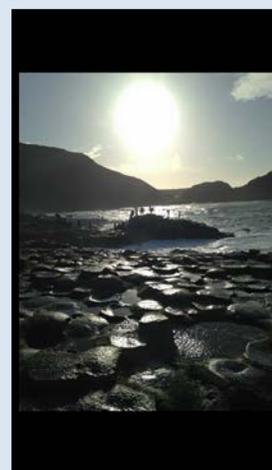


# Study Away Survival Guide



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### Acknowledgements

# Embarking on the Adventure of a Lifetime: Awareness, Initiative, Flexibility

Congratulations! You've made a great choice to study away, a choice which will make you laugh and cry and totally change your life and your outlook forever - and for the better. You'll soon be opening doors you never knew existed.

Whether you're planning to spend a semester or a year abroad, there are probably a number of questions and concerns you'd like to have addressed as you look forward to this exciting time. This handbook has been specifically designed in three parts to answer these questions (and some you haven't thought of yet). **Section One** addresses things you should keep in mind as you prepare for departure. Your program or program provider will likely send you additional information. **Section Two** focuses on issues surrounding your arrival in your host country and the subsequent period of adjustment you will undergo while in country. You will likely have an additional on-site orientation through your program or University. **Section Three** deals with tips and suggestions to help insure a relatively smooth re-entry into the United States.

While this guide is by no means an exhaustive account of all the things you will encounter, the basic information, suggestions, and tips it contains should prove a helpful resource and a useful tool as you progress through the various stages of your adventure. The information it contains has been compiled from a wide array of knowledgeable experts who have all, at one time or another, been in the same situation in which you now find yourself. It is your guide as you make your preparations to leave, consult it when you arrive, and refer back to it when you return and begin to readjust to the "familiar" surroundings of home and college.

There are a few things you'll want to keep in mind as you make your plans. First, you'll need to be aware of and informed about your own country and its customs before you go. Likewise, become aware of and sensitive to the culture you'll be entering and the differences you're likely to encounter there. Remember, you are a representative of your home country and of Williams College.

Secondly, understand that YOUR experience abroad depends, ultimately, on no one but YOU. Depending on the program you've selected, you may or may not find yourself being taken care of and checked up on like you are at Williams. Motivation and initiative will prove essential to assuring you get the most out of your study away experience.

And finally, be flexible! Whether you're in Great Britain or Tanzania, you *are* in a foreign country. Expect to deal with the normal ups and downs of adjusting to a new country and a different culture, and be open-minded and willing to adapt to the changing situations in which you find yourself. Your experience will ultimately be rewarding and you will learn a lot along the way.

This is a unique opportunity to grow, mature, and learn from experiencing first-hand the excitement and challenge of living in a new and changing international atmosphere. It's also a great chance to be awed and passionate and just have a lot of fun. So make the very most of it - and above all, learn as much as you can and enjoy yourself!

# Section One: Pre-Departure Information

## Official Documents

The information that follows regarding passports and visas applies to United States citizens. Give yourself plenty of time to allow for application processing and work closely with your program provider to follow their immigration instructions. If you are a foreign national, you should contact your embassy or consulate for information and instructions on applying for visas.

## Passports

If you're a United States citizen and you don't already have a United States Passport, you should **apply for one now**. Applications normally take two to eight weeks to process (depending on the season and the office to which you apply), so be sure to plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to receive the passport in time to apply for your visa. If this will be your first passport, you'll have to apply in person. You can apply at either of the following locations near Williams:

U.S. Passport Office  
County Court Building  
207 South Street  
Bennington, VT 05201  
(802) 447-2702

U.S. Post Office  
67 Summer St.  
North Adams, MA 01247  
(413) 664-4554

Locations of other passport offices can be found at: <http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport>

This is an excellent website, and can answer many questions you may have about the application process. Be advised, however, that many passport offices in larger cities require you to schedule an appointment by telephone before applying in person. To find out more, you can also call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778).

Your passport will be valid for ten years unless specifically limited to a shorter time. As soon as you receive your passport, sign it and fill in the notification data in the front (it's legally the only way the U.S. embassy in your host country will be able to notify your parents/ relatives/ other contacts if you're injured or incapacitated). Make several photocopies of your passport. Leave one at home with friends/relatives you trust, leave one in your luggage, and carry one with you, but not in the same place as you carry your passport. If you ever lose your passport, having a photocopy will greatly ease the process of getting a new one at an American embassy or consulate abroad. A word to the wise: recent passports tend to fall apart when they get wet, and the ink on many visas will run.

Remember that your passport should be valid at least 6 months beyond the end date of your program. If it is about to expire, you should plan to renew prior to your visa application.

## Visas

Many countries require a visa for visiting students- an official authorization stamped on a passport - for entry into, travel within, and exit from the country. Travel with a visa is usually for a limited time and for a specified purpose, and in some developing countries can restrict the bearer to specified (or unspecified!) areas within the country. It's usually a good idea to make sure you understand exactly what your visa entitles you to, and restricts you from, doing.

If a visa is required for the country in which your program is located, or for a country through which

you'll be traveling, you'll want to consult with your program (since some programs do some of the work for you). For information on which countries require visas and under what circumstances, check out:

<http://travel.state.gov/visa> (or Google "x/country visa" – see "student visas")

All students should visit the country's Embassy/Consulate website for visa information:

- The country's embassy or consulate here in the States. When calling or emailing, be sure to specify YOUR nationality when requesting visa information.
- Passport agencies cannot help you obtain visas.

The visa application process is, for certain countries, notorious for taking extraordinary amounts of time. The best thing to do is to apply as soon as possible, update yourself on the state of your application if, and only if, it is overdue, and keep the following in mind when planning:

- Most visas require a fee.
- You'll need to fill out several forms and you may need to submit passport-size photos. You can obtain these at the Print Shop or at Rite Aid in Williamstown, MA.
- Since each visa is stamped on a blank page in your passport, you'll need to give your passport to the embassy or consulate awarding you the visa so it can be processed. The entire process can take a considerable amount of time, especially when you'll be traveling through several countries, all of which require a separate visa; so plan well in advance.

## **International Student Identity Cards**

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) serves as an effective means of proof of student status, since many tourist spots won't honor regular U.S. college I.D.'s. It's also helpful in securing cheap air fares to Europe, Asia, and Africa. The application process is simple and takes only a couple of minutes, a passport-sized photo, and a \$22 application fee. You can apply in person in the Registrar's Office and takes 2-3 days to process. If you choose to apply by mail using an application that can be picked up in the Registrar's Office, the process can take up to 6-8 weeks. Regardless of whether you apply in person or by mail, you'll need to get the application form stamped and signed in the Registrar's Office.

The card more than pays for itself in reduced fees for everything from airline flights and accommodations to restaurants, theaters, and museums. You'll also receive a helpful guide outlining these and other benefits when you receive your card. For more information, pick up an application in the Registrar's Office, or look the card up on the web at: [www.myisic.com](http://www.myisic.com)

## **Optional Documents**

### **The International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF) Card**

Staying at a hostel is often a culture and an adventure unto itself, and usually provides for some great travel stories even if it doesn't always guarantee a good night's sleep. If you plan to stay in a hostel while abroad, you'll want to get an IYHF card, required at most youth hostels. Where not required, it usually entitles the bearer to modest discounts on rates, or at least will earn you a privileged spot on the waiting list. You can sometimes purchase an IYHF card at participating hostels abroad, but at inflated (if not downright exorbitant) prices. So, your best bet is to get one before you leave, by inquiring at Hostelling International USA (301-495-1240), or on the web at: <http://www.hiusa.org>

## **The WHO Card**

The WHO is an international body that co-ordinates health policy and health care on an international scale. It publishes a little yellow card commonly called a WHO card, technically called the "International Certificates of Vaccination," on which one records all one's vaccines and pertinent medical history. In some developing countries, you'll be required to show your WHO card before they'll let you in the country. This always applies in countries that require a yellow fever vaccination before granting entry to foreign nationals. The Health Center can set you up with a WHO card, as well as give you information on a yellow fever vaccination if required by your host country. A word to the wise: WHO cards don't age well, and they disintegrate when wet, so keep yours in a safe, dry place.

## **Academics**

Because you are *studying* away, it is important that you understand a few academic differences and how the coursework completed abroad impacts your Williams degree.

### **Transfer Credit**

Prior to departure, you should contact your major department to understand if and how courses taken abroad may count toward major requirements. Approval of courses toward your major is at the discretion of the department. You can get much of the course information from your program directly, including syllabi and course descriptions. For general Williams course credit, you must register for courses within the liberal arts and obtain approval via email from the Office of International Education and Study Away once your schedule is close to finalized. Assuming you complete your courses within the liberal arts with a minimum grade of "C-" or above, your courses will transfer. You cannot take courses pass/fail. Additional details, including course credit requirements, can be found in your CAS letter.

Academics abroad will inevitably be different from your experience in the Williams classroom. You may be in a large lecture hall with hundreds of other students and no discussion. You may also find that rigor can vary from one course or program to the next. Embrace this change and know that you are studying away to experience difference. If you are directly enrolling in a foreign university, you may notice a difference in engagement in the classroom from fellow students. Education systems and structure differ from the United States. Embrace the change but be sure to understand the expectations in terms of coursework and examinations. Your program provider or International Student Office at the University abroad will be a good resource for you.

### **Transcript and evaluation process**

In order for credit to transfer to Williams, we need an official transcript sent directly from your program in a signed, sealed envelope. The transcript should be addressed to the Office of International Education and Study Away at Williams College.

The Office of International Education and Study Away cannot process your transcript until we receive your online program evaluation after the completion of your program. These evaluations are made available to future Ephs as a resource when they are planning to choose their study away program. It is also a way for Williams to assess the quality of the program abroad.

It is your responsibility to arrange for the transcript to be sent and the program evaluation to be completed before credit can transfer toward your Williams degree.

## **ADA and disability support**

If you receive disability support at Williams and you are hoping for similar accommodations abroad, you should contact the Director of Accessible Education at Williams College prior to departure. You should also work with your program provider to determine what support is available for you.

Additional information can be found here: <http://academic-resources.williams.edu/disabilities/>

## **Travel**

### **Customs**

We strongly recommend that you do not ship items in advance and many program partners prohibit it. However, if you do plan to ship dutiable items either abroad or back to the States, you'll have to declare them when you arrive, and may have to pick up an import permit and pay duties when you collect your package at the Post Office. Consult the consulate or embassy of your host country for specific questions about their customs and duty procedures. For additional information about American customs, the booklet "Know Before You Go, Customs Hints" is an exhaustive treatment of US Customs regulations and duty rates by the U.S. Customs Service. The booklet is available at: [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)

When you return to the States, you'll be allowed to bring in up to \$800 worth of merchandise free of duty. The next \$1000 worth of material is subject to a flat duty rate of 10%. Keeping track of purchases you make abroad and saving receipts will smooth the customs declaration process, as will packing all the items you bought abroad and must declare together in one bag. Penalties for failure to declare items, or for understating the value of a declared item, can be quite severe.

Generally, Customs officials will not allow fruit, vegetables, or animal products to pass. Breads, canned goods, and chocolates are often acceptable, although this depends largely on the country from which they are being imported. Items of obvious historical value or cultural heritage can sometimes be held by customs. Also, if you plan to leave or return with over \$10,000 in U.S. currency (not a recommended practice); you must report this to U.S. Customs.

### **Travel Advisories and Warnings**

You can call the Department of State Citizen Emergency Center at (202) 647-5225 for a recording of all current travel advisories issued by the State Department if you have concerns about conditions in your destination country. You can also obtain this information from official passport agencies, U.S. Embassies, travel agents, airlines, and the State Department Webpage, which contains travel advisories as well as a summary of current conditions in each country: <http://travel.state.gov>

### **Driving Abroad**

Williams College strongly discourages you from driving while studying abroad. Road conditions, signage, and implied driving regulations and customs in foreign countries are obviously different. When driving feels foreign, as you can no doubt imagine, accidents happen - and they're usually very big. Motor vehicle accidents actually account for the vast majority of all study-abroad deaths and serious injuries; so please, seriously consider NOT driving while abroad. There are so many other forms of transport that are even better to use and really allow you to know and understand the culture on a deeper level. Work with your program staff on-site to understand what your safe options are. Many programs actually restrict this as well, so be sure to check with your primary on-site contact regarding their policy and recommendations.

# Money

If you are a financial aid student, you would have worked with the financial aid office at Williams on your estimated budget and financial aid package prior to departure. Your program and previous student evaluations are excellent resources when you are trying to budget actual costs abroad.

Your program will invoice you directly for the cost of your semester or year abroad. You will work with the Bursar's Office or the program directly to arrange for payment. You will be invoiced a \$1500 Study Away fee by Williams and all other expenses will be paid to the program directly (including tuition, room, and sometimes board if applicable). If you have any questions about this, you can contact the Bursar's Office or the Financial Aid Office at Williams directly.

Figuring out how to maintain and ensure an adequate flow of cash when abroad can seem both challenging and intimidating. Please remember to notify your home bank and credit card companies in advance of your travel plans. This will help to prevent them from shutting down access to your accounts due to fraud concerns.

## Credit Cards/ATMs: The Best Way

Most major credit cards are accepted abroad. Visa and MasterCard are quite widely used, especially in Europe, with American Express only slightly less so. ATM's are quite widely available in most cities and can even be found every couple of hundred feet in most European airports, making it now often unnecessary to even carry a supply of foreign cash with you on the plane. Benefits of credit cards/ATM cards include:

- Round the clock access to funds.
- Ease of replacement should they be lost.
- Ease of carrying - one need never show cash in public.
- Many cards carry consumer benefits such as buyer's insurance and toll-free ATM locator phone numbers.
- You get the best exchange rate available, and never have to deal with physically exchanging your funds.

When using credit cards, there are a few simple things to keep in mind to avoid potential catastrophe. Never, ever forget your PIN number when abroad. It is often required for any kind of credit card purchase abroad, even at cash registers. Before leaving, verify that your PIN number works, and call the customer service number on the back of your card to ensure the card will work in your host country. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are the recommended cards; wide-ranging accessibility is uncertain with other cards. Only bring cards that you plan to use, or, in other words, only bring cards you're willing to lose and have to replace. Replacing two cards is much easier than replacing six. Also, photocopy your cards and record the customer service numbers. Leave one photocopy at home with someone you trust, put one copy in your luggage, and keep one copy with you, but not in the same place as your cards, to facilitate replacement in case they are lost. And finally, try to keep within your credit limit, as overdrawing in some countries can lead to confiscation of your card at best, and your arrest and imprisonment at worst.

Be sure to notify your bank that you will be traveling so that they do not close your account access because of fraud concerns. This includes traveling away from your program site to another country.

**A special note:** Credit card use in Russia and certain African and Middle Eastern countries such as Madagascar and Morocco, is limited and unreliable. **In the case, and only in the case, of travel to these countries, you may wish to consider the following options.**

## **Traveler's Checks**

In countries where credit card use is in doubt (i.e. Russia and certain African countries), traveler's checks can be an option. To guard against loss and theft, traveler's checks are generally the preferred alternative to cash. American Express Traveler's Checks are usually the most widely accepted, and are refundable if lost or stolen (if you're in a country that has a customer service number, and has a phone system for you to access said customer service number). This can prove to be a very complex and frustrating process, however, and is compounded if you lose identification documents at the same time as your traveler's checks, so take extra care to carry them safely and keep a detailed record of all your transactions. Remember to record the serial numbers of your checks, and keep your records separate from your checks. In addition, keep checks separate from your passport, since a thief in possession of both can easily cash the checks. You'll probably want to carry relatively small denominations, \$10 and \$20 checks, to avoid carrying unnecessarily large amounts of cash. Checks can usually be cashed in a variety of places, such as banks, hotels, exchange booths, and train stations. Be aware, however, that exchange rates and commissions charged to cash checks vary widely from place to place, so it's probably in your best interest to shop around and avoid sites with heavy tourist traffic.

## **Cash**

Do NOT carry large amounts of cash, unless you'll be traveling to Russia and have checked the State Department travel advisory website first. Plan only to keep a small amount of cash in case of an emergency. If you'll be arriving in Western Europe, there is no need to purchase foreign cash in the States before you leave, as ATMs will be available in the airport. If you'll be traveling outside Western Europe, you may wish to have a small amount of foreign cash before you leave, so as to pay for food, transportation, bathrooms, and the phone when you first arrive. Carrying any more cash than this is a bad idea, if not downright dangerous, as you have no protection against theft. Large amounts of cash can even attract thieves, especially in crowded places such as subways and markets. Avoid displaying your cash in public, and carry only as much as you plan to use in a specific outing, so as to avoid having to sort through a wad of cash to pick out a couple bills. Carrying dollars abroad is also generally a poor idea (except, currently, when traveling to Russia), as foreign exchange booths in arrival facilities often charge excessive commissions and provide poor exchange rates.

## **Black Market Exchange**

Never, EVER exchange money on the black market. Exchanging money on the street, from private vendors in airports and train stations, and from random people who offer to "trade" is an extremely dangerous practice. Many countries will arrest people caught exchanging money on the black market, and some countries reward such activity with lengthy prison stays or public, physical forms of punishment.

## **Health Issues**

The quality of your study-abroad experience depends on your health. Traveling abroad reminds even the most sturdy and experienced traveler of the soft, coddled life we live here in the United States. The States are, in comparison with many other countries, remarkably clean and germ-free. As a result, we tend to be unprepared for dealing with less clean environments, and have little natural resistance built up for what are, in some countries, everyday germs. While it is perfectly normal to get sick once or twice while studying abroad, there are some easy steps you can take to significantly reduce both the frequency and intensity of minor illnesses, and the chance of contracting a major illness or undergoing a traumatic injury. Carefully reading through the following section, and following the suggestions provided, will undoubtedly make your study-abroad experience both more enjoyable and more rewarding.

Obviously, health risks depend on the country to which you will be traveling. It's a good idea to consult with your doctor or the nursing staff in the Health Center about the health precautions you should take for the region in which you'll be studying. The staff at the Williams Health Center are more than happy to help and they are quite educated on foreign health concerns.

## **A General Overview of Health Issues**

The risk of becoming ill while abroad depends on three factors:

- Ensuring adequate pre-departure preparations.
- Knowing the health and safety risks of the areas in which you'll be studying.
- Following sound medical council.

In most "developed" areas, such as Australia, Western Europe, New Zealand, Japan, and Canada, health risks are often little more than in the United States. In these countries, one rarely has to worry about the quality of drinking water, foods that shouldn't be eaten, and infectious diseases that don't already pose problems in the States. On the other hand, in "less developed" areas, such as Africa, Asia, South and Central America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, health risks, living conditions, and hygiene and sanitation can vary greatly from place to place, from being abysmal to being relatively close to American standards. So, the key to maintaining good health and avoiding injury lies in knowing what to expect, and taking the proper precautions.

Good old common sense precautions are: take your vitamins, and wash your hands! Hand washing is perhaps the single easiest method of controlling the spread of disease. You'll want to keep in mind that your body will be subject to a great deal of physical and psychological stress as it adapts to your new environment. Get plenty of sleep (but don't spend your whole day in bed), limit your consumption of alcohol, avoid sharing water bottles or utensils within the group, and generally do not push yourself too hard.

## **Diseases You Hope You Don't Catch**

### **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is a fairly common problem for travelers, so endemic for Westerners traveling to "less developed" areas the most benign form has earned itself the name "traveler's diarrhea." It usually lasts a couple of days and almost never over a week. Diarrhea is actually nature's way of cleaning out the body, serving to flush the intestines of disagreeable foods, noxious bacteria, and other hostile microscopic critters. The most important step to take for diarrhea is to keep adequately hydrated. The body is capable of losing large amounts of fluid through diarrhea in short periods of time. This fluid, and the essential electrolytes contained within, must be replaced to prevent dehydration that can develop, if unattended, into a serious, and potentially even life-threatening, problem. When re-hydrating, take care to drink fluids that contain electrolytes (juices, hot tea, etc.) if they're available (water is fine too, but then you'll need to add electrolytes), and above all, make sure these fluids are safe and uncontaminated. Obviously, drinking the same thing that made you sick won't make you well! Diarrhea-stopping medications such as Imodium should only be taken when traveling, since diarrhea is a natural process and should not be blocked by such medications unless absolutely necessary. If the condition becomes severe, lasts more than several days, or if there is blood or mucus in your stool, a fever occurs with chills, or hydration proves overly challenging, consult a doctor immediately. You should also notify on-site staff of any health concerns so that they are aware and can assist. To reduce your chances of contracting more serious forms of diarrhea in developing countries, especially in the tropics and in sub-tropical regions, follow your program's advice regarding what not to eat and what not to drink.

**AVOID THE FOLLOWING:**

- Raw vegetables (especially salads). Rinsing these in water is not sufficient. Vegetables that have been well cooked are usually fine.*

- Fruits that do not have a thick covering that you yourself wash and peel before eating.
- Rare or raw meat, fish, or shellfish
- Dairy products, especially those from small vendors. This includes ice cream. Although dairy products bought in large supermarkets are sometimes safe in some countries, in others NO dairy products are safe.
- Tap water, or any beverage that isn't bottled or canned and opened by you. Be sure that the seal is not broken and is only broken by you. Don't use tap water for brushing your teeth if so advised by your program.
- Ice and restaurant glasses are great ways for bacteria to slip by your precautions. Avoid ice, and make sure the glasses that you drink out of are clean and dry. Then, open the bottled beverage yourself, or have it opened in front of you, and pour it into your clean dry glass.

On the flip side of diarrhea is constipation, which can sometimes become severe in new environments containing new foods and a disruption in the daily routine. Regular bowel movements are normal; if they should stop being regular, it's a good idea to visit a physician before a serious blockage occurs.

## **Tetanus**

Tetanus, also known as "lockjaw," is a highly unpleasant and ultimately fatal infection of the nervous system and associated tissue from a contaminated wound or injury. It's a common perception that tetanus only occurs from rusty nails; actually, tetanus can be contracted through any open wound in just about any non-sterile environment, including dirt. Tetanus results in severe muscle spasms that are rapidly incapacitating and eventually fatal. Thoroughly washing all sites of injury and keeping them clean is one of the easiest preventative steps. Another easy step is a tetanus vaccine which should absolutely be up-to-date before you leave the States. Tetanus vaccines are good for ten years, except in the case of a traumatic injury, in which case you should receive a booster if you haven't had one in the last five years.

## **Hepatitis**

Hepatitis A and B are prevalent in many less-developed areas of the world. Both can also be contracted in the States and other developed areas. Although not commonly thought of as a threat, Hepatitis B is much more prevalent and easy to contract in the developed world than AIDS. Crowded living conditions and poor sanitation constitute an excellent environment for contraction of the virus. In addition, the virus can be spread through blood and other bodily fluids, so contaminated needles and unprotected sex carry a high risk of infection. Hepatitis A can be transmitted through contaminated food and water, such as improperly prepared clams, oysters, and other shellfish. Symptoms include fever, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, and yellowing of the eyes consistent with jaundice. Ultimately, the disease can result in liver failure and, if untreated, death.

You should strongly consider receiving vaccinations against hepatitis A and B before going abroad. The Health Center can provide you with more information on both vaccines, as well as administer them. It takes several months to complete an entire vaccination series so you'll want to plan ahead.

## **Malaria**

Transmitted by the female Anopheline mosquito, malaria is endemic in parts of the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. It has been identified by the World Health Organization as the world's largest health problem. Four varieties of malaria exist, all with approximately the same symptoms. Only one variety most commonly found in sub-Saharan Africa, is fatal. Symptoms are often flu-like, including night sweats, high recurrent fever that breaks in a sweat, and joint pain and aches. Untreated, the disease will make you miserable at best and, in the case of the fatal variety, can result in fairly rapid death. Anti-malarial medication is a must for anyone traveling to a malaria area, and often is required for entry into the country. Quinine-resistant malaria is a widespread phenomenon, although pockets of non-resistant malaria still exist. For information on anti-malarial

prophylaxis (a term that designates a preventative dose of medication taken before, during, and after a period of exposure), consult the Health Center. New treatments are continually evolving, so be sure to find the latest information on the disease and prophylaxis, as well as areas of resistance.

## **AIDS**

Public perception of AIDS in the Western world has evolved dramatically in the last ten years. Once a horrible disease that struck fear into the hearts of millions and motivated many to practice safe sex, it is now perceived as a greatly reduced threat that is treatable with modern medicine.

One of the great ironies of the modern world, however, is that the people who are most commonly infected have no access to "modern" medicine's miracle treatments, and are therefore dying by the millions. AIDS in Africa has reached truly epidemic proportions, on the order of the Black Plague in Europe. It is such a problem in some countries that industries are going bankrupt from disability payments and a lack of workers, and economies are collapsing from the bottom (the work force) up. AIDS is, therefore, a serious threat to any student traveling abroad, and doubly so to those going to lesser developed countries.

AIDS is a blood borne pathogen, that means that to avoid contracting AIDS, you must avoid contact with blood or bodily fluids that come into contact with the more permeable mucus membranes (i.e. other than the nose and mouth). This means, above all, practicing safe sex with latex condoms that you bring from America, or, even better, abstinence. You should also avoid contact with blood or bodily fluids in the street. This may sound gruesome, but it's a consideration, especially in third-world countries where automobile accidents are common. If involved in, or witness to, an automobile accident, keep this in mind before you help out. An equally large threat is poor hygiene in foreign hospitals that often re-use syringes and needles without properly disinfecting this equipment. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you avoid contact with needles or syringes by any and all possible means when in developing countries. This covers needles used in illicit drugs, tattooing, piercing, and acupuncture.

## **Other Diseases**

Some of the nastier diseases out there include Dengue Fever, Yellow Fever, Rabies, Tuberculosis, and Schistosomiasis (Bilharzia), as well as worms and other parasites. This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives you a good idea of the array of diseases to which you may be exposed. Vaccinations and/or precautions exist for the above, so if you'll be traveling to countries in which any of these diseases may be a threat, visit your doctor or the Health Center for more information and the proper precautionary vaccinations or medications. Another good source of information is the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta (CDC) at (800) 232-4636, or at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## **Insurance**

If you are a student at Williams College some form of insurance already covers you. Before your departure, it's a good idea to examine your policy to understand what it does and doesn't cover. Many policies, for example, won't pay any benefits for medical care received abroad. Others will cover certain treatments abroad, but won't cover medical evacuation. The College requires all study-abroad students to have health insurance that will cover medical care abroad. If you decide to enroll in Williams College Student Health Insurance, you'll need to submit an enrollment form to Health Services, as they will not automatically enroll you. If you have questions about your health insurance policy coverage, contact your provider *before* you leave and find yourself sick and short of funds, halfway around the world. Once you have determined what type of policy you will have while abroad, it is required that you complete the "Off Campus Health Coverage Verification Form" and submit it to the International Education and Study Away Office prior to your departure.

## Medications

In addition to the vaccinations you'll receive here in the States before you go abroad, you may accumulate a healthy supply of medications to take with you, especially if you'll be traveling to a tropical or developing country. If you have any medical conditions that sometimes require medications, or routinely take a prescription medication, make sure you bring an adequate supply with you. Trying to explain what you need to a pharmacist halfway around the world in a foreign language is often a challenging and risky business. However, for some medications, you can only have so much prescribed in advance. You should work with your doctor well in advance to develop a plan to access necessary medications while abroad. Medications cannot be shipped, they will be held in customs.

When packing, plan to take all your medications with you on the plane, and make sure they're all in their original containers. Be sure to consult the airline website regarding medications. The following is a general idea of what you need to do:

- Make a personal inventory of all your medications and medical items; name of drug, dosage, doctor prescribing medication, etc.
- Consult with your physician(s) on filling prescriptions while abroad
- Pack enough medication to last you the duration of your trip and bring extra just in case you extend your stay
- All prescription medication must be in the bottle with the label; do not combine different medications in one bottle – each medication should be in its own correctly labeled bottle
- If your prescription medication is gel or liquid, be sure to follow the airport security guidelines for gels or liquids: must be kept in 3 oz. container and the containers must be put in a quart-size clear plastic bag with zip top. You can put all liquids or gels in one bag if they fit. If you require more medication the airline restriction allows, contact the airline in advance to explain. They will advise you on their procedure.

Another way to notify medical personnel of important medical conditions or allergies is by wearing a Medic Alert tag, usually in the form of a bracelet or a necklace. Although this is not a completely universal system, it's a good idea everywhere, whether overseas or in the States.

For more information, write to: **Medic Alert Foundation International**

2323 Colorado Avenue  
Turlock, CA 95382  
Toll-free: (888)-633-4298  
International: +1 209 668 3333  
[www.medicalert.org](http://www.medicalert.org)

## Medical Care Abroad

Your program director should maintain a list of quality physicians and hospitals in the area in which you will be studying. If you'll be traveling by yourself, take a copy of this list with you, or contact the American embassy in the country in which you'll be traveling for a list of English-speaking doctors. An English-speaking doctor is a good idea unless your language skills are extraordinary, since when it comes to your health, you don't want to risk a breakdown in communication. A list of English speaking doctors abroad can also be obtained from:

**The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT)**

1623 Military Rd.  
Niagara Falls, NY 14304-1745  
(716) 754-4883  
[http://iamat.org/doctors\\_clinics.cfm](http://iamat.org/doctors_clinics.cfm)

## International SOS

Williams College has contracted with a company called International SOS (SOS) to provide worldwide assistance and evacuation services for all study abroad participants. The services provided by International SOS range from telephone advice and referrals to full-scan evacuation by private air ambulance. The SOS network of multilingual specialists operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from SOS Alarm Centers around the world. Your SOS membership, provided by Williams College, protects you against a variety of difficulties that could arise while you are abroad. The coverage is designed to supplement the policies, procedures and support staff which Williams College already has in place.

It is important to understand that, although International SOS will offer our students travel, medical and security advice and services, as well as on-line access to information which many insurance companies do not offer, **International SOS is NOT health insurance**. Williams College continues to require all students studying abroad to maintain a health insurance coverage that meets the standards set forth by the College's Student Health Service and to make certain that their policies cover them while abroad.

Whenever you are traveling or living abroad, you can access up-to-date reports on more than 200 countries worldwide on health issues, medical care and vaccination requirements via the International SOS website – your home page for travel health and safety information (located at <http://www.internationalsos.com>). The International SOS website also contains an on-line Personal Locator form for inputting travel and destination information.

**All travelers should complete the form online so that this information is available to International SOS should you need to be located in the event of a crisis or emergency.**

While you are abroad, your first contact should always be the director of your overseas program, as instructed during your orientation. If you are traveling, and/or in a situation where you are not able to reach that person, or are not on a program, you should contact International SOS who will work to meet your needs immediately and will contact the Williams College International Education and Study Away Office and/or the Dean's Office in the United States while coordinating coverage with Williams College.

## A Few Final Words on Health Issues

The information above is not meant to scare or intimidate you. Hopefully, you'll never have to worry about any of this, especially if you prepare adequately, get the proper vaccinations, and take the proper precautions in your host country. Donna Denelli-Hess ([ddenelli@williams.edu](mailto:ddenelli@williams.edu)) in Health Services at Williams is an excellent resource for you prior to departure.

A little prevention goes a long way. In addition to preventing illness, you should take steps to prevent injury. For example, always wear your seat belt if it's available; be aware of crazy foreign drivers when crossing the street; don't hitchhike; don't bungee jump; and listen to that little voice inside of you that says "I've got a bad feeling about this." If you don't feel you're safe, you're probably not! Granted, you'll have to deal with a level of comfort and safety inferior to what you're used to; but that doesn't mean you can't take all practical steps to minimize your exposure to unsafe or dangerous conditions.

# Personal Preparation

## Education

Probably the single most important thing you can do before departure, in terms of ensuring that your experience will be the most interesting and rewarding possible, is to learn all you can about your country. This can and, ultimately, should, take several forms.

First, read and study about your country's history, political system, and customs. Gather information about economics, industry, education, popular culture, family and social structure, religion, and human and natural resources in your country. The more you know about your country, the better prepared you'll be to appreciate your surroundings and make sense of the hustle and bustle of your first few months abroad. Also, having a relatively large base of knowledge prior to departure will put you in a much better position for the colossal amount of synthesis you'll do as you incorporate yourself into the culture, and incorporate an understanding of the culture into who you are. A number of materials exist to provide you with more information on your host country:

- Read the *New York Times* or a similar paper to get an idea of current goings-on in your country.
- The Economist* is a great way to get a grip on your host country's political and economic life. -A good travel guide, such as a Lonely Planet guide, is an excellent way to get some basic background on your country. Lonely Planet guides provide highly informative "Facts about the Country" and "Facts for the Visitor" sections.
- Surfing the Internet for references to your host country is an excellent activity. Not only can it provide interesting, valuable, or downright kooky information, it will also give you an overview of structural means of rational thought and organization particular to your country. Note not only what you see, but also what you *don't* see and would expect to see on an American page.
- Look up [http://travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html). Follow the links to the overview on your country.
- Look up [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/country.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/country.html) for CIA information on your country. It may sound like spy material, but it's actually just good old-fashioned statistics and indicators, as well as basic information on political structure, political parties, religion, etc.
- Check out a movie made in your host country from the library.
- If you'll be speaking a foreign language, go to your language's lunch table at Mission.

A good goal is to see how many of the following questions (from the University of Rochester) you can answer:

1. How many people who are prominent in the affairs (politics, athletics religion, the arts, etc.) of your country can you name?
2. Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?
3. Can you recognize the national anthem?
4. Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language? What are the social and political implications of language usage?
5. What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion?
6. What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How regularly do people participate in them?
7. How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religions?
8. What are the most common forms of marriage ceremonies and celebrations?
9. What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Plural marriages?
10. What is the attitude toward gambling?
11. What is the attitude toward drinking?
12. Is the price asked for merchandise fixed, or are customers expected to bargain? How is bargaining conducted?
13. If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale, will the storekeeper think you are

- knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, completely outside your rights? Other?
14. How do people organize their daily activities? What is the normal meal schedule? Is there a daytime rest period? What is the customary time for visiting friends?
  15. What foods are most popular and how are they prepared?
  16. What things are taboo in this society?
  17. What is the usual dress for women and men? Are slacks or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions?
  18. What are the special privileges of age and/or sex?
  19. If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early, on time, or late? If late, how late?
  20. On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts from people in the country? What kinds of gifts would you exchange?
  21. Do some flowers have a particular significance?
  22. How do people greet one another? Shake hands? Embrace or kiss? How do they leave each other? What does any variation from the usual greeting or leave-taking signify?
  23. What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
  24. What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities?
  25. What sports are popular?
  26. What kinds of television programs are shown?
  27. How are children disciplined at home?
  28. Are children usually present at social occasions? At ceremonial occasions? If they are not present, how are they cared for in the absence of their parents?
  29. How does society observe children's "coming of age?"
  30. What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
  31. Who has the right of way in traffic: vehicles, animals, or pedestrians?
  32. Is military training/service compulsory?
  33. Are the largest-circulation newspapers generally friendly in their attitude toward the United States? The local government?
  34. What is the history of the relationships between this country and the U.S.?
  35. How many people have emigrated from this country to the U.S.? Other countries? Are many doing so at present?
  36. What kinds of health services are available?
  37. What are the common remedies for minor ailments? Where can medicines be purchased?
  38. Is education free? Compulsory?
  39. What kinds of schools are considered best: public, private, parochial?
  40. Where are the important universities of the country? If university education is sought abroad, to which countries and universities do students go?
  41. What do citizens of the country think of vegetarianism? Carnivores?
  42. What are the minority groups in your host country? Will you be a minority in that country?
  43. What are men's, women's, and minorities' roles?
  44. Do men, women, and minorities have equal opportunity/protection under the law?
  45. Do women and minorities serve in the military?
  46. Do women work outside the home?
  47. What type of leadership roles do women and minorities hold?
  48. How do men treat local women? Minorities?
  49. Are there special concerns/issues that women and minorities should be aware of before they study abroad in your host country?
  50. Where do women and minorities fall within the social hierarchy?

On the flip side of learning about your host country is learning more about your own country. You'll be acting as a representative of your own country which carries with it a range of inferred responsibilities. Many foreign nationals will expect from you a reasonable knowledge of your own country, in addition to your new host country. This will allow you to be respectful of the new culture while at the same time able to answer questions about your home culture, from music to politics. You'll probably be asked some fairly in-depth questions, so be prepared to discuss a range of issues intelligently and thoughtfully, while

knowing enough about your host country to avoid offending whomever you're having the discussion with. So keep up on the news! Being from the Purple Bubble is never a sufficient excuse.

If you'll be studying in a country where you'll need to know a foreign language, now is a great time to improve your listening and speaking skills. Study a phrasebook, build your vocabulary, read in the language, attend language lunch tables in Mission (call the Center for Foreign Languages in Hollander Hall for more information). Plan to spend as much time as you can brushing up on the language, as it will prove invaluable in making your adjustment to your new culture go smoothly and enabling you to form meaningful connections with host families and foreign students.

## **Packing**

Visit TSA website often for current information: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm>

Whether you'll be away for a semester or a year you'll be faced with the challenge and the joy of transporting all your necessary (a very important word here) belongings overseas. This is not a particularly easy task for most of us, especially if you have baggage restrictions on your flight (although this is better in the long run, as it forces you to pack lighter). The number one rule is to PACK LIGHT! Let it be said again:

### **Pack Light!**

Many airlines have strict baggage and weight requirements. You must adhere to these and plan accordingly.

### **WHAT TO BRING**

Start with good, sturdy luggage that will withstand rough airline treatment. Remove any attachments that may get snagged on the plane. Consider luggage that won't attract attention to you as an American or a foreigner. In developing countries, a full-size internal-frame backpack camouflaged in an Army surplus duffel or the like works well - and also spares your bag from dust and dirt from all-day trips on bus luggage racks.

- Clearly mark each of your bags, inside and out, with your name, address, and telephone number for the flight.
- A small carry-on bag that can later double as an overnight bag for traveling.
- As little clothing as possible. Most foreign students own significantly less than we do, and besides, it won't take long for you to get sick of carrying all your clothes.
- Make sure your clothing respects local dress codes.
- Layered clothing is your best bet for protection from the elements in all climates.
- Investing in good, lightweight raingear is an absolute must; no ponchos, no vinyl.
- A warm hat, gloves, warm socks, and warm, well-fitting waterproof boots will come in handy in any climate where the temperature occasionally drops.
- Sturdy walking-shoes or hiking boots. Don't forget to break them in before you go.
- One nice outfit.
- Gifts for host family members.
- A small towel, if you don't feel like buying one abroad (they're usually pretty cheap).
- A money belt or other form of pouch to conceal your money and valuable documents is especially important when traveling.
- A pocket dictionary and, if available and appropriate, a phrasebook if you'll be speaking a foreign language.
- A small sewing kit.
- A sleeping bag if you'll be on a program (like SIT) that does some camping. Be aware, though,

that sleeping bags are usually not allowed in youth hostels.

-ALL your documents: passport, visas, WHO card, ISIC, airplane tickets, etc.

-A small first aid kit.

-Contraceptives.

-Pharmacy products if you're traveling somewhere that access is limited.

-At least two 1-quart water bottles.

-Water purification equipment if necessary.

-Pocket flashlight and batteries.

-(Simple) American recipes can be a fun way to share America with foreign friends.

-Pictures of family/friends/your home town/Williams to show to inquisitive host nationals.

-Spare glasses or contacts and contact solution.

-Be prepared to fend for yourself for a couple days on your carry-on luggage if the airline misplaces your checked luggage. It happens to at least one person from every group. Pack enough in your carry-on.

-Your program will likely also provide a packing list specific to the country you are visiting.

### **WHAT NOT TO BRING**

-Electric or electronic appliances of any sort, as converters are very unreliable.

-Heavy (down, etc.) jackets or outdoor wear. Layering is your best bet.

-TOO MUCH. If you can't walk around the block with your luggage after it's packed, you'll never make it to another country!

### **BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO SHIP ITEMS ABROAD**

-Realize that the cost will be significant, even by the cheapest method. Also, you'll have to clear the items through customs (sometimes a major hassle), may have to pay a duty, and will probably have to allow four to six weeks to receive the shipped items.

-Remember, too, that you'll probably want to ship home whatever you ship abroad - so you'll have to pay this cost twice (and it may be much more expensive the second time around).

-Consult with your program - shipping items ahead is not recommended and must be approved by your program. Many times it is not permitted.

-Realize that damage to packets shipped abroad is quite common. Also, theft is a major problem in many developing countries, so keep that in mind when packing.

### **BEFORE YOU LEAVE WILLIAMS**

-Make sure all your college bills are paid.

-Return all of your library books. The fines can get very large.

-Make arrangements for a proxy for room draw if you'll be gone during the spring.

-Verify with your department chair that credits will be transferable and you'll be able to fulfill major requirements.

-Find out the details of voting by absentee ballot if you'll miss an election, and make sure you file the proper paperwork considerably in advance.

-Ensure that you'll receive W-2's and state and federal tax forms at your overseas address if you'll be gone over tax time (April).

## Section Two: Arrival and Adjustment

### ◆ Day-to-Day Life

There are several important things to keep in mind that will help make your adjustment go more smoothly (other than getting a good night's sleep!): be informed, be sensitive, and be flexible.

If you've done your homework, you probably already have a general idea of what you're getting into - the country, its people, customs, habits, and perception of, and attitude towards, foreigners. If you're informed and aware, you'll be much better equipped to respond appropriately. This learning process that you started before departure will continue throughout your stay. Keep reading the newspaper, keep reading up on culture, keep asking questions about what, where, why, how.

In the days and months ahead, consider the customs of your new host country and make an effort to respect them, while recognizing that you needn't sacrifice your own value system. The easiest way to remember this is by telling yourself: "It's not good or bad, it's just different." Chances are, you won't reach the limits of this statement during your time abroad. Given the knowledge you've acquired and will continue to acquire, try to be sensitive to the people and situations to which you'll be exposed. Be open, try things on for size, be attentive for little clues about how people act, what they value, how they feel about certain issues. Look for patterns of speech, action, value, and thought that may be different from what you're used to. You'll find that recognizing a pattern can be much more useful in the long run than memorizing many specific reactions to many specific situations. Don't automatically assume that what works or is acceptable in the States will be so abroad, especially in terms of local laws, customs, and regulations. A small bit of common sense and sensitivity, as well as being observant, will go a long way and be greatly appreciated as you begin to adapt to your new surroundings.

Your greatest asset, however, will be your flexibility. You'll need to be flexible everywhere - in terms of your schedule, what you want to see, what you want to do, your values and beliefs, how you apply your ideals and judgments to others. It's easy to say "be non-judgmental," but much less easy to exercise such advice. A first step towards being non-judgmental, however, is just being flexible - coming to terms with the fact that things will unroll in bizarre and sometimes nonsensical ways with utter disregard for your plans or expectations. That's what makes being abroad such a unique experience - it's the things that are different, after all, that probably got you so interested in coming here in the first place.

You've worked long and hard to get here, so go make the most of it! You're on the adventure of a lifetime, so even though *Carpe Diem* may be a bit cliché, I can't think of any better way to say it.

### Finances and Expenses

Finances and expenses are generally individual matters and will vary greatly from one person to the next and from one program location to the next. There is some general advice, however, that may help keep your financial situation in the background during your trip. First and foremost, notify your bank that you will be abroad before your departure.

You'll want to draft a budget of some sort, planning your expenses accordingly and then sticking to that plan. Also, leave yourself an emergency fund of a hundred dollars or more.

Take a little time to become familiar with your country's currency as soon as you arrive. It may look and feel like Monopoly money, but it disappears just as fast, if not faster, than real dollars! Foreign bills are

usually easier to distinguish than dollars, but foreign coins are usually more difficult; so take some time to become familiar with them. This will save you embarrassment in check-out lines, as well as a good deal of money lost to unscrupulous vendors who are more than happy to capitalize on your change mistakes.

Become familiar with currency exchange rates and keep an eye on how they change from day to day. [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) is a good exchange rate resource. In some countries, it's helpful to make the conversion to dollars in your head before buying an item, to give you an idea of how much it really costs. In countries in which the standard of living is less than that of the United States, however, try to get a feel for how much things cost relative to an average host national's salary. Part of responsible tourism and responsibly living abroad is keeping this in mind. Try to live like the natives, rather than making "super-cheap" purchases, that are, in the eyes of the natives, quite lavish. In addition, if bargaining is expected of you, then bargain! Get a good feel for the price you should get, keeping in mind it will always be somewhat higher than what the natives pay, and then haggle until you get it, or go on to the next vendor and try again. This is a major part of being culturally sensitive, and will also help ensure that travel in the area remains affordable for future Westerners, especially those on budgets.

## **Photography Etiquette**

Ugly American stories will abound as you travel abroad. One that's all too common is that of the rich, well-dressed American tourist indiscriminately shooting photos of the "quaint" or "cute" natives living in a hovel. PLEASE ask permission before photographing people, and make an attempt at preserving the dignity of those you're photographing. Also, for your own good, don't take pictures of government buildings, police or military installations, airports, or other potentially sensitive areas. A good rule is, if there's a policeman or a soldier in front of the building, it's not a good one to photograph -at least not without first asking permission. Such photos can be interpreted as acts of espionage and potentially land you in prison. Also, remember that flashes are not allowed in most museums.

Be alert to your surroundings before exposing your camera. Cameras are great targets for thieves, as well as dead give-away that you're a tourist.

## **Food: Shopping and Health**

If your program or university doesn't provide meals for you on a regular basis, then you'll get to experience the pleasure of cooking for yourself. Try to cook in groups, especially with locals, as meals constitute a major social element of most cultures. In this sense, fending for yourself can actually be a blessing in disguise. If you'll be living in a host family, plan on taking meals with your family if they are provided; once again, meals are a major element of family structure, and your presence will be expected. If for some reason you can't make it to a meal, it's generally considered courteous to tell your family beforehand. Not doing so could be perceived as quite insulting.

Your best bet on finding the cheapest and best places to shop is to inquire with the locals. You'll undoubtedly have to change your dietary habits somewhat in your new culture. It's best to go to the market and buy what everyone else is buying, rather than to make the daily pilgrimage to the local American-style restaurant or, even worse, to McDonald's (a place that should be considered strictly off-limits to all Americans studying abroad). The local cheese may stink, and the local meat appear downright disgusting, but trying them (as long as they're properly cooked and safe for you to eat) is a major part of experiencing a new culture. Even insects are worth trying at least once. You'll know you're adapting to your host culture when you discover you actually like these foods!

Consult your physician, the Health Center, and the section on Health earlier in this booklet for information on food and health, especially if you'll be eating in a less-developed country. In the case of food items that you shouldn't eat or drinks that you should avoid for health reasons, it's helpful to have a

pre-constructed response to the question: "Why won't you eat that? It's perfectly good food and has never caused me any problems!" These responses can vary from "It's against my religious beliefs, because..." to "we Americans have particularly weak stomachs that aren't used to foods like that, or the bacteria in the water to which you've developed a natural immunity." Be aware that many peoples have no concept of the germ theory of disease (even in Europe), or believe it to be downright hogwash.

If you're a vegetarian, you may, in some countries, find explaining why you don't eat meat to be a formidable challenge. Sometimes it's easiest to just explain that it's a custom of your people or a religious custom, which you feel obligated to obey. If you're served meat and refuse to eat it, this can sometimes be a sticky point that can cause major insult to your host. So think over vegetarianism carefully and remember that, while you don't by any means have to sacrifice your values for those of your new culture, in the real world some values carry consequences that can sometimes be mitigated with proper, culturally tailored, prompt explanations.

## **Safety**

### **General Information**

Your safety is paramount to your enjoyment of your study-abroad experience. While safety is not something you should have to dwell upon every second, there are some very important things to keep in mind that will help make your experience rewarding rather than traumatic. The basic rule of thumb is just be smart and use common sense. Become familiar with the area in which you'll be living, and know which places are safe and which aren't, as well as conditions that can make them safe or unsafe, such as day versus night and traveling in groups versus traveling alone. Make a habit of never going out alone, at least until you're very familiar with the area and the dangers it presents. Keep a low profile and avoid behaviors that will draw attention to you, especially as a foreigner or a tourist.

Stick to reliable and safe means of public transportation, and make sure you understand the system before you travel it without a map. Carry what you'll need for emergency phone calls to your host family or program director, and memorize the phone numbers of emergency services such as the police or ambulance (and be aware that, in some third-world countries, these services aren't what you'd expect in America). If you're in a situation or considering entering a situation in which you're just not comfortable, listen to the little voice in your head that's telling you something's not right, and just get out!

Remember that the U.S. Embassy is there to help you should you fall victim to a crime. Every embassy and consulate has a duty officer on-call around the clock to assist in an emergency. If you need emergency medical care, the duty officer will try to help you get in touch with a reliable doctor or clinic. If you lose your passport, report the loss to the local police and go to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate on the next business day to apply for a new one. If you have a police report, photos and proof of identification, (or are accompanied by someone who can identify you) a new passport can often be issued the same day.

A wide variety of pamphlets are available on-line from the State Department to assist Americans traveling abroad. For more information on safety, consult: <http://travel.state.gov>

### **Public Transportation**

Taking public transportation is a particularly adventurous activity in any country. Standards and systems will probably be different from what you're used to, which makes public transportation both a challenge, and a great source of wonder and excitement. Carry a map with you, but if you still get lost (a common occurrence), remember to be polite when asking directions. A simple greeting, such as "Hello! Excuse me, sir," in your host country's language will get you a much better response than a rapid-fire question.

Public transportation can be high-risk in developing countries. Research public transportation in such countries before diving into the system. Make sure you understand the costs, route, and how to signal the driver to stop. Also, keep a good eye on your belongings, and stay relatively close to an exit. NEVER jump onto or off of a moving vehicle if you can possibly help it, even if this is a common practice. One look at the toes of the taxi-brousse or bus attendant will probably tell you why this is a bad idea. Be aware that most developing countries confuse buses and sardine tins, so be prepared for cramped conditions and have water and food on your person, since stops can be few and far between. And keep in mind that an upset gastric-intestinal tract on a long-haul public bus is a recipe for disaster; this is one of the only times when Imodium should be considered.

When using taxis abroad, never put your bags in the taxi before you yourself enter the vehicle. Don't take a taxi if there's already someone in the back seat, and keep the windows rolled up and doors locked to slow down potential thieves at traffic lights. Always settle a price before you enter the taxi, and if possible, be familiar with the route. At night, taxis may be the safest way across large cities, and are almost always preferable to walking at such hours.

Never travel alone on public transportation if at all possible, and take the safest - not necessarily the cheapest - form of transportation. Generally speaking, for long voyages, trains and planes are safer than buses. The extra money you spend taking the train or plane will more than make up for the emotional and physical stress and injury you may potentially suffer in the event of an automobile accident.

## **Traveling**

When traveling, whether by public transportation or private, there are several things to keep in mind to ensure your safety. First, log your trip with International SOS and leave your itinerary with a trusted friend and/or your program director. If you promise to call at regular intervals, do so; on the other hand, if finding a phone will present a significant challenge, then don't promise to call. Also, set a return date, and stick to it at all costs. This way, if something should happen to you, your friend/program director can send the cavalry out looking for you.

Learning about the area to which you will be traveling ahead of time will make your trip all the more enriching. A good guidebook is invaluable, especially when you don't have the time or resources available to thoroughly investigate the area's culture, history, and significant landmarks prior to your departure. Pay special attention to days when museums and other sights are closed (in Europe, for example, many attractions are closed on Mondays). Be aware that these are subject to change, especially by season, so consult an up-to-date guide/website.

Although the whirlwind tour of Europe can be exciting and visually remarkable, it can also be quite frustrating. To prevent this, leave enough flexibility in your schedule to take an extra day or two here and there to check out particularly interesting or enjoyable local(e)s. Be aware that, with a rail pass, this may be difficult, since the pass is usually good only for a specified number of consecutive days. If you do opt for a rail pass (an excellent way to travel), remember to buy it before you leave the States. Pack light (anything more than a school backpack will weigh you down, leading you to fantasize about throwing it out the train's window), and don't forget your passport, visa, and ISIC card.

Whether traveling in developing or developed countries, it is best not to travel alone. Traveling alone in stable, well-developed (generally urban) areas that present little danger to the solitary traveler can sometimes, if you feel you're up to the challenge, be a rewarding experience, as you'll meet many more people and be much better immersed in the culture if you're by yourself. Traveling alone in developing countries, or any region where travel conditions are sometimes poor or the political situation is unstable, is strongly discouraged. The potential for debilitating injury or entry into a compromising situation is simply too high; and, when traveling alone, there will be no one who speaks your language or understands your system to help you. Travel alone on trails should never, ever be done, as even a sprained ankle can become a serious life-threatening condition. Thieves are attracted to solitary

travelers, because they have no defenses and no route of escape. Safety in numbers is, in the developing world, a basic survival concept.

Many areas of the world view women travelers, whether solitary or in all-female groups, as an oddity at best, and a serious violation of basic social norms at worst. Women are especially discouraged from traveling alone in developing areas, as such undesirable encounters that can range from sexually suggestive language to marriage proposals to downright kidnapping, can present a formidable challenge to the lone female traveler.

## **Alcohol and Drug Use: Penalties from Around the World**

In many countries, the role of alcohol varies significantly from what we are used to here. In some countries, toasting with alcoholic beverages is an intrinsic part of the culture. In the same countries, however, there are strict laws that regulate acceptable drinking behavior and may forbid it. Americans have a shared stereotype of these countries, and especially countries in Europe, as having fewer alcohol problems or viewing alcohol more liberally because of drinking ages that, compared to America, are relatively low or absent. This stereotype should be resisted at all costs, even when promulgated by host nationals. Alcohol is and remains a perceived social problem in many areas of the world. Public drunkenness is considered inappropriate in many European countries and, at least in France, is grounds for arrest. In addition, being drunk drastically increases your chances of becoming a victim of theft or violent crime.

Never, EVER get involved with drugs while abroad. Drug laws naturally vary from country to country, but most are extremely severe, regardless of the intended use of any drugs found in your possession, or even near you. Bail isn't granted for drug cases in most countries, pre-detention, including solitary confinement, can last for months, many countries don't provide jury trials, and in some cases you don't even have the right to be present at your own trial or have a lawyer (let alone an English-speaking one). When traveling, you are subject to the laws of the country that you are in.

If you get caught for drug use or trafficking, there's little the U.S. Embassy can do for you. Chances are, you'll be lost in a non-English speaking foreign judicial system for years (the average worldwide sentence is seven years), confined to harsh prison sentences in prisons where the poor conditions defy human belief. Often, foreign prisons don't even supply prisoners with food - family members must bring it in from outside. Don't get caught, either, thinking that small amounts of drugs are okay - in reality, Americans abroad have been jailed, subjected to harsh physical punishment, and/or executed for possessing as little as three grams of marijuana (that's about a tenth of an ounce, or about the weight of a paperclip).

So the basic idea is, don't break the law, especially when it comes to alcohol or drugs. Familiarize yourself with the laws prior to departure.

## **Adjustment**

### **Culture Shock**

Culture shock's a doozy. Most people are so excited before they leave that they never expect the euphoria to go away; eventually it does, and that's when culture shock sets in. You've probably already experienced it before, although you may not have realized it. At Williams, we call it "being homesick," but that feeling of missing home, being generally depressed, overworked, and a little lonely and out of place, especially your first year, was culture shock.

This phenomenon is something everyone experiences to one degree or another when moving between cultural settings that vary even mildly. There are usually considered to be four stages:

- Euphoria
- Irritation and Hostility
- Gradual Adjustment
- Adaptation, Acceptance, and sometimes even Biculturalism

Generally, there's a "honeymoon period," a time of euphoria and excitement in that everything seems new and different and really cool.

Of course, the flip side of this is that, when the excitement and euphoria wear off, when things that were new now become everyday, when what was really cool now just smells bad or is uncomfortable or inconvenient or gives you gastric-intestinal problems, many people have a particularly pronounced down-turn in their overall emotional state. Culture shock sets in, you become more aware of the differences between your own culture and your host culture, and you become irritated with, and even hostile towards, your host culture. This is a normal part of the integration process, and you should realize that everyone else is going, has been, or will go through the same thing, every time they go to a new culture. Feelings of anger, frustration, and depression are fairly common. Other symptoms of moderate to severe cases of culture shock include:

- Irritability.
- Boredom.
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep.
- Compulsive eating/drinking (especially alcohol).
- Withdrawal.
- Hanging out in American places.
- Homesickness.
- Humongous phone bills home.
- Inability to work efficiently.
- Stereotyping and/or hostility toward host nationals.
- Downright depression.

Usually, most people experience several of these symptoms before they begin to adjust. If you recognize these symptoms and become concerned, it's sometimes helpful to talk it out with other members on your program who are probably going through the same thing, or your program director, who probably has some ideas on how to help the adjustment process along. But rest assured, if you don't give up and keep plugging away at trying to understand, appreciate, and fit into the culture, you will come out of it eventually.

Gradual adjustment occurs, as one would probably suspect, over a period of time. This period varies for the individual, with some people reaching a point of adjustment relatively quickly, and a rare few never truly reaching this point. Generally speaking, your ability to gradually adjust will depend directly on your DESIRE to gradually adjust; that is to say, you've got to really want to understand and adapt to the culture, and make a concerted effort to do so, to be successful. As gradual adjustment occurs, your perspective begins to change as you learn to adapt to your surroundings. You start to pick up on cultural cues and clues that you may have missed before, and start to feel more comfortable and at ease with your culture. You gain self-confidence and begin to realize that you do indeed have some control over your situation. The experience is not unlike putting together a jigsaw puzzle. As you slowly assemble more and more pieces, the big picture suddenly begins to take shape, and things come together easier and more quickly than before.

Adaptation and biculturalism are probably your ultimate goals, and they are absolutely within your reach. A state of full adaptation comes out of the process of gradual adjustment when you develop the ability to function within the new culture with confidence. This does not connote mastery of the host

culture. Indeed, one of the things that will, over the years, continue to draw you back to your host culture will be your continued curiosity about all the things you still don't know. This adaptation is by far one of the most wonderful things about studying abroad - words are not enough to describe it, but it is definitely worth the hardships and effort that come with the working-through of culture shock. Just as with your Williams experience, you may not fully realize just how much you've adapted until you head home and experience "reverse culture shock," that will be discussed further in section three.

## **STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK**

- Learn as much as you can about your host country and its culture, both **before** you leave the States, and throughout your stay. Resist the urge to conclude, "I already know enough," or, "I'm already here, so I can stop reading about this place."
- Keep working on your language skills, both by speaking and by making a conscious effort to study on your own. Make vocabulary lists, and look up new sentence structures and idioms that you encounter in day-to-day life.
- As you observe the goings-on of the culture and people around you, make a conscious effort to look for the reasons behind and connections between things. Try to determine patterns and interrelationships. The importance of systems in shaping our lives and our perceptions cannot be over-emphasized; if you understand the system, you'll be much closer to understanding each new individual you meet.
- Resist temptations to marginalize the host culture. Don't joke about the perceived stupidity or backwardness of the "natives," and certainly don't fall into the trap of seriously considering the natives stupid or backwards. Avoid associating with foreigners who lower themselves to this kind of behavior - they'll only hold you back.
- This is a big one: don't spend all your time with Americans! Their perspective is a one-sided perspective at best. Try to make connections with host nationals who are interested in you and your views on certain issues and situations. Remember, the less time you spend with Americans, the faster you'll feel comfortable in your host country.
- Have a good sense of humor. The ability to laugh at your foibles and the things that knock you off balance or upset your plans will see you through many tough times.
- Most importantly, have a positive attitude and have faith in yourself, your hosts, and the ultimate positive outcome of the experience.

## **Integration and Reaching Out**

For most of us, there's really nothing more important to an overseas experience than reaching out to others and integrating oneself into one's host culture. Breaking out of your world and meeting the people of your host country, though difficult at first, will undoubtedly be the most enlightening and rewarding part of your stay abroad. As with many aspects of your study-abroad experience, it will be up to you to take the initiative. Introductions will be rare, and almost never to the people with whom you really want to connect, and no one will force you to integrate. Especially in programs with a lot of Americans, overriding the desire to stay with the group and within the safety of an American community abroad can be both frightening and difficult. But if you branch out and spend time in social settings away from other Americans, the rewards in meeting and establishing relationships with host nationals, as well as improving your language skills, will absolutely outweigh the emotional and physical effort involved. So, find an activity or a sport or SOMETHING that'll help you meet the locals, and do what you set out to do when you applied to study abroad - get away from America!

## **A Special Note Regarding Harassment Abroad**

Many issues that concern women concern men as well. Study abroad, although sometimes a different experience for each gender, presents many of the same challenges and hazards. One issue that does, however, affect women and LGBTQ people when outside the States, is harassment.

Because you'll be living in a different culture, understand that perceptions and assumptions regarding men and women (especially Americans) will often be significantly different from what you're used to at Williams, or what you expected to find. Again, a basic awareness of the cultural differences you may encounter can help you avoid misunderstandings and potentially dangerous or embarrassing situations.

One of the major changes over the last decade on US college campuses is an increasing focus on the person responsible for the harassing behavior, regardless of the context in which it occurs. However, this is a very culturally-specific understanding, and outside of a US campus setting, you will likely find that there is the most institutional and social support for those who are acting within the cultural norms of that community. Thus, you may find that adhering to these cultural differences can help to minimize or avoid harassment and to assist in your assimilation into the culture.

For example, in many Muslim and Orthodox countries, it is considered improper for women to expose their arms and legs. You should be aware of this fact, and follow local custom and the advice of your program director. In other countries, such as Italy and Spain, men can be notoriously forward, and this can be compounded by a stereotype of American women as loud, aggressive, and open to sexual advances. You'll want to be aware of this, and realize that you may not understand the signals and cultural innuendoes in your host country like you do at home. You may want to be more reserved in your dress, speech, and body language in social situations with men in such countries until you feel you have a better grasp of the culture.

However, institutional harassment does not, and should not, have to be tolerated. Although you are in a foreign culture, a fact that requires you suspend, for a certain period of time, your culturally-based judgments, you should not be made to feel threatened or otherwise uncomfortable because of aspects of your gender. This may seem like a fine line. But if you feel in any way that it may have been crossed, speak with your program director (or whoever is in charge of your program). If the need arises, contact the Director of International Education and Study Away or the Dean's Office for assistance. Please refer to this information for additional resources: <http://dean.williams.edu/policies/sexual-misconduct/resources-for-support/>.

## **A Special Note Regarding LGBTQ Abroad**

Acceptance of LGBTQ lifestyles and LGBTQ values varies greatly from country to country. More importantly it also varies greatly *within* a given country or culture. Defining cultural groups is an extremely difficult task; the line between individual perceptions and perceptions shared by groups of various sizes often breaks down under close scrutiny. Therefore, sweeping generalizations about the LGBTQ experience abroad are often misleading and can lead to stereotyping and presumptuous summary judgments about the host culture that can be counter-productive to the study-abroad experience. Keeping an open mind is essential to overcoming cultural stereotypes and creating a uniquely personal experience in which you can relate to your host culture as an individual, as yourself.

That said, there are a few things to keep in mind to make your experience abroad more comfortable and more compatible with your identity. Keep in mind that studying abroad is a time of great personal change and development, in which many personal values and beliefs – including one's sexual identity - are questioned and reconsidered. This time of self-questioning and self-discovery can encompass all facets of the coming-out experience. It's important, then, to identify resources available to you while abroad which can help you deal with the stresses involved in coming out or living in an environment which may not welcome LGBT culture. Your program should be able to help you locate such resources, as well as provide information regarding queer meeting places, queer organizations, laws, behavioral norms, LGBTQ media, and general attitudes toward LGBTQ people. Additional resources can sometimes be sought through LGBTQ travel guides (available in Sawyer Library and on-line), and even contacts at Williams, including the BGLTU, the Davis Center, and the Dean's Office.

In many cultural settings, it's extremely important that LGBTQ individuals be attuned to how their behavior will be interpreted by members of the host culture. Keep in mind that you probably won't be familiar with the body language, subconscious cues, and behavioral signals that are considered acceptable, flirtatious, or downright objectionable in your new culture. It's a good idea, then, to play it safe until you're sure of how to interpret the gross and, eventually, more subtle cues of host nationals. Once again, consulting LGBTQ resources within your host country can be beneficial.

Safety abroad is a highly complex issue. In some more conservative countries, homosexual acts may be outlawed, resulting in stiff prison terms. In more liberal countries, however, the LGBTQ lifestyle may be much more readily accepted than in the United States. It is essential, then, that you learn all you can about the legal and social aspects and consequences of assuming a LGBTQ identity in your host culture before leaving the States.

## **A Special Note Regarding Race and Ethnicity Matters Abroad**

A quick glance at the front page of any major newspaper will undoubtedly provide a hint of the incredible complexity of ethnic issues abroad. Students of color expecting to leave a racist American environment for a more accepting environment abroad will quickly discover that the issue is complex and challenging. At the same time, Caucasian students traveling to certain countries may unexpectedly find themselves victims of racial harassment and even, potentially, outright racism. Race, therefore, is an imperfect paradigm when considering large-scale group dynamics of power and oppression abroad.

It's important to keep in mind that ethnic issues are environmentally determined. Expect issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and class to continue to be present, but potentially be significantly different abroad from what you're used to at home. These issues are extremely complex, and you'll be at a disadvantage in understanding them within the context of your host culture, as you won't know the rules or the dialogue. So, general advice is to be prepared for anything, and resist making judgments. Remember that, at least until you know all the facts (often a lifetime's work), things aren't necessarily good or bad - *they're just different*. Once again, keeping an open mind is essential to overcoming cultural stereotypes and creating a uniquely personal experience in which you can relate to your host culture as an individual, as yourself, rather than as a member of a faceless mass.

Educating yourself about ethnic issues in your host country before leaving the States is an excellent idea. Since ethnic issues are very country-specific, and can even vary greatly within a given country (and often, as in the States, from one person to the next), you'll want more specific information than this guide can provide. Lonely Planet Travel Guides, your program literature and staff, the Davis Center, and the Dean's Office can provide good jumping-off points for an in-depth study of country-specific ethnic issues. Also potentially useful are professors, foreign nationals (including Teaching Assistants from the Center for Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures in Hollander), foreign magazines and newspapers, the Internet, and the library. Keep in mind that the very system in which ethnic information is presented in America will most likely be significantly different from what you'll find abroad. America is fairly unique, for example, in encouraging a "politically correct" dialogue, so the more you learn in the States, the less you'll have to muddle through language and style barriers, as well as unwritten cultural prejudices and taboos abroad.

## Section Three: Going "Home"

The most emotional part of your study-abroad experience will probably not come, oddly enough, until you leave your host culture and return "home." Even though this is a moment you may have longed for while in culture shock, chances are when the moment finally comes, you won't feel ready; there will be things you haven't yet seen, people you still want to meet, people you don't want to leave. You may not have realized, until you contemplate leaving, just how much you've adapted to, and grown comfortable in, the host culture. All the little things about wherever you are that made it unique and different, from the view to cars to local sounds to the market, will all be sorely missed within a short time (a matter of hours to weeks) of getting on the plane back home. This leads to a process called "re-entry" that often comes with its own "reverse culture shock."

You'll have to readjust to life in America and find ways to deal with this "reverse culture shock." The entire process is a challenge not unlike what you went through when you left Williams; in many ways, it's like entering a culture for the first time, but without the initial period of euphoria and everything being different. Readjustment challenges usually result from several factors in combination:

- Trying to re-establish yourself in your own culture at the same point at which you left.
- A sense of anger and frustration at feeling you are a stranger in your own country.
- Resentment at having to leave the host country, especially just when you were beginning to feel comfortable there.

### What to Expect

Many of the problems you encounter will involve self or cultural identity, interpersonal relationships, role changes, and poorly fulfilled expectations. These are compounded by the fact that, although some individuals do indeed feel like they're going "home," for others, this term has become ambiguous or even hollow, having come to be applied to the host culture as well. Some people have a more difficult time re-adjusting to life in the States than others; and generally speaking, it's the people who adjusted the most to life abroad (whether easily or through a great deal of effort) who struggle the most with the re-adjustment process. So, just because you successfully tackled the project of integration and adaptation abroad, don't just assume you'll be immune to the challenges you'll face upon re-entry. As always, being prepared and knowing what to expect are key elements in handling the whole process smoothly and successfully.

Just like with culture shock, reverse culture shock presents definable stages that must be worked through before you can come to terms with being "home." These are:

- Excitement*: Initially, you may be excited, if not downright euphoric, to be returning home to family, friends, and familiar places. You will expect to tell interesting stories to lots of people, and are excited about bringing all that you saw and learned back to your life in the States.
- Re-establishment and Frustration*: This initial excitement is fleeting. You soon realize that you're neither the center of attention, nor even, for many people, anything more than a momentary, passing interest. Few people are truly interested in your experiences, and everyone seems to have changed in some ways. Home looks different somehow, and strangely enough, a lot has happened while you were gone. People don't seem too concerned with helping you catch up. You may feel trapped in old roles that, because of your experience abroad, no longer fit comfortably. You may realize that you've changed as well, in fundamental ways that require a re-definition of how you relate with "home." The continuity gap between who you were before you left and who you are now, as well as the life you lived abroad and the life you're living at "home," becomes

evident and painful. The same feelings of frustration and irritation of the culture shock you experienced abroad begin to creep in.

*-Sense of Control:* You may find yourself employing certain tactics to remove the perceived threats to your self-concept and establish a sense of control over your environment. These tactics may include scapegoatism (blaming others for your re-adjustment problems), rejection of traditional roles, and a desire to escape, especially back to Williams. You'll find that you'll have the same feelings at Williams as you did at home, because consciously or unconsciously you're attempting to change your environment in order to reduce the feelings of dissonance, rather than adapt to it. Oftentimes, the attempt to re-establish control can lead to withdrawal, up to and including self-enforced isolation and attempts to go abroad again. The desire to withdraw must be resisted; should you not be able to overcome such a desire in a reasonable amount of time, it may be a good idea to seek some short-term professional help.

*-Readaptation:* Looking for ways to address and cope with the problems of re-entry will lead to a readaptation to "home." Since attempts to change the environment have failed, you'll find it most helpful to understand and respond to your new surroundings using the skills you've learned abroad. This process requires patience, persistence, and perceptiveness, and is often hamstrung by a lack of motivation - you really don't see *why* you should have to adapt to a place you call home. Pay attention to societal cues, just as you did abroad, and also closely examine how the messages you send and receive may be interpreted. This final stage is marked by a lot of learning. Though it can be a slow, frustrating process, it can also mark the promising beginning of a new outlook on your life and culture - an outlook that combines your old and new perspectives and experiences, and allows you to operate in a bicultural fashion.

You'll realize that it was all worthwhile (no pain, no gain!), and that the person you are now is more or less the person you wanted to be before you left home in the first place.

## What You Can Do

A good starting place to enhance re-adaptation is to use the skills and interests you've gained from your experience abroad. Recognizing that it was life changing is important; it's equally important to recognize the ways in which it has better prepared you for life. Your growth will continue as you creatively apply what you've learned.

The most important thing you can do is to **GET INVOLVED!**

1. Get involved in the international club, the Davis Center, go to language tables, and meet the foreign-language Teaching Assistants. They're more than happy to make new friends, especially new friends who know a little about their culture or at least what it's like to live abroad.
2. Spend time with people who've shared similar experiences. Branch out! Involve yourself with people from lots of different perspectives. Most everyone who has had study-abroad experiences will have some things in common; and yet, everyone will have their own unique views. These can be fascinating, and you can definitely learn from people who have lived bi-culturally.
3. Pursue continued language learning. Take additional language courses, go to language tables, visit the Teaching Assistants, check out movies in your host-country's language, tutor, surf the web for host-country pages, and read books (Sawyer Library's full of interesting books, including novels, in all kinds of languages).
4. Assist the International Education and Study Away Office. Participate in campus information sessions and encourage other students to study abroad. The office maintains a list of recent returnees organized by country for prospective students to ask a returnee questions about a country or program; it's a great way to get a captive audience!

5. Share your experience by giving presentations to children, students, and adult groups in the community.
6. Learn more about your host country. In addition to taking language courses, you can take history, political science, literary studies, and other courses that touch on your host country. Build up your knowledge by reading newspapers and books, seeing films, and perhaps even using your host culture as a jumping-off point for a research project or a thesis.
7. Investigate international careers. Visit the Career Center at Williams and find out about the Foreign Service, the Peace Corps, international development agencies, teaching abroad, and any business that might need bilingual employees. You can also visit the Fellowships Office for information on International fellowships, such as the Fulbright and the Watson.
8. Volunteer to work on campus or in the community. Help organizations that support community service and development, especially with immigrants, refugees, or the elderly. Each will make good use of your recently acquired listening and empathy skills and patience. North Adams has many such opportunities – so you can explore, as you did abroad, a whole different world from Williamstown.
9. Keep in touch with your experience. Write to your overseas friends and keep up-to-date with events in your host country. Send photos and updates to keep your program friends informed about you. Plan a return trip back to your host country, and invite friends to visit you. There's nothing quite like having your friends from "abroad" in your world back "home."
10. Integrate the best of two cultures. Don't feel like you have to give up one at the expense of another. Know that your experience was unique and will impact you in many ways for years to come.

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Eryn Leinburgh '99 wrote the original content of this document and it has continued to be a wonderful guide for Williams students studying away for many years under the guidance of Dean Laura McKeon. The text has gone through several updates and modifications since, but there is much gratitude to the original author(s) and resource(s) for laying the solid foundation for future Ephs abroad.