

“A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

-John A. Shedd

Education Abroad

Pre-Departure Orientation 2

Health, Safety, and Security Abroad

Today's Orientation

- Health and Safety Prep
- Physical Health
- Protecting Your Property
- Protecting Yourself
- Title IX
- WWU Survivor Advocacy Services
- Mental Health



Preparation:

Where are you going?

- Being informed about your destination is a safety mechanism
 - Check the State Department country profile: <http://travel.state.gov>
- Check host country's State Department Travel Advisory
 - Petition for an exception through WWU EdAbroad for Travel Advisory Levels 3 or 4
- Visit State Department study abroad page: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>
- Who is in power? What are the customs?
- Register your trip with State Department: <https://step.state.gov>

Studying in Non-Democratic Countries

- Do **NOT** post, text, write, publish, email, or say anything critical about the host government (doing so would put you in danger of arrest/incarceration)
- You are under surveillance in these countries—the host government is listening to your calls and reading your texts, emails, social media posts, etc. The host government has informants everywhere, which could include neighbors, faculty, staff, students, host families, friends, etc—literally anyone.
- Do **NOT** participate or be near any protests or demonstrations of any kind (this is illegal)

Preparation: Informing Yourself

- Think about your identity and how people similar to you are treated in your host country
 - Women
 - Diverse ethnic/racial background
 - LGBTQ+
 - Disabled Students
 - Tourist / foreigner
- Resources
 - <https://studyabroad.wvu.edu>
 - <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>



Preparation:

Vaccinations and Prescriptions

- Health History Form
- Travelers Health: www.cdc.gov
 - By Destination: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>
 - Travel Health Notices: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>
 - COVID-19 Travel Health Notices: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid19>
- Bringing medication:
 - Is it legal to bring into host country?
 - If so, can you get it there?
 - If not, can you bring enough with you?
 - Keep in original bottle/packaging
- Continue to take medication prescribed by your doctor for physical and mental health; study abroad is not the time to experiment with getting off medication without the supervision of your health provider.

Pandemic Safety

- COVID-19
 - CDC International Pandemic Travel: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>
 - The CDC advises that you travel internationally only if you are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
 - Wearing a mask makes a difference, especially in enclosed spaces.
 - Ventilation in enclosed spaces makes a difference (open a window where you can).
 - Carry hand sanitizer with you.
 - Your international health insurance may cover isolation. For students using CISI, that company requires a letter from a doctor/pharmacist confirming COVID diagnosis and prescribed isolation (save receipts!).
 - Follow public health advice and use your critical thinking skills. Viruses don't care about politics.
 - Protect your COVID-19 CDC vaccination card because it is difficult to replace with a duplicate CDC-issued card.

Visiting a Doctor Abroad

- Start with your resident director / host university advisor
- International health insurance through study abroad provider or WWU EdAbroad (generally you pay up front and are reimbursed by insurance company)
- Campus health centers or local clinics



Protecting Your Property

- Petty theft abroad: carry only what you're willing to lose
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Keep wallet in front pocket / wear purse over torso and keep in front of body / purses should fasten close
- Money belt for credit cards, passport, large sums of cash or keep in safe place in housing
- Keep jacket and loose pockets empty
- When seated, put property on lap or between feet; never over back of chair

Protecting Yourself

- Be aware of surroundings; know appropriate dress
- Carry cell phone
- Go out with friends / groups / buddy system
- Watch drink being poured; don't leave unattended; don't accept from others
- Avoid walking alone at night, especially in quiet streets/alleys

Protecting Yourself Continued

- Careful with politics / religion
- Avoid demonstrations / protests
 - Could be illegal
- Avoid driving and be careful crossing streets
 - Vehicle fatalities highest cause of death to foreigners traveling abroad
 - Use safe modes of transportation
- Traveling abroad
 - Always tell Resident Director or host country advisor
 - Do you need a different visa to visit neighboring country?
- Learn host country's version of 911



Don't pet unknown animals abroad!
Rabies can be lethal.

Title IX Rights

- Title IX is a civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in all educational programs.
- Western's "Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sex Discrimination, Including Sexual Misconduct" applies to international programs.
- Title IX and Western's Policy advocate for the protection of everyone from sexual violence, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, and race or ethnicity.

Title IX Rights

- If you experience sexual harassment or sexual violence during an international program, please seek help.
 - Most WWU employees are required by law to report these incidents to Western's Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance office. If you're not ready for mandatory reporting, reach out to a confidential support resource first.
- Confidential support resources include:
 - WWU Survivor Advocacy Services – On campus confidential support and counseling
 - RAINN – website links to international resources
 - DVSAS – Bellingham-based survivor resources

WWU Survivor Advocacy Services is a safe, confidential resource for students who have been affected by violence.

(360) 650-3164 • <https://cwc.wwu.edu/survivorservices>

Email WWU Survivor Advocate, Deidre Evans, MSW at Deidre.Evans@wwu.edu

SAS believes that violence can happen to anyone and it's never the survivor's fault.

Regardless of your identity, all students are welcome.

Mental Health Abroad

- Studying abroad can be stressful
- Consult your healthcare provider before travel to ensure that you're stable enough for travel without your usual support system
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule
 - **Consult a doctor if you can't sleep**
 - **Avoid alcohol to induce sleep**
- Take medications as prescribed during travel, and know how your medications interact with alcohol
- Watch for tiredness, sleep changes, mood swings, withdrawal, change in appetite, feelings of hopelessness. Talk to the program director immediately!

Developing a Coping Plan

- Have you considered making a plan for coping with these symptoms?
- Who would you talk to about making a plan?
- Specific items for the plan include:
 - Contact with a known treatment provider
 - Ways to cope with triggers
 - Sleep, eating, roommates, academics, **recreation**
 - Communication with international staff about symptoms
 - Access to treatment abroad and crisis support services (see the list on the next slide)

Mental Health Resources

- Western's Counseling Center: Old Main 540, 360-650-3164 during business hours
- To reach the after-hours (Pacific Standard Time) on-call counselor, call 360-650-3164 and choose option 1
- Western's Student Health Center in Campus Services Facility: 360-650-3400
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- Community Crisis Line (Volunteers of America 24 hour crisis line): 1-800-584-3578
- Crisis Text Line: <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- The Trevor Project (national 24-hour free confidential suicide hotline for gay and questioning youth), 1-866-488-7386

Questions

