of the substance. The risk of being put in jail for just one marijuana cigarette is not worth it.

- If you are purchasing prescription medications in quantities larger than that considered necessary for personal use, you could be arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking.
Once you’re arrested, the American consular officer CANNOT get you out.

If you are arrested on a drug charge it is important that you know what your government CAN and CANNOT do for you.

The U.S. Consular Officer CAN:

• Visit you in jail after being notified of your arrest.
• Give you a list of local attorneys (The U.S. Government cannot assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of these individuals or recommend a particular attorney).
• Notify your family or friends and relay requests for money or other aid—but only with your authorization.
• Intercede with local authorities to make sure that your rights under local law are fully observed and that you are treated humanely, according to internationally accepted standards.
• Protest mistreatment or abuse to the appropriate authorities.

The U.S. Consular Officer CANNOT:

• Demand your release or get you out of jail or the country.
• Represent you at trial or give legal counsel.
• Pay legal fees and/or fines.

If you are caught buying, selling, carrying or using hashish, heroin, marijuana, mescaline, cocaine, Quaaludes, designer drugs like ecstasy, or any drugs at all...

IT COULD MEAN:

• **Interrogation and Delays Before Trial** - including mistreatment and solitary confinement for up to one year under very basic conditions.
• **Lengthy Trials** - conducted in a foreign language, with delays and postponements.
• **Months or Life in Prison** - some places include hard labor, heavy fines, and/or lashings, if found guilty.
• **The Death Penalty** - in a growing number of countries (e.g., Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey).

Regarding the Legal System:

• Once you leave the United States, U.S. laws and constitutional rights do not cover you.
• Bail is not granted in many countries.
• The burden of proof in many countries is on the accused to prove his/her innocence.
• In some countries, evidence obtained illegally by local authorities may be admissible in court.

• Few countries offer drug offenders jury trials or even require the prisoner’s presence at his/her trial.

U.S. CONSULS HELP AMERICANS ABROAD

There are U.S. embassies in more than 160 capital cities of the world. Each embassy has a consular section. There are also consular officers at about 60 U.S. Consulates General and 20 U.S. Consulates around the world (Consulates General and Consulates are regional offices of Embassies).

Consular officers in consular sections of embassies do two things:

• issue visas to foreigners and

• help U.S. citizens abroad.

The Department of State’s Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Overseas Citizens Services provides emergency services pertaining to the protection of Americans arrested or detained abroad, the search for U.S. citizens overseas, the transmission of emergency messages to those citizens or their next of kin in the United States, and other emergency and non-emergency services. Contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST. The numbers are: 1-888-407-4747 (toll free) in the U.S. or 202-501-4444 outside the U.S.

For an emergency after hours or on weekends or holidays, call the Overseas Citizens Services’ duty officer at: 1-888-407-4747.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Replace a Passport.
If you lose your passport, a consul can issue you a replacement, often within 24 hours. If you believe your passport has been stolen, first report the theft to the local police and get a police declaration. This process is smoother if you have a photocopy of your passport.

Help Get Funds.
Should you lose all your money and other financial resources, consular officers can help you contact your family, bank, or employer to arrange for them to send you funds. In some cases, these funds can be wired to you through the Department of State.

Help In An Emergency.
If your family needs to reach you because of an emergency at home or because they are worried about your welfare, they can call the State Department’s Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747 (toll free). The State Department will relay the message to the consular officers in the country in which you are traveling. Consular officers will attempt to locate you, pass on urgent messages, and, consistent with the Privacy Act, report back to your family.

Visit In Jail.
If you are arrested, you should ask the authorities to notify a U.S. consul.
**Make Arrangements After The Death Of An American.**

**Help In A Disaster/Evacuation.**
If you are caught up in a natural disaster or civil disturbance, you should let your relatives know as soon as possible that you are safe, or contact a U.S. consul who will pass that message along to your family through the State Department. Be resourceful. U.S. officials will do everything they can to contact you and advise you. However, they must give priority to helping Americans who have been hurt or are in immediate danger.

**WHAT CONSULAR OFFICERS CANNOT DO:**

- In addition to the measures noted above, consular officers cannot act as travel agents, banks, lawyers, investigators, or law enforcement officers. Please do not expect them to find you employment, get you a residence or driving permit, act as interpreters, search for missing luggage, or settle disputes with hotel managers. They can, however, tell you how to get help on these and other matters.

- If you need to pick up mail or messages while traveling, some banks and international credit card companies handle mail for customers at their overseas branches. General Delivery (Poste Restante) services at post offices in most countries will hold mail for you.

**PRIVACY ACT**

The provisions of the Privacy Act are designed to protect the privacy rights of Americans. Occasionally, they complicate a consul’s efforts to assist Americans. As a general rule, consular officers may not reveal information regarding an individual American’s location, welfare, intentions, or problems to anyone, including the individual’s family members or Congressional representatives, without the expressed consent of that individual. Although sympathetic to the distress this can cause concerned families, consular officers must comply with the provisions of the Privacy Act.

For more information, please contact the Overseas Citizens Services, Department of State,
Room 4811, Washington, D.C. 20520
Department of State Publication 10176
June 1994

**TRAVEL WARNINGS AND ADVISORIES**

“Travel Warnings” are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country or locality. In the recent past, Travel Warnings have been issued in response to natural disasters, political or civil unrest, and health issues. For the most current warnings, visit: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

**WHO EMERGENCY TRAVEL ADVISORY**

*World Health Organization* (WHO) travel advice is issued to protect international public health and to reduce opportunities for further global spreading of disease along the routes of international air travel. Precautionary measures aim to reduce the impact of and contain the disease while it is still in a relatively early stage. The WHO homepage is: [www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/).

Study abroad programs in a country for which a WHO Emergency Travel Advisory has been issued may be subject to withdrawal or cancellation.
IV. CROSS-CULTURAL INFORMATION

Experiencing a new culture can present many challenges as well as opportunities for growth. We have compiled the following information based on our collective knowledge as well as on advice from former study abroad returnees to assist you in preparing for your immersion into a new culture.

WHAT I WISH I HAD LEARNED BEFORE I LEFT ILLINOIS

STUDYING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

• Don’t be shy about the language. Just get out there and speak - no matter how many mistakes you make. You will get your point across even if your grammar isn’t good.
• Learning a foreign language fluently (even after 6 years of practice) is hard!

HOW DO I INTEGRATE INTO THE FOREIGN CULTURE?

• Try not to choose only Americans as friends because you are already comfortable with them. Meet as many people as possible.
• It’s a different system over there. You can’t know everything before you go - so be calm about it.
• You will get homesick at the beginning, but then you adjust to the culture. Be open to the differences. Be outgoing and get involved in campus activities.
• Bring gifts for host students and families.

I CAME ALL THIS WAY... NOW HOW DO I ADJUST?

• This may possibly be the hardest thing you have ever done. But, it will be the greatest thing. For the first month, you may hate everything, but after that initial shock wears off you’re fine. I almost dropped out and came home - I was a total basket case! So, if you ever feel like dropping out - don’t do it!
• Bring pictures of home, family, friends etc. I didn’t bring many with me and I wished I had. There will be times when you’ll really enjoy looking at them.
• Talk to people who have been there. You will be homesick but it goes away so fast and before you know it you’re back, and wish you were still there! Take advantage of everything!
• Be prepared to stay forever because you may never want to return.
• No matter what, you will be a different person when you get back.

SO MANY CLOTHES, SO LITTLE LUGGAGE...WHAT DO I PACK?

• Pack light! Almost everyone over-packed.
• Bring a large camping backpack; it’s so-o-o convenient when traveling. Pack lightly and don’t think about how short your stay abroad is - just enjoy it.
• Bring extra passport photos.
• Bring several types of clothing.
• Soak up the atmosphere and culture. Once you come home it will feel like you were never there. Take a million pictures and write a journal!
• Read up on the country and bring a good travel guide. Don’t take a lot of stuff, especially when you travel. Everyone wears the same thing over and over and you can always buy anything you need.
DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

Studying abroad can be one of the most exhilarating experiences of your life. Or, it can become a series of bewildering and frustrating incidents that leave you longing for home. Aside from the basic preparations of the "hows" and "wheres" of your trip, it is also valuable to take some time to investigate "what am I likely to encounter". These are the things that will happen to you as you mingle with people whose values, traits and characteristics are different from your own. By thinking and preparing for these encounters, you will certainly enrich your study abroad experience.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES—WHAT ARE THEY?

We are surrounded by elements in our own culture that influence who we are and how we relate to the world. We become comfortable in our home culture because we have grown up with it. Our values and attitudes about who we are and how things should be have been shaped by our experiences in our native culture. What happens when we suddenly lose the cues and symbols that orient us to situations of daily life? What happens when the facial expressions, gestures, and words are no longer familiar? The psychological discomfort that we feel in this foreign situation is commonly known as "culture shock".

REACTIONS TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Culture shock is a logical reaction to differences we encounter in a foreign culture. Luckily, it is only one phase in the process of integrating into a foreign country. The various phases that you may find yourself going through in this process include:

• Being fascinated with all the new things you are experiencing.
• Feeling uncomfortable because you feel as if you don't belong.
• Rejecting the foreign culture and people as being strange.
• Learning to decipher foreign behavior and customs.
• Accepting and enjoying the foreign culture.

Our emotional reactions to these various phases will influence how we relate to local citizens. Naturally, being excited and fascinated with foreign behavior and customs will help pave the way for positive interaction. Conversely, acting with hostility and aggression toward those "strange and un-American" customs will do little more than perpetuate an "ugly American" image and prevent the local populace from interacting with you.

PREPARING FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Read as much as possible about where you are going in order to gain some perspective. A good starting point is to check out the resources available for your study abroad country available on the library’s website at: http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/diversity/library.html.

Your bibliography might also include guidebooks, international newspapers, magazines, novels, plays, poetry, and political and economic analyses. Talk with international students and veteran travelers who have been where you want to go. Ask your Study Abroad Office advisor as well.
A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Have a clear idea of what you specifically want to accomplish by going abroad. Keep in mind your priorities for what you feel is important to experience. It is important to keep an open mind and be willing to pursue the unexpected, taking advantage of opportunities presented by your host family and new friends.

It might be helpful to try to figure out what you want to accomplish in your travels by answering the following questions:

- Who am I? (awareness of your personal beliefs and attitudes)
- Where do I come from? (awareness of U.S. cultural beliefs and customs)
- Where am I going? (awareness of foreign culture customs, behaviors and values)
- What am I going for? (to practice a foreign language, interest in foreign countries, to see famous sights, to leave the U.S., to impress my friends...)
- What am I willing to consider? (How open will you be to different ways of doing things? Will you “try on” some of the behavior and values of the host culture?)

GETTING OVER CULTURE SHOCK

Knowledgeable travelers advise handling culture shock with adaptability, a sense of humor, and a lot of common sense. Give yourself time to become accustomed to cultural differences. You may even find that many of the differences offer a pleasant change from the U.S. way of life. If you have an active interest in finding meaningful patterns of unfamiliar customs, it expands your horizons and adds the wealth of another culture to your experience. The following advice from past students is valuable:

"You can go with everything--strangeness, the inconvenience, the different customs--or you can fight it all and be miserable in the very place where others are having the time of their life..."

"When you are there, try not to compare everything with home...."

HOW CULTURAL DIFFERENCES RELATE TO YOU

Discovering cultural differences and experiencing "culture shock" are both powerful learning tools. Through these, one gains a high degree of self-understanding and personal growth. Past travelers say that traveling abroad provides an excellent education in what it means to be an American and also in how the rest of the world's populations live and think. Don't try to find a "little America" wherever you go. By doing so, you will miss so many of the beautiful experiences your host country has to offer.

Remember, there may be difficult and even frustrating times for you overseas. However, as some of our former students have noticed, bad moments (even days) are quickly forgotten, and even the bad experiences become priceless stories you can look back upon with a smile.
THE STAGES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT*

Adjustment to a new culture is not accomplished in a few days. In fact, adjustment is an ongoing process. What follows are the typical four stages of cultural adjustment identified by Gregory Trifonovitch. Although they are generally experienced as described, you may re-visit each stage several times as you experience the natural ups and downs of every day life.

The Honeymoon Stage

This initial stage is characterized by exhilaration, anticipation and excitement. You will be overcoming jet lag and travel fatigue while going through registration, orientation, tours, parties and getting acquainted with your surroundings. You are fascinated with everything that is new. You are embarking on your “dream come true”—to study in a different country. You feel eager to please the people around you. You display a spirit of cooperation and show an active interest in others. Because you are likely to feel eager to please others, you may nod or smile to indicate understanding when in fact you have not understood. When the misunderstandings mount up, you are likely to experience the second stage of cultural adjustment.

The Hostility Stage

The second stage is characterized by frustration, anger, anxiety and sometimes depression. You may feel frustrated and, if you are in a non-English speaking country, you might be weary of speaking and listening in a foreign language daily. Sleep patterns may be disrupted. You may suffer from indigestion or be unable to eat. You might feel upset because, although you have taken time to learn about the new country, and know how to speak the language, you don’t seem to understand anyone. You might react to this frustration by rejecting your new environment. The internal reasoning might be, “If I feel bad it’s because of them.” At this point it is likely that you will display hostility toward your host culture. Some of this hostility is translated into fits of anger over minor frustrations, excessive fear and mistrust of host-country nationals, frequent absenteeism, lack of interest, lack of motivation and, at worst, complete withdrawal. Many academic problems begin during this stage. If you find you are having a difficult time, talk to your Resident Director or someone in the International Office where you are.

The Humor Stage

This third stage follows when you begin to feel relaxed in new situations and begin to laugh at misunderstandings and minor mistakes that would have caused major headaches in the hostility stage. By now, you will have made some friends and are able to manage better in the host culture. The faster you can learn to operate in this phase, the easier your transition will be.

The Home Stage

The final stage occurs when you not only retain allegiance to your home culture, but also “feel at home” in your new culture. You have successfully adjusted to the norms and standards of the host culture and should be commended for the ability to live successfully in two cultures.

*The next page shows a graph of the Cultural Adjustment Curve.
DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Though discrimination is illegal in most countries, it may still occur. Discrimination is built on negative racial, gender, or other stereotypes that are influenced by a variety of factors, including the media. If you believe you are being discriminated against, please discuss it with on-site program staff or the University of Illinois Study Abroad Office.

Sexual harassment, as defined by law, is any unwanted sexual gesture, physical contact, or statement that is offensive, humiliating, or an interference with required tasks or career opportunities.

You will be entering a different culture and must realize that in some instances foreign methods of communication may be uncomfortable for you. For example, in some cultures people touch in a more open fashion. In others, people stare with no intention or implication of rudeness. Regardless of the mode of communication, within the host country’s cultural context this may not be viewed as harassment. If the communication becomes uncomfortable, even after acknowledging cultural differences, we encourage you to sit down and talk to the individual and try to resolve your concerns on an informal basis. This provides the individual an opportunity to explain the culture and affords the same of you.

If you do not feel comfortable talking directly to the individual, you should feel free to take your concerns to an on-site staff person. This person could be the coordinator assigned by the program or the individual assigned to handle student affairs by the institution you are attending. If it is unclear to you who is responsible for handling this issue at your program site, or if you wish further advice or assistance, please contact the Study Abroad Office in Illinois.
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students Share... 

People can't relate to the experience of you having been abroad, much less the gay parts of it. To this day, I don't think I have talked to my family about being gay abroad. My gay friends, however, want to know about that and hardly anything else.  
-- gay male, calendar year work abroad in Japan

I feel more validated here than I did there. I did not meet anyone openly gay in China...the gay community in the U.S. is much more accessible and you're likely to meet others wherever you go.  
-- lesbian female, semester in China

As a lesbian, my study abroad experience was pivotal to the development of my identity and the acceptance of myself.  
-- lesbian female, semester in the UK

Coming out in an environment where I was unknown allowed me to concentrate on myself and my feelings almost exclusively.  
-- gay male, academic year in Germany

I had reverse culture shock when I came home, but a more balanced and open mind in dealing with everything else in life, including my sexuality.  
-- bisexual female, short-term study and work in Greece

Returning, knowing I would have to come out to my family and the friends whom I had known since childhood, made me quite apprehensive and very nearly prompted me to stay in [the host culture].  
-- gay male, academic year study and work in Germany

Coming home was the most difficult part of the experience. My friends and family could not relate to my experience overseas, much less about my coming out. They were shocked when I came out to them upon return...I only knew one gay man--a fraternity buddy. I looked him up and coming out to him was a great help.  
-- gay male, work abroad in Africa

Coming out after returning was quite a challenging experience. My family temporarily rejected me, but my mom, sister, and brother came around.  
-- gay male, academic year in France

If I hadn't gone away I don't think I would have thought about my sexuality as much or as clearly as I did.  
--bisexual female, calendar year in Germany
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

WELL, I’VE SEEN SOME SHOWS, READ BOOKS, AND MET PEOPLE FROM THERE...

Generally, it is very hard to know what life is really like in a country or region whose culture one has never experienced directly. But it is very easy to have the illusion of knowing what it will be like—from images furnished by popular communications media, from reading, or perhaps having met a few people from “there,” here on home ground. Simply “knowing about” another culture, however, is not the same thing as knowing what it will feel like to be learning and living there, on its terms. Every culture has distinct characteristics that make it different from every other culture. Some differences are quite evident (e.g. language, religion, political organization, etc.). Others can be so subtle that while foreign visitors may be vaguely aware of them, making adjustments is a complex process and one may remain uncomfortable and off balance for quite some time.

One of the difficulties students and other travelers have in adjusting to foreign life comes about because they take abroad with them too much of their own “cultural baggage”: misleading stereotypes and preconceptions about others, coupled with a lack of awareness of that part of themselves which was formed by U.S. culture alone. As a result, suddenly feeling like a fish out of water is not an uncommon experience. It is in fact something that should be anticipated as normal and likely, at least for a while.

NOBODY LIKES TO BE STEREOTYPED...

Frequently, the stereotype of the American is far from complimentary: the boorish tourist who expects everyone to speak English, the arrogant patriot who thinks every country in the world should pattern itself after the United States, the drunken reveler who sees the anonymity of traveling abroad as an opportunity to drop all civilized inhibitions—all have contributed to the development of this unfortunate stereotype. It is up to you to behave in a manner that will convince your hosts that this is indeed an unjustified stereotype that cannot be applied arbitrarily, at least to yourself.

In some areas, the American outgoing manner, especially on the part of young women, can be grossly misinterpreted: a friendly smile and warm “hello” on the streets of Rome could easily be interpreted by an Italian Lothario as something more than mere friendliness. This is to say that until you develop a feel for the social customs characteristic of the area where you are living and studying, it is wise to be more formal and restrained in your social contacts.

Keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as adept at stereotyping Americans as we are at stereotyping them—and the results are not always complimentary. The following are a few examples of the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others frequently associate with the typical American:

- outgoing and friendly
- Immature
- have all the answers
- wealthy
- lacking in class consciousness
- informal
- hard working
- racially prejudiced
- generous
- disrespectful of authority
- loud, rude, boastful
- extravagant and waste
- ignorant of other countries
- always in a hurry
- promiscuous
SO, HOW DO I FIT IN THEN?

Here are some basic things that you, as a student in another culture, can keep in mind to integrate yourself more successfully into your host culture.

**Politeness**  
In keeping with the relatively formal manner of social customs abroad, you should place much more emphasis on the simple niceties of polite social behavior than you might at home. Be prepared to offer a formal word of greeting to whomever you meet in your day-to-day activities.

**Humor**  
While each country has its own particular brand of wit and humor, very few cultures appreciate the kind of "kidding" to which Americans are accustomed. Comments, even when intended to be humorous, can often be taken literally.

**Speaking the Language**  
When it comes to language, most people will be extremely flattered rather than amused at your efforts to communicate in their native language. Do not be intimidated or inhibited when practicing your own limited command of the language. Do your best to avoid slang expressions, which may be totally meaningless or inappropriate in the context of another culture. Be aware of the differences between "familiar" and the "polite" forms of address and be sure to use them properly.

**Physical Contact**  
When establishing social relationships, "play it by ear" in determining the level of familiarity that you should adopt at the various stages of your relationship. A cheerful pat on the back or a warm hug may be quite embarrassing and uncomfortable in certain cultures. All cultures have different notions about social space, for instance how far away to stand or sit when conversing, or how to shake hands or wave farewell. Restraint is advisable until you learn how the locals do it and what they expect.

**Personal Questions**  
Let your hosts point the way when engaging in "small talk." While Americans may find it easy and quite appropriate to talk about themselves, in some countries, your hosts may view this as being as impolite as asking personal questions of them.

**Drinking and Drunkenness**  
Be extremely sensitive of others’ attitudes and feelings when it comes to drinking. You will often find that your hosts enjoy social drinking as much as any American, but they might not look upon drunkenness as either amusing or indeed tolerable. Know the law, local customs, and your limits.

**Price Bargaining**  
Haggling is not only appropriate, but even expected in some circumstances. The trick is to know under which circumstances haggling is appropriate. You can always test the waters by politely indicating that you like the product very much but that it is a bit more than you had anticipated spending. If the merchant wishes to bargain further, this will give them the opening they need to offer you the product at a lower price; if it is not that kind of an establishment, you can simply (and politely) terminate the conversation.

**Photograph Etiquette**  
You may want to include the local populace in your pictures. However, remember that the people you "shoot" are human beings and not curiosity objects. Be tactful and discreet in how
you approach photographing strangers; it is always courteous and wise to ask permission before taking someone's picture.

Social customs differ from one country and culture to another, and there is simply no way you can fit in and be at home unless you learn what is and isn't appropriate behavior. It is impossible to make generalizations that can be applicable to every situation. Therefore, it is socially acceptable to inquire politely about local customs and social niceties.

**SPECIAL NOTE TO WOMEN**

Some women students in certain overseas locations (e.g. South America, the Middle East, and parts of Europe) have a hard time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad, in both public and private interactions between men and women. Some (but not all) men in such countries openly demonstrate their appraisal of women in ways that many American women find offensive. It is not commonplace for American women to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly appraised, and to be actively noticed simply for being American women. Sometimes the attention can be flattering. However, it may become very annoying and potentially even angering. Local women, who often get the same sort of treatment, have been taught how to ignore the attention.

**RACIAL AND ETHNIC CONCERNS**

No two students studying abroad ever have quite the same experience. Reports from past participants vary from those who felt exhilarated by being free of the American context of race relations, to those who experienced different degrees of “innocent” curiosity about their ethnicity, to those who felt they met both familiar and new types of ostracism and prejudice and had to learn new coping strategies. Very few students of color conclude that racial or ethnic problems, which can be encountered in other countries, represent sufficient reasons for not going abroad. We suggest that you ask the Study Abroad Office for referrals to students of color who have
studied abroad and see if former program participants can provide you with some counseling. See the “Diversity” section of the “Studyabroad.com Handbook” for further information and helpful hints.

Adapted from Bill Hoffa’s “Exploring Cultural Differences”
Adapted from Bill Hoffa’s “Studyabroad.com Handbook”

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I COME BACK?**

There is a lot to think about before you go abroad, and much more to consider when you are overseas and integrating into another culture. This booklet prepares you for the experiences and emotions you will go through as you progress at varying rates through culture shock. What many students don’t realize is that when their time abroad comes to an end, there is another unique experience that you may go through in varying degrees. It is sometimes called *reverse culture shock*, and can make your re-entry into the United States rougher and bumpier than you expected.

Coming back home after spending time abroad doesn't mean the end of your intercultural experience. It does, however, mean that for the time being, you’re back in the United States and that can require an adjustment. Just as you had to adjust to your host country, the new you—the one you discovered abroad—will have to get to know your family, friends, and home culture all over again.

Fear not, as this is a common experience for many returning study abroad students. We just wanted to present the idea for your consideration so it will not become an unexpected shock to your system. When you return, you will receive a Returnee Handbook which will go over in detail the elements of “reverse culture shock” and the various things you can do to make your re-entry as smooth as possible.

**YOUR INPUT**

This handbook is a compilation of stories, ideas, and experiences of many who have ventured abroad before you. As every person’s experience is different, and times and customs are always changing, your input into this handbook can be very valuable. Upon your return (or even while you are abroad), we welcome you to submit ideas for this handbook. Anything from a line or two about what you wish you had known to a full article on a specific topic will be considered for inclusion.

Best wishes on your imminent journey—both the physical journey AND the personal journey.
V. OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS

WHAT THE STUDY ABROAD OFFICE CAN AND CANNOT DO FOR YOU WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD

While you are abroad, the Study Abroad Office is your liaison with the University of Illinois and also your record-keeper. In case of any questions about courses, financial aid, registration, billing, or anything to do with your study abroad programs, you or your family should contact the Study Abroad Office first at 217-333-6322.

• WE CAN sort out registration or billing questions.

• WE CAN give advice about any problems to do with University matters, i.e., help or refer your family to the right department. If you are worried about anything, call the Study Abroad Office first at 217-333-6322.

• WE CANNOT give your name, address, or UIN to anyone, including your family members, relatives or friends. You should give this information to all the people you want to have it. (If you don’t have a host address before you leave, you can give them the program’s contact address until you have a permanent address abroad.)

• WE CANNOT pay your bills, library fines, McKinley fees, or any balance you owe UIUC. Please pay all your bills before you go. (Remember that phone bills come in late sometimes, so please, check before you leave that everything is clear.)

• WE CANNOT calm down anxious family members if they haven’t heard from you. Write or call your family regularly. If you say you are going to call at a certain time, please DO so. Don’t think that your family won’t worry, they will! This is especially important on holidays and birthdays.

• WE CANNOT arrange housing for you for your return. Pick up a housing contract before you leave campus, or have friends arrange housing for you.

• WE CANNOT register you for your return term. It is important that you know your academic advisor’s name, address, telephone number, and email address. For important University of Illinois dates, please refer to the Illinois Campus Academic Calendar at: http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/registration/deadlines.html

• WE CANNOT accept collect phone calls from abroad.

• SENIORS: WE CANNOT check on your graduation requirements for you. Sit down with your academic advisor and your college records officer before you leave and discuss your requirements for graduation. Check on your residency requirements as well. Make sure that you take the right courses while abroad.

• For those of you applying to law schools and graduate schools: WE CANNOT prevent those schools from asking to see an official transcript of grades from your study abroad institution, even if you decide to take your abroad work for “credit only.” Most schools will require a transcript from the actual study abroad school you attended.

• For students on other U.S. college or organizations sponsored programs, WE CANNOT work out anything to do with payments, refunds, or specific program policies. You are under their jurisdiction.
KEEPING IN CONTACT WHILE STUDYING ABROAD

Keeping in contact with friends and family while studying abroad can be challenging in some ways, because it will be a change from how you normally communicate. You will want to be sure to maintain a balance between keeping in touch with folks at home and interacting with your host culture, including new friends, new classmates or roommates, and possibly a host family. Here are some ways to keep in contact both with home and with your study abroad location, and some common trends that we’ve seen from students who have already studied abroad.

INTERNET

There are so many ways to keep in contact, especially on the internet, where—as you probably know—the possibilities are endless! First of all, access to the internet in your host country may be anywhere from easy to difficult, depending on your location. The majority of countries where we send students will have wireless internet, or at least computer labs, at their host universities or institutions. Outside of school, depending on your location, internet access may pose a challenge. In some places, particularly in Europe, wireless access is available, but you are required to sign a long-term contract in order to get it. Some host families, dorms, and apartments will have the internet, and you can also go to internet cafes around town. In most countries outside the U.S., internet cafes are easy to find, inexpensive, and often popular places to hang out.

FACEBOOK & TWITTER

One of the ways students commonly keep in contact while abroad is by using Facebook. Almost everyone is already familiar with this social networking site, but there are some ways that you can improve how you use it while abroad. By putting up pictures, you can share what you’ve seen with friends. You can also update your status when you’re doing something exciting, like taking a trip or going to a soccer game. This will let all of your friends know what you are up to, and it will also show them how great it is to travel and learn about new cultures and languages. You can do the same by updating your Twitter while abroad. Tweet about your new experiences or things that you have been doing in an entirely new environment.

BLOGGING

One of the best ways to use the internet to keep in contact is blogs. You can easily start a blog before you go abroad with sites like www.blogspot.com or www.wordpress.com. These sites and many others are free. Tell all of your friends and family about the site, and then they can check it regularly to stay up to date on your activities abroad. They can also use Google Reader to follow many blogs at once and to easily access the blogs from iGoogle or Gmail.

Blogs are also an amazing resource after you study abroad. Once you return to the U.S., you can go back to your blog and reminisce by looking at posts and photos. Looking back and reflecting upon your experiences abroad can help you to grow and to become more globally-minded. It can also help make you more competitive in your postgraduate plans. Using examples of experiences abroad in graduate school applications or during job interviews can make you stand out from the crowd.

If you have little internet access or prefer more privacy, journaling might be a better option than blogging. While the two are similar, it may be more personal to write in a journal, as you would not be sharing it with everyone. If you would like to share updates with a specific group of family and friends, you could also consider sending an email update. Typically, whether writing blogs, journals, or emails, students make updates once or twice per week.
Some good topics for blog posts are:

- Travel preparations
- Visas
- Entertainment (music, TV, books)
- Academics and classes
- Food
- Activities and events
- Holidays
- Religious customs
- Culture
- Differences between home and abroad
- Favorites—restaurants, parks, etc.
- Transportation
- Trips or excursions
- People (interview someone!)
- Social or political issues
- Volunteering, internships, or other ways you have connected with the community

SKYPE

Skype is also a great way to keep in contact with family and friends while you’re abroad. Skype is basically a phone call on your computer. You can also use a webcam to see the person (or people) you are talking to. To sign up, go to www.skype.com and follow the directions on how to get started. One of the best parts of Skype is that it’s free!

Also, if you want to call from your computer to U.S. phones (as opposed to talking to someone who is also on their computer), it only costs $3.00 per month. Because family and friends aren’t always signed on to Skype, this option allows you to call their cell phones and ask them to sign on. You can also pay for “credit” on your Skype account. This enables you to call any phone in the world. You might even want to use this to call friends locally if minutes on your local cell phone run out.

PHOTOS

You should also take pictures while you are abroad. Photos are a great way to share your experience abroad with your friends and family at home. Taking photos will also keep you in contact with the culture around you, through interacting with your surroundings and helping you to remember the experiences you had once you return home.

Everyone who is interested in your study abroad experience will not only want to know about your trips and adventures while abroad, but also about your daily life. Remember to take pictures on your way to school, volunteering, or your internship. You should also take pictures of your housing, your school or workplace, and some of your other favorite places. One important thing to remember is to be respectful when taking pictures, especially with locals from your host country. If you want to take a picture of someone, make sure to ask first. This can be a great way to start a conversation and maybe even a friendship!

CELL PHONES

Another way to keep up local contact while you’re abroad—you don’t want to spend too much time online—is by getting a local cell phone. Many students choose to purchase a phone once they arrive in their host country. Several study abroad programs will assist you in buying a phone or give you recommendations on where to go. Other students choose to use their own
phones while abroad. You may be able to switch out the SIM card on your U.S. cell phone. Still others buy a “world phone” that works anywhere in the world, but those tend to be expensive. It is helpful to use the same cellular company as your friends in your host country, because calling and texting is almost always cheaper between phones with the same carrier.

ADVICE

Now that you know many different ways to keep in contact both locally and across the world, here’s what you can do to make the best of your experience:

**Before and During Study Abroad**

- Take note of what you could be doing instead of spending hours on facebook/skype/internet.
- After a week or two abroad, set a limit for yourself on how much time you can spend using technology (not including using it to do homework).
- Find a balance between time contacting home and time in your new environment. You need to have new experiences in order to talk about them!

**During and After Study Abroad**

- Evaluate and reflect upon your experience.
- Simply saying what you did isn’t always enough. How did it impact you? How have you grown?
- Write it down!
- Share your stories with others.

Whether you decide to keep in contact via phone, internet, or journaling—remember to enjoy and appreciate your study abroad experience. Keeping in contact can be a challenge, but that is what study abroad is all about: overcoming challenges, solving problems, and constantly learning about new and exciting things. Have fun out there!

**WHEN YOU RETURN**

Returning to campus can sometimes be overwhelming, and the Study Abroad Office will try to help make the transition easier. Here are a couple of details in advance (more information is available under “Resources” at [www.studyabroad.illinois.edu](http://www.studyabroad.illinois.edu).

**BECOME ACTIVE IN INTERNATIONAL ILLINI**

This student organization was created by and for students returning from study abroad to give them a chance to share their experiences with other returnees, meet with international students on the UIUC campus, and get involved in international activities in Champaign-Urbana. Membership is included in your fees.

**TRANSCRIPTS AND STUDY ABROAD CREDIT**

One of the first questions students have when they return from study abroad is, “When are my study abroad grades going to appear on my UIUC transcript?” While there is no standard answer to this question, figure on 90 to 180 days after the program ends. There are a few things you can do to help speed up the process.

Course approvals must be completed and returned to the Study Abroad Office before you go abroad. You must obtain approvals for ALL courses taken abroad. If the courses that
were pre-approved do not match the courses actually taken abroad, you must obtain approval for all additional courses upon your return.

**Are all of your study abroad bills paid?** Your credit cannot be processed until you have paid all costs of the study abroad program, as well as any costs owed to the sponsoring program and/or institution.

Once the Study Abroad Office receives your transcript, we will send you an email where course titles, grades/marks and credit hours/point from your original (university abroad) transcript will be listed. If the information on your original transcript is incorrect, you will need to email the Study Abroad Office about this.

**If you want to dispute or question a grade received, you must pursue the question yourself with the program or the university you attended. The Study Abroad Office cannot intervene.**

Upon receipt of your transcript and all of your signed course approvals, the Study Abroad Office will prepare a credit recommendation. Your grades/marks and credits/points will be converted (where conversion is necessary) into UIUC grades and credits. If you opted to receive credit only for some or all of your courses, and provided the required documents (see [http://studyabroad.illinois.edu/resources/transcripts_credit/index.aspx](http://studyabroad.illinois.edu/resources/transcripts_credit/index.aspx)), your letter grades will be converted into CR/NC. Upon completion, your credit recommendation will be sent to your college and to the Office of Admissions and Records for final approval.

**Note:** Changes to your credit declaration (whether to receive grades and credit or credit only for your classes) must be made according to college-specific guidelines and deadlines. See [http://studyabroad.illinois.edu/resources/transcripts_credit/index.aspx](http://studyabroad.illinois.edu/resources/transcripts_credit/index.aspx).
VI. RECOMMENDED READING

LITERATURE ON INTERCULTURAL ISSUES

Below is a list of novels and collections of poetry and short stories that have been used in various learning environments as starting points for discussions on issues of cultural diversity, intercultural understanding, and communication.


This listing was provided by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), University of Minnesota. It is also available online at http://www.carla.umn.edu/culture/resources/readings.html.
DIVERSITY ISSUES IN STUDY ABROAD

The Diversity Issues in Study Abroad booklet is a collection of quotes by Brown University students about their experiences abroad. The quotes were gathered through a survey of study abroad students returning from either spring semester/full year 1999-2000 or fall semester 2000-2001 abroad. The survey directly addressed issues of diversity in study abroad including ethnicity, heritage, sexual orientation, religion, minority/majority issues, physical appearance, and language. It was designed to elicit thoughtful and honest responses from participating students. Excerpts from the responses have been taken and corrections in spelling have been made, but otherwise the responses have not been changed….we are limited to input from those students who responded to the survey. We encourage students to explore as many resources as possible when considering study abroad in order to gain a fuller picture of the issues they may face in other cultures. In addition, students should keep in mind that the responses in this booklet represent individual experiences and are not necessarily representative of the views of other participants or Brown’s Office of International Programs....

The above excerpt is an explanation of the contents of the Diversity Issues in Study Abroad booklet quoted from the booklet itself. The booklet is available online at:

http://www.brown.edu/Administration/OIP/pdf_docs/diversity_st_abroad01.pdf

You are encouraged to check it out.
FOR THE COMMITTED VEGETARIAN, COMMUNICATION IS A
SOMETIMES THING

By Suzanne Berne

The first night my sister stayed with her Japanese host family on her junior year abroad, they took her to a restaurant on the outskirts of Kyoto. Her Japanese was rudimentary and the family spoke no English, but everyone sat sociably around the low, polished wooden table drinking sake and smiling at each other. When the waitress arrived to take their orders, however, my sister became flustered. She was a vegetarian then, and while she had practiced how to say that she ate only fish, vegetables and fruit, she also wanted to be polite.

When it was her turn to order, she stared at the kanji characters marching down the menu and then, smiling beseechingly at her Japanese mother, made her careful announcement. The waitress widened her eyes; the family froze. My sister, not knowing what else to do, repeated what she’d just said. Finally, her Japanese mother whispered something to her husband, who murmured something to the waitress, who vanished. Everyone blinked nervously at my sister.

What she had confided, she learned later, was that she consumed only fish, greengrocers and children.

This story is by way of introducing the plight of the traveling vegetarian, the person for whom every menu is a lesson in denied gratification. Unless you can communicate your dietary needs, your foreign sojourns as a vegetarian will be difficult. A garbled vowel, a muffled consonant, and you have ordered boeuf bourguignon, not oeufs aux champignons, and perhaps shocked your waiter as well. For the omnivore, choosing blindly from a menu in a foreign language can be an exploit, a suspenseful way to sample exotic dishes. For the vegetarian, it can mean going hungry.

One answer is to plan. An unusually organized vegetarian friend of mine buys cookbooks from whatever countries she plans to visit, then memorizes the names of vegetable dishes. Although those dishes may not be offered at any restaurants she encounters, she can always request them and hope the chef is feeling charitable. This strategy appears sound, though I’ve never tried it. The same friend also carries packets of instant ramen noodles with her everywhere, and was once stopped at customs on her way to Stuttgart, Germany, with a block of tofu in her suitcase.

Traveling the byways of one’s own country can prove as gastronomically bleak as traveling anywhere else. For instance, try finding wheat gluten in Ketchikan, Alaska. It’s no surprise then that my traveling diet, whether here or abroad, tends to be cheesy. Grilled cheese sandwiches, cheese and crackers, cheese omelets, cheese enchiladas, cheese tortellini, salads with blue cheese dressing. In search of protein, I raise my cholesterol to perilous levels. When my husband and I spent a recent anniversary biking around remote stretches of Nova Scotia, we happened on a fishing village that actually boasted a health food restaurant. We ate a lovely lunch (I think I ordered tempeh burritos), but when we climbed back on our bicycles, I suddenly burst into tears. It was the thought of leaving this bright oasis and returning to a dry world of bread and cheese.

Ten years ago, when I was just out of college, I traveled alone in Ireland for a month on rations of ice cream, apples and canned peas. Any vegetable other than peas seemed a financial risk. Sitting in a tiny bedroom in Galway or Killarney, I would eat my peas and gaze out at impossibly romantic, twilight sweeps of green hills and tumbled stone walls, and dream of a good lentil burger.

Less committed vegetarians often fall by the wayside when the travel. I remember a friend who returned from Europe and declared, rather militantly, that she had give up vegetarianism. “I was
in Vienna,” she told me, “I had to eat sausage.” Other people I know have made virtually the same statement about wienerschnitzel and pâté maison. “How could you turn down lamb kebabs,” demanded an astonished relative when I described my trip to Greece. “What did you eat?” Well, a lot of spanakopita, olives and peaches the size of grapefruits, which I devoured with a napkin tied under my chin.

But it’s true, most vegetarians live a Spartan life when traveling; you might call us the culinary challenged. Airlines for instance, appear convinced that vegetarians are actually invalids, accustomed to pale convalescent meals of boiled carrots and rice. Some airlines don’t even provide rice. A fellow vegetarian recently reported being served lettuce, carrot sticks and a flaccid tomato-no dressing, while other passengers gobbled ham sandwiches and brownies on a lunchtime flight. Usually I try to pack along a bagel and cream cheese in case my airline vegetarian entrée proves inedible. In an extravagant moment, I once tooted a pair of stuffed artichokes onto a flight to Los Angeles, which I ate appreciatively while my neighbor struggled with a disheartened version of chicken croquettes.

My husband cannot eat the same dish twice in the same week, much less two days in a row. He is not a vegetarian. In France, I lived on croissants and crudités, never tiring of those purple julienned beets, and, of course, cheese. In the wildest reaches of Scotland and Wales, I have survived on tomato and egg sandwiches, Cadbury chocolate bars, and chips with vinegar washed down with a beer. Andalusia can be difficult, but I’ve gotten by on frittatas, those marvelous egg-and-potato omelets, and I adore gazpacho. Yet even I have my limits, which is why my heart belongs to Italy, my epicurean Eden, because of her glorious variety of pasta: I can frequently order several on a single menu. Agnolotti tre formaggio, ravioli con spinaci, lasagna alla Fiesolana, cannelloni con funghi. Gnocchi, polenta, risotto. Could there be a love song with more bewitching lyrics?

Some countries embrace vegetarians, England, especially London, home of the famous herbivore George Bernard Shaw, has a number of good vegetarian restaurants as well as endless Indian take-out establishments. Then there is India itself, Thailand, China, Indonesia, all places where vegetable curries, rice and noodle entrees prevail. Northern California, which some consider a foreign country in its own right, has become a sort of vegetarian mecca, with Greens restaurant in San Francisco the central shrine. The first time I had lunch there I recall sitting at a table made of driftwood, listening to mandolin music and gazing at the menu for half an hour, unable to decide what to choose. Like Diamond Jim Brady, America’s most famous glutton, I wanted to eat everything simply because I could. It actually proved a rather unpleasant meal, because as soon as I had chosen one dish (a wild mushroom ragout), I wished I had ordered another and spent the rest of lunch in a fidget of regret.

Fortunately, my favorite food, the food on which I endure, happens to be one I can find just about everywhere. I love bread with a greedy intensity that sometimes shocks me. Not your puffy, soulless, supermarket bread, but bread with real heft to it. Bread with guts. Crusty baguettes, fragrant loaves, coarse Irish soda bread slashed twice across the top. And especially those heartbreaking little Tuscan pizza biancas seasoned with rosemary. I don’t think it’s much of an exaggeration to say bread is my passport to the world. Which is why I believe a traveling vegetarian dubbed bread “the staff of life,” having had to lean on it over and over as he wandered across Byzantium, the prodigal eater, praying that when he got home he’d find some.
PERSONAL CONTROL OVER THE ENVIRONMENT

Americans no longer believe in the power of Fate, and they have come to look at people who do as being backward, primitive, or hopelessly naive. To be called “fatalistic” is one of the worst criticisms one can receive in the American context; to an American, it means one is superstitious and lazy, unwilling to take any initiative in bringing about improvements.

In the United States people consider it normal and right that Man should control Nature, rather than the other way around. More specifically, people believe every single individual should have control over whatever in the environment might potentially affect him or her. The problems of one’s life are not seen as having resulted from bad luck as much as having come from one’s laziness in pursuing a better life. Furthermore, it is considered normal that anyone should look out for his or her own self-interests first and foremost.

Most Americans find it impossible to accept that there are some things which lie beyond the power of humans to achieve. And Americans have literally gone to the moon, because they refused to accept earthly limitations.

Americans seem to be challenged, even compelled, to do, by one means or another (and often at great cost) what seven-eighths of the world is certain cannot be done.

CHANGE

In the American mind, change is seen as an indisputably good condition. Change is strongly linked to development, improvement, progress, and growth.

Many older, more traditional cultures consider change as a disruptive, destructive force, to be avoided if at all possible. Instead of change, such societies value stability, continuity, tradition, and a rich and ancient heritage—none of which are valued very much in the United States.

These first two values—the belief that we can do anything and the belief that any change is good—together with an American belief in the virtue of hard work and the belief that each individual has a responsibility to do the best he or she can do, have helped Americans achieve some great accomplishments. So whether these beliefs are “true” is really irrelevant; what is important is that Americans have considered them to be true and have acted as if they were, thus, in effect, causing them to happen.

TIME AND ITS CONTROL

Time is, for the average American, of utmost importance. To the foreign visitor, Americans seem to be more concerned with getting things accomplished on time (according to a predetermined schedule) than they are with developing deep interpersonal relations. Schedules, for the American, are meant to be planned and then followed in the smallest detail.

It may seem to you that most Americans are completely controlled by the little machines they wear on their wrists, cutting their discussions off abruptly to make it to their next appointment on time.
Americans’ language is filled with references to time, giving a clear indication of how much it is valued. Time is something to be “on,” to be “kept,” “filled,” “saved,” “used,” “spent,” “wasted,” “lost,” “gained,” “planned,” “given,” “made the most of,” even “killed.”

The international visitor soon learns that it is considered very rude to be late—even by 10 minutes—for an appointment in the United States. (Whenever it is absolutely impossible to be on time, you should phone ahead and tell the person that you have been unavoidably detained and will be a half hour—or whatever—late.)

Time is valued in America, because by considering time to be important one can clearly accomplish more than if one “wastes” time and does not keep busy. This philosophy has proven its worth. It has enabled Americans to be extremely productive, and productivity itself is highly valued in the United States.

Many American proverbs stress the value in guarding our time, using it wisely, setting and working toward specific goals, and even expending our time and energy today so that the fruits of our labor may be enjoyed at a later time. (This latter concept is called “delayed gratification.”)

EQUALITY/EGALITARIANISM

Equality is, for Americans, one of their most cherished values. This concept is so important for Americans that they have even given it a religious basis. They say all people have been “created equal.” Most Americans believe that God views all humans alike without regard to intelligence, physical condition, or economic status. In secular terms this belief is translated in the assertion that all people have an equal opportunity to succeed in life. Americans differ in opinion about how to make this ideal into a reality. Yet virtually all agree that equality is an important civic and social goal.

The equality concept often makes Americans seem strange to foreign visitors.

Seven eights of the world feels quite differently. To them, rank and status and authority are seen as much more desirable considerations—even if they personally happen to find themselves near the bottom of the social order. Class and authority seem to give people in those other societies a sense of security and certainty. People outside the United States consider it reassuring to know, from birth, who they are and where they fit into the complex system called “society.”

Many highly placed foreign visitors to the United States are insulted by the way they are treated by service personnel (such as waiters in restaurants, clerks in store, taxi drivers, etc.). Americans have an aversion to treating people of high position in a deferential manner, and conversely, often treat lower class people as if they were very important. Newcomers to the United States should realize that no insult or personal indignity is intended by this lack of deference to rank or position in society. A foreigner should be prepared to be considered “just like anybody else” while in the country.

INDIVIDUALISM AND PRIVACY

The individualism which has been developed in the Western world since the Renaissance, beginning in the late 15th century, has taken its most exaggerated form in 20th century United States. Here, each individual is seen as completely and marvelously unique, that is, totally different from all other individuals and, therefore, particularly precious and wonderful.

Americans think they are more individualistic in their thoughts and actions than, in fact, they are. They resist being thought of as representatives of a homogenous group, whatever the group. They may, and do, join groups—in fact many groups—but somehow believe they’re just a little
different, just a little unique, just a little special, from other members of the same group. And they tend to leave groups as easily as they enter them.

Privacy, the ultimate result of individualism, is perhaps even more difficult for the foreigner to comprehend. The word “privacy” does not even exist in many languages. If it does, it is likely to have a strong negative connotation, suggesting loneliness or isolation from the group. In the United States, privacy is not only seen as a very positive condition, but it is also viewed as a requirement which all humans would find equally necessary, desirable, and satisfying. It is not uncommon for Americans to say—and believe—such statements as “If I don’t have at least half an hour a day to myself, I will go stark raving mad!”

Individualism, as it exists in the United States, does mean that you will find a much greater variety of opinions (along with the absolute freedom to express them anywhere and anytime) here. Yet, in spite of this wide range of personal opinion, almost all Americans will ultimately vote for one of the two major political parties. That is what was meant by the statement made earlier that Americans take pride in crediting themselves with claiming more individualism than, in fact, they really have.

**SELF-HELP CONCEPT**

In the United States, a person can take credit only for what he or she has accomplished by himself or herself. Americans get no credit whatsoever for having been born into a rich family. (In the United States, that would be considered “an accident of birth.”) Americans pride themselves in having been born poor and, through their own sacrifice and hard work, having climbed the difficult ladder of success to whatever level they have achieved—all by themselves. The American social system had, of course, made it possible for Americans to move, relatively easily, up the social ladder.

Take a look in an English language dictionary at the composite words that have the word “self” as a prefix. In the average desk dictionary, there will be more than 100 such words, words like self-confidence, self-conscious, self-contented, self-control, self-criticism, self-deception, self-defeating, self-denial, self-discipline, self-esteem, self-expression, self-importance, self-improvement, self-interest, self-reliance, self-respect, self-restraint, self-sacrifice—the list goes on and on. The equivalent of these words cannot be found in most other languages. This list is perhaps the best indication of how seriously Americans take doing things for one’s self. The “self-made man or woman” is still very much the ideal in 20th century America.

**COMPETITION AND FREE ENTERPRISE**

Americans believe that competition brings out the best in any individual. They assert that it challenges or forces each person to produce the very best that is humanly possible. Consequently, the foreign visitor will see competition being fostered in the American home and in the American classroom, even on the youngest age levels. Very young children, for instance, are encouraged to answer questions for which their classmates do not know the answers.

You may find the competitive value disagreeable, especially if you come from a society which promotes cooperation rather than competition. But many US Peace Corps volunteers teaching in Third World countries found out the lack of competitiveness in a classroom situation equally distressing. They soon learned that what they had thought to be one of the universal human characteristics represented only a peculiarly American (or Western) value.

Americans, valuing competition, have devised an economic system to go with it—free enterprise. Americans feel very strongly that a highly competitive economy will bring out the best in its people and ultimately, that the society which fosters competition will progress most rapidly. If you look for it, you will see evidence in all areas—even in fields as diverse as
medicine, the arts, education, and sports—that free enterprise is the approach most often preferred in America.

**FUTURE ORIENTATION**

Valuing the future and the improvements Americans are sure the future will bring, means that they devalue the past and are, to a large extent, unconscious of the present. Even a happy present goes largely unnoticed because, happy as it may be, Americans have traditionally been hopeful that the future would bring even greater happiness. Almost all energy is directed toward realizing that better future. At best, the present condition is seen as a preparatory to a later and greater event, which will eventually culminate in something even more worthwhile.

Since Americans have been taught (in value #1) to believe that Man, and not Fate, can and should be the one who controls the environment, this has made them very good at planning and executing short-term projects. This ability, in turn, has caused Americans to be invited to all corners of the earth to plan and achieve the miracles which their goal setting can produce.

If you come from a culture such as those in the traditional Moslem world, where talking about or actively planning the future is felt to be a futile, even sinful, activity, you will have not only philosophical problems with this very American characteristic but religious objections as well. Yet it is something you will have to learn to live with, for all around you Americans will be looking toward the future and what it will bring.

**ACTION/WORK ORIENTATION**

“Don’t just stand there,” goes a typical bit of American advice, “do something!” This expression is normally used in a crisis situation, yet, in a sense, it describes most Americans’ entire waking life, where action—any action—is seen to be superior to inaction.

Americans routinely plan and schedule an extremely active day. Any relaxation must be limited in time, pre-planned, and aimed at “recreating” their ability to work harder and more productively once the recreation is over. Americans believe leisure activities should assume a relatively small portion of one’s total life. People think that it is “sinful” to “waste one’s time,” “to sit around doing nothing,” or just to “daydream.”

Such a “no nonsense” attitude toward life has created many people who have come to be known as “workaholics,” or people who are addicted to their work, who think constantly about their jobs and who are frustrated if they are kept away from them, even during their evening hours and weekends.

The workaholic syndrome, in turn, causes Americans to identify themselves wholly with their professions. The first question one American will ask another American when meeting for the first time is related to his or her work: “What do you do?,” “Where do you work?,” or “Who (what company) are you with?”

And when such a person finally goes on vacation, even the vacation will be carefully planned, very busy, and active.

America may be one of the few countries in the world where it seems reasonable to speak about the “dignity of human labor,” meaning by that, hard, physical labor. In America, even corporation presidents will engage in physical labor from time to time and gain, rather than lose, respect from others for such action.
INFORMALITY

If you come from a more formal society, you will likely find Americans to be extremely informal and, you will probably feel, even disrespectful of those in authority. Americans are one of the most informal and casual people in the world, even when compared to their near relative—the Western European.

As one example of this informality, American bosses often urge their employees to call them by their first names and even feel uncomfortable if they are called by the title “Mr.” or “Mrs.”

Dress is another area where American informality will be most noticeable, perhaps even shocking. One can go to a symphony performance, for example, in any large American city nowadays and find some people in the audience dressed in blue jeans and tie-less, short-sleeved shirts.

Informality is also apparent in Americans’ greetings. The more formal “How are you?” has largely been replaced with an informal “Hi.” This is as likely to be used to one’s superior as to one’s best friend. If you are a highly placed official in your own country, you will probably, at first, find such informality to be very unsettling. Americans, on the other hand, would consider such informality as a compliment! Certainly it is not intended as an insult and should not be taken as such.

DIRECTNESS, OPENNESS AND HONESTY

Many other countries have developed subtle, sometimes highly ritualistic, ways of informing other people of unpleasant information. Americans, however, have always preferred the direct approach. They are likely to be completely honest in delivering their negative evaluations. If you come from a society which uses the indirect manner of conveying bad news or uncomplimentary evaluations, you will be shocked at Americans’ bluntness.

If you come from a country where saving face is important, be assured that Americans are not trying to make you lose face with their directness. It is important to realize that an American would not, in such cases, lose face. The burden of adjustment, in all cases while you are in this country, will be on you. There is no way to soften the blow of such directness and openness if you are not used to it except to tell you that the rules have changed while you are here. Indeed, Americans are trying to urge their fellow countrymen to become even more open and direct. The large number of “assertiveness” training courses, which appeared in the United States in the late 1970s, reflect such a commitment.

Americans consider anything other than the most direct and open approach to be dishonest and insincere and will quickly lose confidence in and distrust for anyone who hints at what is intended rather than saying it outright. Anyone who, in the United States, chooses to use an intermediary to deliver the message, will also be considered manipulative and untrustworthy.

PRACTICALITY AND EFFICIENCY

Americans have a reputation of being an extremely realistic, practical, and efficient people. The practical consideration is likely to be given highest priority in making any important decision in the United States. Americans pride themselves in not being very philosophically or theoretically oriented. If Americans would even admit to having a philosophy, it would probably be that of pragmatism.

Will it make money? Will it “pay its own way?” What can I gain from this activity? These are the kinds of questions which Americans are likely to ask in their practical pursuit, not such questions as: Is it aesthetically pleasing? Will it be enjoyable? Will it advance the cause of knowledge?
This practical, pragmatic orientation has caused Americans to contribute more inventions to the world than any other country in human history. The love of “practicality” has also caused Americans to view some professions more favorably than others. Management and economics, for example, are much more popular in the United States than philosophy or anthropology, law and medicine more valued than the arts.

Another way in which this favoring of the practical makes itself felt in the United States, is a belittling of “emotional” and “subjective” evaluations in favor of “rational” and “objective” assessments. Americans try to avoid being too sentimental in making their decisions. They judge every situation “on its merits.” The popular American “trial and error” approach to problem solving also reflects the practical. This approach suggests listing several possible solutions to any given problem, then trying them out, one-by-one, to see which is most effective.

**MATERIALISM/ACQUISITIVENESS**

Foreigners generally consider Americans much more materialistic than Americans are likely to consider themselves. Americans would like to think that their material objects are just the natural benefits which always result from hard work and serious intent—a reward, the thing which all people could enjoy were they as industrious and hard-working as Americans.

By any standard, Americans are materialistic. This means that they value and collect more material objects than most people would ever dream of owning. It also means they give higher priority to obtaining, maintaining, and protecting their material objects than they do in developing and enjoying interpersonal relationships.

The modern American typically owns:

- one or more color television sets
- a refrigerator
- a hair dryer
- a sound system
- a washing machine and dryer
- a vacuum cleaner
- a powered lawn mower
- a stove
- a dishwasher
- one or more automobiles
- a telephone
- a personal computer.

Since Americans value newness and innovation, they sell or throw away their possessions frequently and replace them with newer ones. A car may be kept for only two or three years, a house for five or six before trading it in for another one.