

Health, Security & Safety Abroad



Education Abroad | Pre-Departure Orientation 2

Today's Orientation

- Health and Safety Prep
- Protecting Yourself & Property
- Title IX - WWU Survivor Advocacy Services
- Managing your health abroad
 - What to pack
 - Stress maps
 - Mental Health
 - Chronic & physical health
 - Pandemic safety



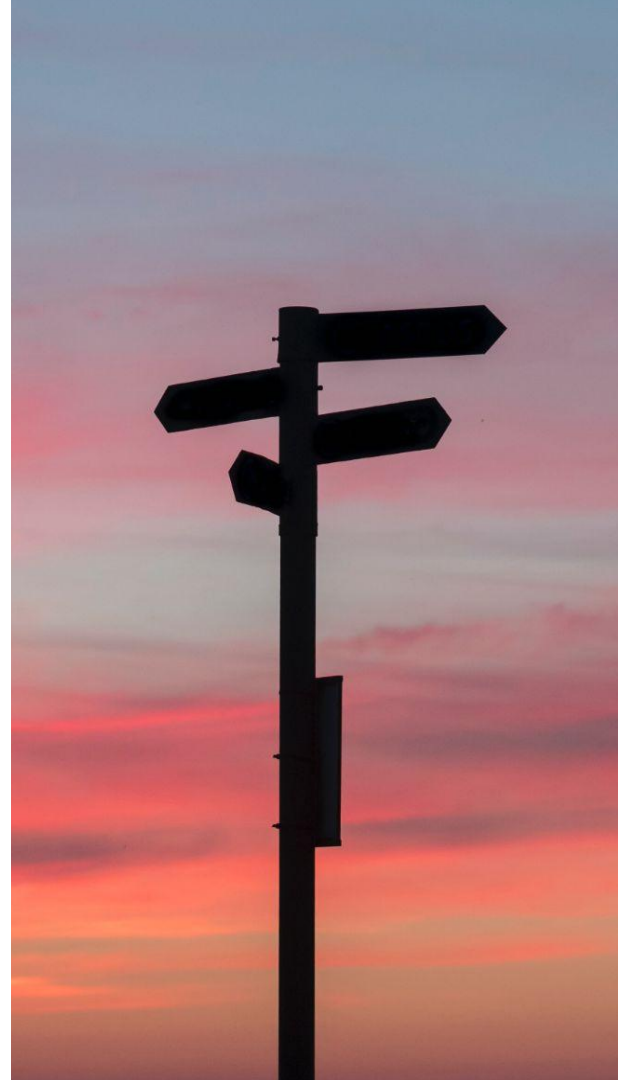
Preparation: Informing Yourself

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: Where are you going?

- Being informed = 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. You can also put others in danger through your actions.
- Do NOT participate or be near any protests or demonstrations of any kind (this is illegal)

Preparation: Documents to Bring and Keeping Them Safe

- Protect your passport and visa
 - Money belt
 - Fill in all sections of passport
 - Electronic & physical copies of passport & visa
- Write down numbers for debit/ATM/credit cards
- Itinerary, contact numbers, etc. with friends & family at home
 - Parents / guardians should have valid passport



What are the top 3 safety issues abroad?

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, larges 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
- VPN - protect electronic theft



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 Cont'

- Careful with politics/religion
 - Avoid demonstrations/protests
- Avoid driving and be careful crossing streets
 - Vehicle fatalities highest cause of death to foreigners traveling abroad
 - Use safe modes of transportation
- Swimming
 - Basic safety, riptides & alcohol
- 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

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 & Resources

- **If you experience sexual harassment or sexual violence during an international program, please seek help.**
 - Most WWU employees are required by law to report 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.
- ***Confidential support resources include:***
 - <https://cwc.wwu.edu/survivorservices> - On campus confidential support, advocacy and counseling
 - WWU Survivor Advocate, Deidre Evans,
Deidre.Evans@wwu.edu, 360-650-3164
 - <https://www.rainn.org/> - website links to international resources
 - <https://www.dvsas.org/> - Bellingham-based survivor resources

Managing your Health Abroad

Understand your Destination & Identify Health Concerns

- ***Research your destination:***

- 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/noticescovid19>

- ***Work with your healthcare provider(s):***

- Prepare before you go
- Health history form
- Self-care plan

Preparation:

Vaccinations and Prescriptions

- **Step One:** Write down all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you are currently taking (e.g., birth control, insulin for diabetes, Claritin for outdoor allergies, antidepressants, etc.) in your Self-Care Plan. Make sure you take this list with you on your trip. It may be a good resource if you go to the doctor overseas.
- **Step Two:** Determine if your medication is legal and available in your destination.
 - International health insurance = good resource
- **Step Three:** Prepare to travel with medication.
 - Pack enough medication for the duration of your travel in your carry on
 - Keep in original bottle/packaging & if prescription take a note from your doctor on letterhead, explaining your diagnosis, treatment, and list of prescribed medications.
- Remember you cannot mail medications
- 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.

Mental Health Abroad

- Studying abroad can be stressful
 - New environment
- Consult your healthcare provider before travel to ensure that you're stable enough for travel without your usual support systems
- 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!

Self-Reflection - Create a Stress Map

In the context of our travels, I invite you to draw a map of your individual “stress causes and stress relief map.” Start with yourself at the center. Then put the other people, things, ideas, experiences - whatever - that you think are related to your stress/anxiety in both productive/positive and unproductive/negative ways.

There is no need for anything fancy about the drawing. It can be as simple as putting your name on the page and putting the other things on the map around you. You can use words or pictures. Your map might include things that cause stress, where stress happens, when stress happens, etc. It can include people or things that are involved in causing stress or making it worse.


Please also draw things that alleviate stress and that relate to how you manage stress, what makes stress go away.

Be as broad or as narrow as you want.

Develop a Self-Care Plan

- Have you considered making a plan for coping with these symptoms or stressors?
- 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 (Stress relievers, sleep, eating a balanced diet, roommates, academics, recreation, etc.)
 - Communication with international staff about symptoms
 - Access to treatment abroad and crisis support services (see the list on the next slide)





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ABROAD.

STUDY ABROAD
FILM FESTIVAL
2015

WINNER

How might you prepare for study abroad?



Mental Health Resources

- Your international health insurance - make an appt with an English speaking therapist in the country where you will be living
- Western's Counseling Center: Old Main 540, 360-650-3164 during business hours (<https://cwc.wvu.edu/>)
 - 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 (<https://988lifeline.org/>)
- Crisis Text Line: <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- The Trevor Project (national 24-hour free confidential suicide hotline for gay and questioning youth), 1-866-488-7386

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



Common Health Issues Abroad

- Where are you going abroad?
 - Gastrointestinal issues
 - Dehydration & heat related illness
 - Mosquito-borne diseases?
- Traveling with a chronic illness?
 - <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/chronic-illnesses>
- Rabies
 - DO NOT pet animals
 - Lethal



Pandemic Safety - COVID19

- CDC International Pandemic Travel:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>
 - Different countries = own entrance requirements and protocols
 - Fully vaccinated and have up-to-date vaccines 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).
 - Bring at-home tests and hand sanitizer
- 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!).
- Protect your COVID-19 CDC vaccination card because it is difficult to replace with a duplicate CDC-issued card.
 - Home state QR code = good back-up

Questions?

