

Study Abroad- Pre-Departure Guide Jacksonville State University

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I. Registration

Study Abroad programs are like other classes – you must register for them and pay your tuition and fees on time to register. Students should meet with a JSU Financial Aid Counselor to discuss any full course load requirements that may be applicable during their Study Abroad term. Students participating in a Direct Exchange Program must register for 12 – 18 hours of the IHP 399 course, as well as IHP 398 (0 hours) at JSU, prior to departure. Students participating in a consortium Study Abroad Program must be enrolled in the IHP 398 (0 hours) at JSU and appropriate course(s), either at JSU or through the consortium. Be sure to meet with your academic advisor to discuss your study abroad plans.

II. Travel Plans

- a. **Passport** - You must have a valid passport to travel. Completing an application to obtain a passport may take time and certain documents such as proof of citizenship, birth certificate, or photos of a specified size. Renewing, replacing, or updating your passport will also require some time, so you need to check the information on your passport to make sure everything is accurate. Your emergency contact in your family should obtain a valid passport so that he/she could travel abroad to attend or assist you in case of emergencies. You should make a copy of your passport that you can easily access in case you lose your passport abroad. For further details: [How to Apply for a Passport](#)
- b. **Visa** - You must check the visa requirement for the country you are travelling to and make sure that you obtain the required visa stamp prior to your departure from the United States. Contact the [embassy of the countries](#) you will be visiting for more information.
- c. **Flight and Transportation** - If you are making your own travel arrangements, make sure to check the departure city, arrival city, and preferred airline. You need to also check on the cancellation and change of flights policies of the airline before booking your tickets. These policies may help you determine the possible financial losses and make appropriate arrangements to cover for such losses for example, purchasing a travel insurance coverage that covers the cancellation or change of flight fees.
Make sure to have a copy of the tickets to travel and share the itinerary with the Office of International House and Programs, Program Leaders, and your emergency contacts in the United States prior to your departure.
You also need to look into transportation from the airport to the destination if you are travelling on your own.
- d. **Housing** - If you are participating in a direct student exchange program, or nonaffiliate study abroad program you are advised to apply for housing and confirm the housing options before your departure from the United States. You need to have the housing confirmation with you prior to your departure from the United States. You are advised to keep a copy of the acceptance/admission letter issued by the host institution when you travel.

- e. **Packing List-** Here are the suggested list for your packing before departure. This is not an exhaustive list.
- Clothes (appropriate for weather)
 - Credit Card (make sure to call your credit card company to learn about international transactions and charges)
 - Passport
 - Phone and Phone charger (check with your phone provider about international plans)
 - Portable power bank
 - Proof of your travel and health insurance
 - Laptop/other electronic device that you need
 - Hygienic Materials
 - Leave extra space in your luggage for souvenirs*
 - Shoes
 - Some cash in local currency
 - [*Detailed List](#)

III. Communication Abroad

It is very important to establish frequency and means of communication with family and friends before departure. This allows everyone to be comfortable that the student abroad is safe and doing well, without detracting from the experience of living in a new and exciting culture. Students should also check in with the study abroad coordinator weekly and look for any updates or news.

Some of the ways to communicate are via Email, Facebook Messenger, Teams, and Zoom. You do need to keep in mind the time zone differences when communicating and expecting response to non-emergency questions.

JSU Emergency Contact Information:

University Police Department	Director, International House & Programs – Chandni Khadka	Coordinator, International House & Study Abroad – Javier Burrows
256-782-5050 Toll Free @ 1-800-231-5291 Ext. 7	Office: 256-782-5303 Cell Phone: Will be sent to the participant's jsu email.	Office: 256-782-5313 Cell Phone: Will be sent to the participant's jsu email.
	ckhadka@jsu.edu	jburrows@jsu.edu

IV. Health and Safety

This should be one of your top priorities so as to avoid an adverse effect on the amount you learn, how much fun you have, and what you take away from your experience. Staying healthy abroad is not difficult; you have to make smart choices. Find the balance between having a great time, enjoying the food, seeing the sights, and staying healthy.

a. Tips for staying healthy

- Eat healthy, stay fit and get adequate sleep.
- Wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizers frequently
- Keep yourself hydrated however be cautious about drinking water from the tap in certain areas of the world. If you are unsure of the water safety, use bottled water.
- If you are on prescribed medication, continue the routine.
- Prior to your departure, get required and/or recommended vaccinations by your medical provider.
- Practice safe sex to protect yourself from STDs
- Examine your understanding of the use of controlled substance in your host country. Consider the local laws regarding alcohol and other drug, in some areas the laws may be more severe than in the US. Alcohol content in drinks might be higher in some countries compared to the drinks in the U.S. Keep in mind that you are representing JSU and your country while abroad.

Safety may not be your biggest worry; however, you must be aware of some inherent risks in travelling, studying, working, and living abroad and you have to be prepared for them. You must always think about personal safety and plan to avoid any risks and danger.

b. Tips for staying safe

- Educate yourself on the cultural and political environments of the countries you plan to visit.
- Educate yourself about sexual harassment, violence, and gender dynamics abroad to make safe choices.
- Make sure you stay connected with local staff and/or your emergency contact in the U.S. Talk to your cell phone provider about adding international plan on your phone prior to your departure. Upon arrival to your destination, check on the possibility of getting local numbers since Wi-Fi may not always be available. Adding a local number may mean you will have a new phone number, if you do, make sure to send updated number to all your emergency contacts. Make sure to always carry your and keep it fully charged.
- Familiarize yourself with local laws and do not break them
- Get to know your new neighborhoods and locate necessities: banks, food stores, hospitals, post offices, laundry, Internet café
- Do not go for a walk/run after dark alone
- Keep important bags and belongings always close to you
- Avoid specific parts of town designated as less safe
- Guard against petty theft and pickpockets
- Be cautious when driving or riding in a car and understand dangerous situations may occur when you are near or in moving bodies of water. (Traffic accidents and drowning are the leading causes of death for students abroad.)
- Use Common sense
- Stay calm and make decisions carefully
- Stay informed about local news
- Learn how to ask for help in the local language
- Identify ways to blend in with the local culture to avoid being targeted as a tourist
- If something unfortunate does happen, seek professional guidance and assistance

V. Cultural Adjustments

International House and Programs desire to see programs be as accessible to students as possible but you should be prepared when you arrive in your host country and culture. You should explore the perceptions of your host country toward various aspects of identity prior to departure:

- a. **Gender:** Gender roles and perceptions and protections for women and transgender students will vary greatly from one country to another. [U.S. Department of State travel information for women travelers](#)
- b. **LGBTQ+:** Some countries will have strong LGBTQ+ communities with a high level of tolerance, or even acceptance, but other countries do not protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation or even categorically forbid LGBTQ+ relationships. [U.S. Department of State travel information for LGBTI travelers](#)
- c. **Race:** Perceptions of racial minorities abroad range from innocent curiosity to seemingly blunt observations or stereotypes to misplaced misconceptions or associations (e.g., illegal immigration or prostitution).
- d. **Ability:** Some countries have misconceptions or superstitions of physical or learning disabilities while others may not protect or provide for those with disabilities. [U.S. Department of State travel information for travelers with disabilities](#)
- e. **Religion:** While most study abroad locations are normally legally safe from a religious perspective, students may find prejudice against certain religious minorities in their host country and proselytizing may have social or legal consequences.

Free Culture Training: <http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

VI. Emergency Planning

a. What qualifies as a real emergency?

Real emergencies are events or situations that pose a genuine and immediate risk to, or that have already disturbed, the safety and welfare of participants. These include (but aren't limited to):

- Mental Health Concerns
- Serious Injury or Illness
- Sexual Misconduct
- Abduction
- Missing Student
- Substance abuse problem
- Suspected Alcohol Poisoning or Drug Overdose
- Illegal or Criminal Behavior, or Arrest of a participant
- Large- Scale Crises, Natural Disasters, and Epidemics

- Political and Social Unrest and Terrorist Activities
 - Death of a participant
- b. Contacts in case of emergencies:** Find below contacts that participant should keep with them all the time:
- **Local program contacts:** These could be contacts of your host university or the local contacts of the study abroad provider/consortium.
 - **Other program contacts:** Your program will usually have an additional emergency contact numbers in the U.S. These could be contacts of JSU and/or the contacts if the study abroad provider/consortium and/or contact of the insurance provider.
 - **9-1-1 equivalents:** Most countries will have different numbers for 9-1-1. In many countries, there will be a separate number for police, fire, and medical responses. Your program provider and the U.S. Department of State will have a [listing of 9-1-1 equivalents](#).
 - **US Department of State contacts:** Contact information of the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate will help in case of arrest, natural disaster, or civil unrest. For detailed resources on Embassy's contact, refer to [US Department of State](#) website. Students who are not U.S. citizens should find the nearest consulate or embassy of their home country.

VII. Extension of Program

If you are participating in our Faculty-Led Study Abroad Program or CCSA program or Study Abroad Program with Third Party Provider and wanting to stay in the country past the program, keep in mind that you will no longer be considered as enrolled in the study abroad program for the extended dates. You will be solely responsible for your own safety plans, emergency preparedness as well as all expenses past the end of the program date. That will include but not limited to the travel insurance, flight change, living expenses, transportation, food, etc. If you are deciding to stay longer than the program date, you will need to communicate your intention to your program leader and the study abroad coordinator. Also, ensure that you have travel insurance to cover you for your entire stay abroad.

If you are on our Direct Exchange Study Abroad Program or Non-Affiliate Program, you will need to

- submit a new JSU Study Abroad Application form
- complete transient form with approval from your JSU academic advisor, department chair, dean, and registrar
- contact financial aid office and complete the process with their office for your program extension if you are using financial aid for your cost of education
- complete JSU course registration in IHP 398 and 399 courses for the new semester if you are approved for the program extension.

For the Direct Exchange Study Abroad Program, if there is another JSU student already nominated for the new semester, your extension more than likely will not be approved. If the program extension is not approved, you must return to campus upon completion of your current semester abroad

References:

<http://www.travelinsurancereview.net/compare-travel-insurance/>

<https://wmich.edu/studyabroad/gettingstarted/predeparture>

https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/studyabroad/sapredepartureorientation.aspx

<https://studyabroad.ncsu.edu/program-specific-pre-departure-orientation-checklist/>

<https://studyabroad.ucmerced.edu/orientation/safety>

<https://www.jsu.edu/study-abroad/student-resources/index.html>

<https://public.powerdms.com/JSUAL/documents/2176511>