

UNT Center for Global Learning & Experience



PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION HANDBOOK



Dear Student:



Congratulations! You have been chosen to participate in a UNT Study Abroad program. Your success as a Study Abroad student will depend upon how well you have prepared yourself for the experience. This booklet covers a wide range of information necessary for this purpose.

Please take the time to read ALL of the enclosed materials carefully. It may be helpful to bring this booklet to your host country as well.

Over the years, thousands of American students have benefited from the experience of living and studying abroad, improving their language skills and learning firsthand about foreign cultures and civilizations.

UNT approved programs are designed so that immersion in the host culture is a primary goal. We believe that Study Abroad forms an important complement to study in the United States. Indeed, it often provides the occasion for students to profit from a richness of experience and to achieve a level of maturity not easily available in the familiar surroundings of home. UNT programs offer a variety of intellectual challenges, but, equally important, they offer a cultural experience that can give special meaning and depth to the more academic understanding of the language and civilization of the host country.

The Study Abroad experience may be one of the most rewarding aspects of your college career. In deciding to study abroad, students should be prepared to accept that educational philosophies overseas differ substantially from those at U.S. colleges and universities. While the American higher educational system is based on contact-rich relations with students and continuous assessment, foreign education cultures place primary responsibility for learning on the individual student. This is generally true even of overseas programs that are administered by U.S. college/universities, since in most cases their teachers are drawn from local institutions. Similarly, the principle vehicle of instruction tends to be the lecture, while class participation and discussion usually play a minor role. From the viewpoint of Study Abroad, however, the student's goal should be less to express their own opinions and culture biases than to learn about those of their host culture. Students will also generally have less interaction with professors, though they are almost always pleased to interact with students who seek them out. **Most important, do not expect to find an American-style campus at**

many of our schools abroad or the same services that you are accustomed to at your home campus. You must also be prepared to change some of your study habits. Students who do not accept this challenge will be forfeiting a unique educational and cultural opportunity.

Living and studying abroad is a cumulative experience. In addition to linguistic, academic and cultural differences you will encounter as you adjust to life in another country, there are other important aspects of your experience that may offer special challenges. Things may not be as easily accessible as you are accustomed to in the U.S. (e.g. libraries and computers), and you may find yourself dealing with a higher level of bureaucracy. If you come from a town, suburbia, or a secluded campus, you may find that living in a city requires as many adjustments as living in a new country.

Your chosen host country is rich in cultural opportunities, and you are strongly encouraged to take full advantage of museums, galleries, theater, music, lectures, and the many exhibitions that are offered at each site, as well as special activities and opportunities sponsored by your school abroad. Try not to get stuck in the rut of going to discos and bars. It is important for students to broaden their opinions and to learn the native language in as many different environments as possible.

The UNT Global Learning staff is available to assist you as you begin this transition. Your faculty advisors will be helpful as you develop your plan to study, your major, minor, and degree requirements. Other departments are here to help make arrangements in various areas prior to your departure. Our staff encourages students to strike out in their own and to be responsible for initiating their own contacts with the host culture. Your host program coordinator will assist students by providing information (and they are always there in case of emergencies) but they try not to do what students can do for themselves. Students themselves retain ultimate responsibility for their own finances, their own travel arrangements (in most cases) and the fulfillment of their academic requirements.

Once again, we wish you a most rewarding experience abroad and look forward to the new global perspective you will bring back to the University of North Texas!

Sincerely,

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UNT Center for Global Learning & Experience

Please Note: We have tried to make this information in this handout as accurate and useful as possible. However, you should bear in mind that situations and conditions change. For this reason, it is a good idea to use this information as a general resource.

AS AN EXCHANGE STUDENT,

Please make sure you do the following to ensure that you have a successful exchange semester/year:

- 1) Complete an “Academic Pre-Approval for Study Abroad” form (purple card). This ensures that the courses you take abroad will apply to your degree.
- 2) Complete your FAFSA in a timely manner so that your financial aid will not be delayed.
- 3) Give the Center for Global Learning and Experience (CGLE) a copy of your passport one month prior to your departure.
- 4) Pay your tuition! The CGLE will enroll in you in EXCH 3000 for full-time credit for the semester you are abroad. Be sure to pay your tuition at the time you normally would. Financial aid will apply to your tuition account as usual. When you return, your exchange grades will be posted as transfer credit for the semester you were away.
- 5) Remember to register on-line for the semester you will return to UNT. All registration/payment is done on-line.
- 6) Pay for your insurance. All students are required to purchase the UNT insurance unless they are buying insurance required by their host country. The cost of coverage for one semester is \$126; coverage for one year is \$252.
- 7) **KNOW THE GRADING SCALE IN THE COUNTRY IN WHICH YOU WILL BE STUDYING.** A grade of 60 is very bad in the U.S. but very good in the U.K.!
- 8) Remember, your grades on exchange are NOT pass/fail. You will receive letter grades for your work abroad & the work will be transfer credit.

AFFILIATED/PROVIDER/SELF- ENROLLED STUDENTS,

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- 5) Remember to register on-line for the semester you will return to UNT. All registration/payment is done on-line.
- 6) Pay for your insurance. All students are required to purchase the UNT insurance unless they are buying insurance required by their host country. The cost of coverage for one semester is \$126; coverage for one year is \$252. If your program includes insurance coverage, you **MUST** supply the GLE with a copy of this information to avoid being charged!
- 7) **KNOW THE GRADING SCALE IN THE COUNTRY IN WHICH YOU WILL BE STUDYING.** A grade of 60 is very bad in the U.S. but very good in the U.K.!
- 8) Remember, your grades on exchange are **NOT** pass/fail. You will receive letter grades for your work abroad & the work will be transfer credit.
- 9) It may take up to three months for your transcript to be sent to our office. Plan your return semester accordingly!

Check Yourself

REQUIRED

○ PASSPORT

○ VISAS OR TOURIST CARDS:

This document is stamped in or attached to your passport. It is permission from a foreign government to enter the country, or remain there longer than a certain period of time.

○ INSURANCE:

Required of all students studying abroad

- Adequate health insurance and accident coverage.
- Repatriation of Remains and Emergency medical evacuation coverage.

○ IMMUNIZATIONS:

Immunizations are required for many Asian, African, and Latin American countries. An International Certificate of Vaccination is required proof that you had the necessary vaccinations. An up-to-date tetanus shot recommended. Visit the Centers for Disease Control website for more information: www.cdc.org

○ TRANSPORTATION:

Obtain tickets and reservations for travel from the US to your destination. Check baggage size and weight regulations.

○ MONEY:

ATM cards and credit cards are the easiest way to access money.

○ GUIDEBOOKS and MAPS

○ BACKGROUND READING:

Research the countries you are planning to visit and determine travel documents you need.

○ LANGUAGE

Start learning the new language before you depart or make sure you review your previous language class notes. Know some basic phrases.

○ RAILPASSES

○ HEALTH PRECAUTIONS:

Get a health check-up and see your dentist before you leave. Obtain necessary prescription medications and keep them in the original bottles. Other medicines may be recommended. Take an extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lenses and your prescription.

○ MAIL

Make arrangements for receiving mail during your travels. You may get an internet email account, or if you know your POP address you can access your regular UNT email through accounts like "Hotmail."

○ ACCOMMODATIONS:

Reservations are helpful especially for the first night after your arrival or for particular crowded locations.

- INTERNATIONAL PHONE CARD

- LOTS OF PATIENCE, A GOOD ATTITUDE, and SENSE OF HUMOR!!!

WHAT TO BRING:

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS TO PACK LIGHT!!! WE CANNOT BE STRESS THIS ENOUGH ONE WAY TO ENCOURAGE YOURSELF TO PACK LIGHT IS TO PACK YOUR BAGS WITH EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO TAKE CARRY THEM AROUND THE HOUSE FOR 10 MINUTES AND THEN TAKE OUT ALL OF THE THINGS YOU CAN GET BY WITHOUT.

FOR WOMEN:

MAKE-UP SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO GO. YOU MAY WANT TO PARE DOWN YOUR GROOMING ROUTINE TO THE BASICS. HAIR DRYER AND SMALL APPLIANCES ARE BEST PURCHASED OVERSEAS OR ABROAD.

CLOTHING:

- items that are lightweight, drip-dry, and wrinkle-proof, easy to care for clothes
(like microfiber, jersey knit, and micro fleece)
- knits, permanent press, cotton-i.e. can be washed in the evening and worn by morning
- dark colors (they are more practical)
- mix and match items for variety, clothes that can be “layered” are best!

Suggested clothing for travel:

- 2 pair of pants, or 1 pair of jeans and 1 dressier type
- 1 nice outfit (mid-length skirt & blouse, nice shirt & tie)
- 5 tops/shirts short and/or long sleeve (depending on weather)
- 2 blouses/nice shirts
- 1 raincoat or poncho, a layered coat is the best
- 1 sweater—warm and best for layering
- 7 pairs of socks/underwear
- 2 pair of sandals/tennis shoes—make sure they are comfortable
- 1 pair of sweat pants and sweat shirt/jacket
- 1 travel alarm clock

Invest in good footwear! It is important to buy high quality shoes that are going to last you a while and are very comfortable! Do not take new and unworn shoes no matter how cute they are! The last thing you will want to put up with is aching, blistered feet.



To avoid being a target, try not to wear conspicuous clothing (such as UNT or Greek shirts) and excessive or expensive jewelry. Do not carry too many credit cards, or more money than you can afford to lose.



LUGGAGE – Bring the smallest number of pieces you can.

The type of luggage you choose should match the type of trip you are taking. If you're traveling for a month in Europe, choose a backpack, not a 5-piece set of matching expensive luggage set. **Most airlines will let you carry on only 1 piece of hand luggage** on international flights. Check out your airlines to find out the maximum weight allowed for international travel and how many bags you are allowed to check in and carry on. Airlines vary and the excess baggage charges may be by weight or by the piece. Label your luggage both outside and inside with your name, address, program, or university address.

Conventional luggage:

- Soft-sided – lightweight, expendable
- Hard-sided – offers more protection and durability

Backpacks:

- External frame with hip belt – holds up to 60 pounds
- Internal frame – easier to handle and holds up to 40 pounds (some can be converted to “conventional” luggage style)
- Day pack or book bag – for short trips or day excursions

METHODS OF PACKING

Roll Method: put items that can be worn together on top of one another and roll up. You can see your clothing at a glance. For best results with this method, items should be the non-wrinkle type.

Layer Method: fold clothes in a size that will fit your luggage. Place them on top of each other. This method discourages wrinkles. You can even include hangers in your packing in many cases.

Remember---YOU will have to make your way from the airport to the train, taxi, or bus station, walk a few blocks, and go up a few flights of stairs before reaching your final destination! You must be able to do all these while lugging your own bags! The LESS the BETTER!!!

REGULATIONS

For information on U.S. Customs regulations, contact the Customs Office (Dallas Fort Worth International Airport @ 972-973-8888)

Individual airlines set regulations regarding the size and number of luggage a passenger can take on board or can check on international flights. They can refuse to carry excess baggage, but it is unlikely that they will. However, they will usually charge high rates for excess baggage.

For the latest travel regulations go to www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm

Keep prescription and other medicines in their original packages, with the label intact. Pack them in your carry-on bags. You will avoid hassles in customs if you follow this advice.

Visas

A visa is an official document issued by a foreign government which grants permission to enter study or live in a particular country. The Office of Global Learning will help with specific details on how to obtain a visa for a certain country. Since these requirements change periodically, you should check with your host country's Embassy in Washington, D.C. or consular offices for the particular requirements. An affiliated program sponsor may assist you with the application process.

It is important to begin the process of obtaining a visa as soon as you know of your plans to study abroad. It may take 4-8 weeks to obtain all the proper documentation for a student visa. **A passport is required in order to begin the process. Go to The Electronic Embassy at www.embassies.org/embassies/index/html for more information.**

Working Abroad

You should not plan on working abroad until you have fully investigated if this is a legal option in your host country. Working without approval can jeopardize your student status in many countries. Regulations for working abroad vary from country to country. If you are interested in working during Study Abroad you should investigate the appropriate visa status prior to departure. We at Global Learning and Experience do not recommend working while on an abroad program. If you have concerns regarding your financial situation you should discuss options with a Global Learning and Experience counselor and/or at the Financial Aid Office.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The ISIC is an internationally recognized card that provides you with discounts abroad for museum admissions, airfares, theatre tickets, bookstore purchases, hostel reservations and more. It also provides some additional insurance for emergency medical evacuation and repatriation of remains. The GLE sells ISIC cards to current UNT students for \$22 (cash, check, or money order) and a current 2x2 photo. Applications are available in the Global Learning and Experience office. You can look at the benefits of having an ISIC card at myISIC.com



Useful Information

Cell Phones

Purchasing a cell phone abroad is the most convenient way to keep in touch with friends and family. Most foreign providers offer phones at reasonable prices with varying plans and packages. Buying one that takes a rechargeable minute's card will help keep your expenses down. Incoming calls are usually free. Some programs offer cell phones rentals-check with your program to find out more information. Students who purchase a cell phone and bring it back to the States are encouraged to post it for sale on the Global Learning and Experience website for students getting ready to go abroad.

Calling Cards

Calling direct from abroad to the U.S. can be very expensive. A less expensive way to make calls is to have a long distance international calling card. Most long distance carriers offer cards and special plans for international calls. Contact your carrier (e.g. Sprint, AT&T) directly for detailed information. International calling cards may also be available in your host country for a very reasonable price.

Personal Property Insurance

You should consider purchasing insurance to cover loss of personal possessions while abroad. It is possible that you may be covered under a policy held by your parents, so investigate that prior to your departure. Inexpensive but limited travel insurance coverage is available through STA Travel at www.statravel.com.

Absentee Voting

If there will be U.S. elections in which you wish to participate while abroad, you should make arrangements for an absentee ballot before leaving the country. Contact the County Board of Elections or the Secretary of State's office in where you are registered to vote.

Money Money

Emergency Cash

BEFORE you leave, you should discuss with your family a plan for getting more money in case you need more during the program. Check Western Union details and service fees, credit card services and ATM availability.

SPENDING MONEY OVERSEAS:

U.S. banks will mail drafts in U.S. or foreign currency for you, redeemable for cash at specific banks at a specific location for a service charge. Major travelers' check companies will also transfer sums but they take several days and have a service charge. If you have to send money abroad contact a local bank for help. If you find yourself stranded without money at all, contact the U.S. Consulate for suggestions, but not dollars. The Embassy personnel are prohibited from furnishing cash or loaning money. However, they can suggest possible source for financial assistance.

Please Note:

Exchange rates change frequently. Inflation in a country can mean that prices for meals and accommodations increase dramatically from one day to the next. Be sure to check the exchange rate before you travel.

Expenses

In general you should plan to spend at least as much in given month abroad as you would at home. Keep in mind that the amount of money you spend ultimately depends on the life style you choose. One staff member noted: "I would even make a direct relationship here: the less money you spend, the better the experience. The more money you spend, the more you alienate yourself from the host country experience and miss a main point of the program." Local university students on average, don't travel out of the country as much, and are not often found in discos and bars during the week.

Accessing Money

Students need to rely on several sources of money (ATM/ debit card, credit card, travelers check, and cash) to cover expenses while abroad. This will ensure that if one of your means for accessing money fails, you will not be stranded without money. Also, the amount you can access through any one source may at times be subject to limitations, so you will want to have a second source should you need a large amount of money immediately (e.g. rent). Check with your bank before you go to find out the maximum amount you can withdraw in a 24-hour period. Depending on the country, ATMs are common in cities and at most airports, where you can use a credit or debit card (be sure that you have an international valid PIN number). But they are also subject to breakdowns, fraud, and other scams. Converting to dollars and other travelers' checks is possible at banks, exchange houses and hotels. Traveler's checks can be inconvenient; however, since many establishments do not accept them, fees are assessed for converting them, and you are often limited to cashing them during banking hours only. Depending on your location, you may be able to open up a local bank account. Meanwhile, you may wish to exchange a small amount of money (\$100-200) prior to your departure from the U.S. so that you don't have to concern yourself with these matters immediately upon arrival.

ATM & CHECK CARDS: ATM and credit cards give the best exchange rates. ATM cards that are marked with the Pulse, Cirrus, Visa, or MasterCard logo can be used to withdraw cash from just about any ATM in the world.

VERY IMPORTANT!: Contact your bank and credit card company to let them know you are leaving the country for an extended time and that your cards have not been stolen. It is smart to take your bank's phone number in case your cards are stolen. Make photocopies of the front and back of your cards and leave them with someone you trust back at home (like your parents).



How to carry it??

CASH: Carry only small amounts of cash. If it is lost or stolen it cannot be replaced. It is a good idea to obtain a small amount of the host country currency before departure to use for buses, taxis, phone calls, etc. we suggest \$40 - \$50. Local banks can order foreign currency for you. You can also exchange currency in most major airports.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS: We recommend carrying some money in the form of traveler's checks. If lost or stolen they are replaceable. Most banks sell traveler's checks.

CREDIT CARDS: Most U.S. credit cards can be used worldwide. Visa is a commonly used credit card in foreign countries. American Express is not widely accepted. Notify your company if you lose these cards. Be sure to take your card's international phone number with you so you can call them in case a problem occurs.



HOW TO EXCHANGE MONEY?

The key to successful money exchange is advance planning. Try to anticipate how much money you will need for a particular country. It is costly to convert to a new currency because each time you pay a service charge for exchange. Remember to exchange only as much as you think you will need for a particular country. You can exchange money at banks, American Express Offices, airports, railroad stations, large hotels, some tourist information centers, and travel agencies. (Banks, airports, and railroad stations offer the best rates.) Remember you will need your passport with you as identification to exchange money. Keep receipts from banks until you leave the country.

RATES OF EXCHANGE:

Fluctuation is the key word in currency exchange today; therefore, rely on information that is current. Major newspapers carry current exchange rates or try (www.xe.net/ucc/)

Medical

Information

Before you travel abroad, it is worthwhile to take a close look at the many factors that contribute to your physical and emotional well-being. A trip abroad will almost certainly affect your health because so many factors of your daily health have to do with lifestyle and environment. Conversely, the state of your health will have a significant impact on the success and enjoyment of your trip. With proper planning, travel can be a happy and healthy experience.

We recommend you have a dental and eye exam before going abroad. A physical exam is required. Some countries may also require x-rays before issuing a student visa.

Assess your health and health-related practices:

- Going abroad is not a magic geographic cure for concerns and problems at home.
- Both physical and emotional health issues will follow you wherever you go. In particular, if you are concerned about your use of alcohol and other controlled drugs or if you have an emotional health concern, you should address it honestly before making plans to travel.
- Contrary to many people's expectations, travel does not minimize these problems; in fact, it often exacerbates them to a crisis stage while you are away from home.

Identify your health needs

- Be clear about your health needs when applying for a program and when making housing arrangements.
- Describe allergies, disabilities, psychological treatments, dietary requirements, and medical needs so that adequate arrangements can be made.
- Resources and services for people with disabilities vary widely by country and region; if you have a disability or special needs, identify them and understand ahead of time exactly what accommodations can and will be made.

Check health advisories

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) advises travelers of any required or recommended immunization for your host country. Check for any regional health or medical advisories. In particular, if you have special health needs, check for any particular conditions that may apply to your travel overseas.

Remember to ask questions, such as:

- What illnesses, if any, are specific to the region?
- What medications should you take to prevent these illnesses?
- What precautions are recommended for sexual or health practices?
- What kind of insurance do you need, and how much coverage?
- What are the customs, beliefs, and laws in the host country concerning sexual behavior and the use of alcohol country?
- What are the laws governing import of medications, medical supplies, and contraceptives?



More Health information can be found in several in several places, including:

- Family physician
- Campus health service
- Local Public Health Dept.
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
(www.cdc.gov or 1-800-311-3435)
- State Dept:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html
- Travelers with disabilities can get more information from Mobility International (www.miusa.org or 1-503-343-1284)

Find out from your advisor

How long will your flight be and how long can you expect to experience jet lag? What are the local eating

patterns? Are there dietary recommendations? How is the culture different from your own and how can you adjust effectively to minimize homesickness? How can you cope with and overcome culture shock as quickly as possible?

See your health practitioners

A visit to your family physician, gynecologist, and dentist will ensure that you are in good health before you leave, and might prevent emergencies abroad. Get needed immunizations and hepatitis protection, if appropriate. Update your health records, including eyeglass prescriptions and regular medication. If you are on prescription medication, check to be sure it is available in your host country as prescribed, and carry a supply with you. If you self-inject prescribed medication, you may need to carry needles and syringes with you. You'll need a physician's prescription for medication and medical supplies to pass through foreign customs.

Take copies of all medical records, prescriptions in generic form, and pertinent information; carry these with you in a safe place. If you expect to need regular medical care abroad, take along a letter of introduction from your physician at home providing details of your medical conditions, care, and specific needs.

You cannot assume that the expectations and practices you took for granted at home will be accepted in your host country. If you are not sure about something, whether it's a simple question about where a service can be found, or a more complex matter, such as expectations about friendship and dating, ask someone you trust.

Pack a medical kit

Don't underestimate the importance of keeping some basic medical supplies close at hand. You should always travel with a medical kit that includes the following items:

- Band-Aids
- Rubbing alcohol/Antibacterial ointment
- Sunburn ointment/Sunscreen
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Gauze and adhesive tape
- Pain reliever and decongestants
- Antacid
- Prescription Medication

Depending on the region, include water purification tablets,

antihistamines, salt tablets, skin moisturizers, and insect repellent. Be sure to pack regular medications, contraceptives if you may need them, and feminine hygiene products you think you might need. Check the expiration dates of all medications before you leave. Where your health is concerned, it is better to be safe than sorry!

Give yourself some time to adjust

Jet lag and culture shock can sabotage your trip if you are unprepared and their effects can be lasting if you don't take care of yourself. For the effects of jet lag, drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids, eat nutritious food, and rest. Time is the best cure. Generally, it takes one day for every hour of time difference to fully adjust to your new schedule. Culture shock—the emotional effect of facing new values, habits, and lifestyles—can leave you impatient, bewildered, and depressed. You may experience confusing emotional highs and lows during this period. Remind yourself that this will soon pass once you are well rested and eating normally. If the feeling persist, however, consider it a possible medical problem and seek assistance from a counselor or physician.

When you arrive

Successful planning for a healthy trip abroad does not end once you depart. Because of the differences between cultures, any concerns and questions related to your physical and emotional well-being should be addressed after you arrive.

Find out about resources

Learn how to get medical help, whether routine or emergency, before the need arises. Is there a 911-style emergency number and, if so, what service does it access? Who will provide routine medical care, and how can you reach that provider? If you need any special resources, find out how to get them. These could include services for those with disabilities, self-help groups (such as Alcoholics Anonymous), or any other health-related needs.

Make your medical conditions and medical needs known

If you require regular medical care for any condition you have, tell those in your host country who can be of assistance. This may mean simply identifying a doctor or other health practitioner who will provide you care. It could mean discussing and in class if you may need emergency intervention during your stay.

Attend to your well-being

Despite the change in your environment, you should still keep some of your daily routines from home. Get enough rest, a challenge during the few days of jet lag. Eat nutritiously, which may mean trying some foods you're not accustomed to. Get plenty of exercise to keep your mind and body working well. Don't isolate yourself. You will probably have to make the first move in developing friendships, but they are an essential part of any overseas experience and, more importantly, your emotional well-being.

Ask questions!!!

TRAVELER'S DISEASE

The name depends on where you are traveling. In India, they call it, "Delhi belly." Among tourists in Mexico it is known as, "Montezuma's revenge." These picturesque names describe the diarrhea that plagues travelers in developing countries. Whatever you call it; traveler's diarrhea (TD) can ruin a long-planned trip.

It is reassuring to note that it usually lasts only 3-4 days and only ¼ of travelers are forced to alter their plans or seek help from a doctor. You can help decrease your odds of developing TD through prevention. If you are planning to travel to a developing country, here are some things that you can do to prevent it or at least to make sure that you do not get a serious illness.

THE CAUSE

What causes traveler's diarrhea (TD)??? Everyone has what is known as a "normal flora" in their intestinal tract. These normal bacteria rarely cause any health problems. However, when we travel to a developing country, there is a rapid change in the intestinal flora. The new organism may include large enough doses of disease-producing or pathogenic bacteria to cause diarrhea. A number of bacteria, viruses and parasites can also cause problems.

HOW TO PREVENT IT

What can you do to prevent it? Most problems are caused by contaminated food. "Peel it, boil it, or forget it," should be the travelers' motto. Impure water is the most likely source of viruses and parasites.

According to the latest research, bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol) is almost as effective as antibiotics in preventing diarrhea (65%) and has fewer side effects. It may, however, blacken the tongue and stool. People who are taking blood thinners (anticoagulants), large doses of aspirin for arthritis, have stomach problems, or are sensitive to aspirin should check with their doctors before taking any medicine containing subsalicylates. To increase the odds against TD, take two bismuth subsalicylate tablets after every meal and two before bedtime. This prevention gradually loses its effectiveness but is protective for about three weeks. Another preventative is to take shelf-stable acidophilus tablets (with "live and active cultures") and take one every day. You can find these at health food stores. You may want to check with your family doctor before you go on the trip and ask what he/she recommends.

HOW TO TREAT IT

What should you do if you get it? If, after all your efforts you still come down with diarrhea, there are several things you should do to treat the symptoms. One of the most important things is to be sure you get enough liquids. Drink sweetened, bottled mineral water. Teas and clear broth with saltines are a good substitute. Avoid milk products for about 48 hours. Eat carbohydrates such as bread and rice and, as the diarrhea decreases, gradually add protein (eggs, meat) and finally foods. Your doctor may suggest that you take a medicine to slow down the intestinal tract such as loperamide (Lomotil). If you have fever and bloody diarrhea, you may have dysentery and need to be treated with an antibiotic. You need to see a doctor. The best advice is to talk to your family doctor **before** you leave on your dream trip; tell him/her where you will be traveling and ask what you should be packing in your medical traveling kit. Some other things you may want to include are:

- Prescriptions for medicines you take regularly.
- A few non-prescription remedies such as antacid and acetaminophen (Tylenol), and of course, some bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto Bismol).

HARD FACTS

Each year, 2,500 Americans are arrested overseas. One third of the arrests are on drug-related charges. Many of those arrested assumed that as U.S. citizens they could not be arrested. From Asia to Africa, Europe to South America, U.S. citizens are finding out the hard way that drug possession or trafficking equals jail, or worse in foreign countries.

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

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

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women arrested abroad. The rise is a result of women who serve as drug couriers or “mules” in the belief they can make quick money and have a vacation without getting caught. Instead of a short vacation, they get a lengthy stay or life sentence in a foreign jail.

A number of the Americans arrested abroad on drug charges in 1994 possessed marijuana. Many of these people possessed one ounce or less. The risk of being put in jail for just one marijuana cigarette is not worth it.

If you are purchasing prescription medications in quantities larger than that considered necessary for personal use, you could be arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking.

Once you’re arrested, the American consular officer **CANNOT** get you out!!!

You may say “it couldn’t happen to me” but the fact is that it could happen to you if you find yourself saying one of the following:

.... *“I’m an American citizen and no foreign government can put me in their jail.”*

.... *“If I only buy or carry a small amount, it won’t be a problem.”*

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

The U.S. Consular Officer **CAN**

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

The U.S. Consular Officer **CANNOT**

- Demand your immediate release or get you out of jail or the country!
- Represent you at trial or give legal counsel
- Pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. Government funds

If you are caught buying, selling, carrying or using drugs – from hashish to heroin, marijuana to mescaline, cocaine to Quaaludes, to designer drugs like ecstasy...

IT COULD MEAN:

Interrogation and Delays Before Trial – including mistreatment and solitary confinement for up to one year under very primitive conditions

Lengthy Trial – conducted in a foreign language, with delays and postponements

The Death Penalty – in a growing number of countries (e.g. Malaysia and Pakistan)

Although drug laws vary from country to country, it is important to realize BEFORE you make the mistake of getting involved with drugs that foreign countries do not react lightly to drug offenders. In some countries, anyone who is caught with even a very small quantity for personal use may be tried and receive the same sentence as the large-scale trafficker.

DON'T LET YOUR TRIP ABROAD BECOME A NIGHTMARE!

This information has been provided to inform you before it is too late.
SO THINK FIRST!!!

- A number of countries, including the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines, have enacted more stringent drug laws which impose mandatory jail sentences for individuals convicted of possessing even small amounts of marijuana or cocaine for personal use.
- Once you leave the United States, you are not covered by U.S. laws and constitutional rights.
- Bail is not granted in many countries when drugs are involved.
- The burden of proof in many countries is on the accused to prove his/her innocence.
- In some countries, evidence obtained illegally by local authorities may be admissible in court.
- Few countries offer drug offenders jury trials or even require the prisoner's presence at his/her trial.
- Many countries have mandatory prison sentences of seven years or life, without the possibility of parole for drug violations.

REMEMBER!

- If someone offers you a free trip and some quick and easy money just for bringing back a suitcase...**SAY NOOOOO!!!**
- Don't carry a package for anyone, no matter how small it might seem.
- The police and customs official have a right to search your luggage for drugs. If they find drugs in YOUR suitcase, YOU will suffer the consequences.
- You could go to jail for YEARS with NO possibility of parole, early release or transfer back to the U.S.
- Don't make a jail sentence part of your trip abroad!!!

The Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Overseas Citizens Services provides emergency services pertaining to the protection to Americans arrested or detained abroad, the search for U.S. citizens overseas, the transmission of emergency messages to those citizens or their next of kin in the United States, and other emergency and non-emergency services. Contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services from Monday-Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., at (202) 647-5225. For an emergency after hours or on the weekends and holidays, ask for the Overseas Citizens Services duty officer at (202) 647-4000. Internet home page:

<http://travel.state.gov>

Emergency Action Plan Steps

Step One

Remain calm. Take a deep breath. You will need a clear head in order to focus on your next move.

Step Two

Assess the situation, identify in what kind of emergency situation you find yourself. If possible, contact program staff for advice. An emergency/crisis can be:

- Personal: Accident/Injury, Death, Illness, Sexual Assault, Kidnapping, Arrest, etc.
- Regional: Natural Disaster, Political Uprising, Terrorist Attack, War Outbreak, etc.

Step Three

Take action. Exercise good judgment. Follow your evaluation plan/written instructions/maps you have developed as part of your EAP to help remove you from the emergency and get you to safe location where you can get help. Remember the alternate transportation options you have available.



Step Four

Get in touch. Now that you are in a safer and more stable location, update others about your situation. You should use a method of communication at your disposal to get in touch with your emergency contacts, so that they can help you. Have them assist you in finding what you need (medical care, transportation, a lawyer, etc.)

- Take care of yourself. While you are waiting for your contacts to assist you, or in case you cannot reach anyone to assist you, use your emergency kit. Take out the supplies you need to keep yourself healthy (bandages, food, jackets, radio, etc.). You may need additional/continuing medical care and/or personal/psychological counseling. Keep trying if you cannot reach someone to help you (because phone lines are down, you are trapped, etc.) don't give up. Try alternate methods of communication and transportation until you are able to reach someone. If you need to move to another location, let others know and leave a written description of where you are going.

Step Five

Move to a more permanent location. After you have removed yourself from any immediate threat, regrouped at a safer location, and gotten in touch with your emergency contacts, you may need to move to a more permanent location for treatment/assistance (hospital, police station, embassy/consulate, contact's home, counseling center, etc.)

Step Six

Stay in touch. Maintain contact and update your emergency contacts on your condition. It would be useful to have a "communication tree" whereby your emergency contacts can collaborate to help you though the emergency situation (you may need to have privacy release forms in place for this to happen).

Step Seven

Evaluate and revise your EAP after the emergency is over, and once your condition has stabilized, evaluate your EAP and use what you've learned to revise it in case of future emergencies (Please provide feedback to the UNT Office of Global Learning and Experience about how other students may learn from your experience).

My Safety Notes

Resources for Help:

The United States Embassy will help you obtain a new passport if yours is stolen or lost. They can also assist in obtaining a lawyer for you if legal matters occur. However, you are responsible for paying the lawyer.

You may wish to contact the Embassy and notify them that you are living in the country in case there are any safety issues that may occur while you are traveling.

If you are going to be traveling extensively, look at the State Department's website, www.travel.state.gov for any safety advisories.

Foreign countries may require you to check in with local authorities to verify your address and your safety. Please do not disregard this, for students can and will be deported by that country.

Culture: The Hidden Dimension

One of the first things you will encounter when you go abroad is something you can't really see, but which, if you don't understand what it is and how it works, can seriously affect how you adjust to and enjoy your time overseas. That "thing" is CULTURE. The kind of culture we will address here is not at all the kind of thing one refers to when talking about being a "cultured person" or possessing a taste for modern art, champagne, and opera. Nor is culture the exclusive province of educated elite.

Culture is a neutral term, neither good nor bad, and refers to the broadest concept about the learned knowledge that humans use to fulfill their needs and wants. It refers to the collective historical patterns, values, societal arrangements, manners, ideas, and ways of living that people have used to order their society. It is comprised of all those things we learn as part of growing up, including language, religion, beliefs about economic and social relations, political organization and legitimacy, and the thousands of "Do's and Don'ts" society deems important that we know to become a functioning member of that group.

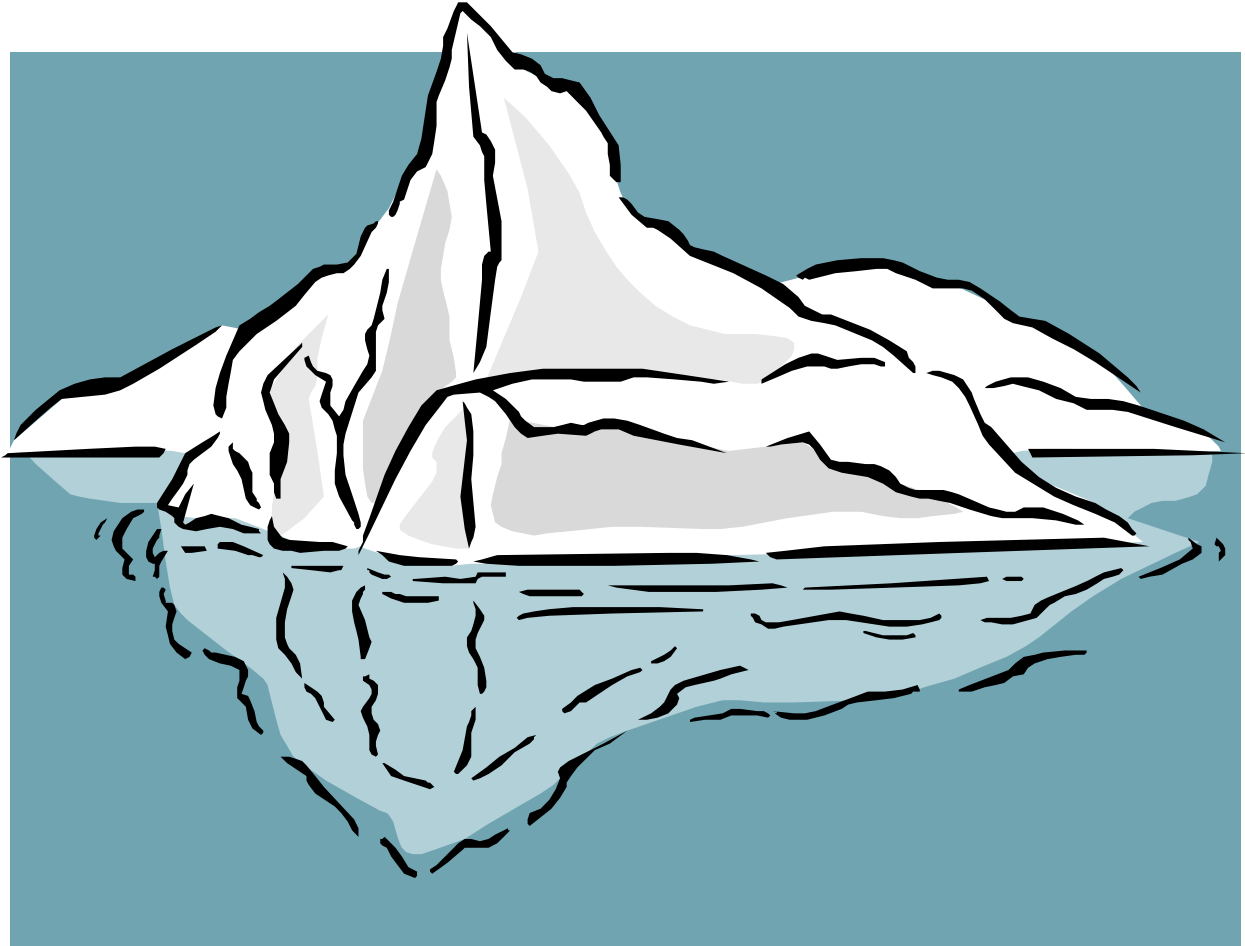
When you go abroad you immediately meet individuals, perhaps a bewildering variety of them, but you also enter another "culture." The behaviors and attitudes you can externally observe in others are molded and motivated by their prior culture learning, just as you have been molded by yours. You can't see a person's culture directly because feelings, judgments, and mental constructs are not always on display, although they may become evident through what people say or do.

Culture has been defined in literally hundreds of ways for different reasons. For Study Abroad purposes, culture can be most broadly defined as the shared sets of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which are widely held by members of the host culture. A sojourner will not only need to be aware of these cultural patterns but will have to respond to them appropriately.

What is culture??

| |
|---|
| <p>Culture, as a body of learned behaviors common to given human society, acts rather like a template (i.e. it has predictable form and content), or shaping behavior and consciousness within a human society from generation to generation.</p> |
|---|

How is culture like an iceberg?



Where do the following aspects of culture based on the country you will visit fall on the iceberg—above or below the water?

Facial expressions
Ideas about leadership
Decisions making process
Religious belief
Customs
Concept of beauty
Paintings and literature
Concept of self
Social etiquette
Importance of time

Child-raising beliefs
Importance of work
Concept of personal space
Values
Ideas about modesty
Housing
Ideas about fairness
Music
Holidays
Gestures

Linking Values to Behavior

To understand where behavior comes from—to understand why people behave the way they do—means learning about values and beliefs. While the behavior of people from another culture may seem strange to you, it makes sense to them. The reason any behavior makes sense is simply because it is consistent with what a person believes or holds dear. Conversely, when we say that what someone had done “makes no sense,” what we mean is that the action contradicts what we think that person feels or wants.

Going abroad without understanding the likely points of contention across cultures, and why they tend to occur, is a recipe for problems. The bad news is that crossing cultural boundaries often produces its share of stress and anxiety, the good news is that overcoming such obstacles makes one wiser and more knowledgeable. Making mistakes is inevitable. Things are not always what you think they are and the most ordinary interactions may occasionally take on a surreal quality. Why? Because the simplest things matter and errors might arise from language mistakes in which your word choice in French or Swahili sends your audience into gales of laughter or shocked silence! Or you use the wrong hand (who knew there was a “right hand”?) to pass food at a meal in India and your host looks at you like you did something really gross. Or you ask an older male acquaintance in Jordan what you think is an innocent question, “How is your wife?” and are surprised by his cold and abrupt response.



A good start towards figuring this all out begins by acknowledging that:

- a. They have a culture
- b. You have a culture
- c. Some things in their culture will be similar (or may seem similar) to yours
- d. Some things will be different (maybe in ways you can't even imagine!)
- e. One of your main jobs while abroad is to figure out the new culture:
 - What those differences are...
 - Where they come from...
 - What they mean...

And how you are going to respond when conflict or misunderstandings arise...

In the exercise below, match the behavior in the column on the left to a value or belief in the column on the right.

Behavior Value/Belief

1. ___ Using of understatement
2. ___ Asking people to call you by your first name
3. ___ Taking off from work to attend the funeral of an aunt
4. ___ Not helping the person next to you on an exam
5. ___ Disagreeing openly with someone at a meeting
6. ___ Not laying off an older worker whose performance is weak
7. ___ At a meeting, agreeing with a suggestion you think is wrong
8. ___ Inviting the servant to eat lunch with you in your office
9. ___ Asking the headmaster's opinion of something you're the expert on
10. ___ Accepting, without question, that something cannot be changed

- a. Directness
- b. Centrality of family
- c. External control
- d. Saving face
- e. Respect for age
- f. Informality
- g. Deference to authority
- h. Indirectness
- i. Self-reliance
- j. Egalitarianism



FEATURES OF CULTURES

This exercise contains a list of behaviors. In the underlined space preceding each of them, put a “U” if you think the behavior is universal, “C” if it is cultural or “P” if it is personal.

1. Sleeping with a bedroom window open
2. Running from a dangerous animal
3. Considering snakes to be “evil”
4. Men opening doors for women
5. Respecting older people
6. Liking spicy food
7. Preferring playing soccer and/or reading a book
8. Eating regularly
9. Eating with knife, fork, and spoon
10. Being wary of strangers
11. Calling a waiter with a hissing sound
12. Regretting being the cause of an accident
13. Feeling sad at the death of your mother
14. Wearing white mourning robes for 30 days after the death of your mother.
15. Not liking to wear mourning clothes for 30 days after the death of your mother.

Isn't it interesting how others see Americans?

The following profiles are both American characteristics and attributes as perceived by Mexicans and Taiwanese

Mexican Perceptions

Reserved
Rushed / time conscious
Realistic / hard headed
Team worker
Quality conscious
Unemotional
Serious / business-like
Self controlled

Taiwanese Perceptions

Friendly / outgoing
Relaxed / easy going
Optimistic
Independent
Output oriented
Emotional
Fun-loving / joking
Self-indulgent

People of different cultures will perceive and react to Americans in radically different ways depending on the contents of their own cultural baggage.

What does it mean to be an American?

A child you are tutoring in school asks, "Do you have a mansion for a house? I was watching television, and I saw that everyone had gigantic houses like the movie stars in California! Are you one of the rich Americans my grandpa always talks about?" What response could you provide him?

Questions for further exploration:
What are some signs of poverty in the U.S.?

What programs does the U.S. provide to support low-income families?

Do rich people keep getting richer and poor people keep getting poorer?

In most countries students are really interested in politics and international relations. Suppose you are sitting in a pub or bar and the discussion turns to American politics—issues such as the death penalty and the conflict in Iraq. How would you respond?

Questions for further exploration:
How is the election going to impact U.S. relations with Iraq?

What are your opinions of the death penalty? Is it right or wrong? Why?

Since you're from Texas do you agree with everything George W. Bush does?

Concept of Time

The two poles or extremes of this time dimension— mono-chronic and poly-chronic are described below:

Mono-chronic

Time is the given and people are the variable. The needs of people are adjusted to suite the demands of time— schedules, deadlines, etc. Time is quantifiable, and a limited amount of it is available. People do one thing at a time and finish it before starting something else, regardless of circumstances.

Poly-chronic

Time is the servant and tool of people. Time is adjusted to suit the needs of people. More time is always available, and you are never too busy. People often have to do several things simultaneously, as required by circumstances. It's not necessary to finish one thing before starting another, or to finish your business with one person before starting in with another.

In the blank space before each of the behaviors or characteristics listed below, put "M" if you think it is more likely to apply to a culture where time is monochronic and "P" if it is polychronic.

Characteristics and Behaviors

1. ___ Time is money.
2. ___ To be late is rude.
3. ___ Schedules are sacred.
4. ___ The focus is on the task, getting the job done.
5. ___ Being made to wait is normal.
6. ___ Interruptions are a normal part of life.
7. ___ Plans are fixed once agreed upon.
8. ___ This attitude is consistent with an individualist view point.
9. ___ The focus is on the person, establishing a relationship.
10. ___ Deadlines are an approximation.
11. ___ To be late is to be late.
12. ___ Focus on the internal clock.
13. ___ Plans are always changing.
14. ___ Having to wait is an insult.
15. ___ People are never too busy.

US-American Values

So what are “US-American values”? How many are there?

Do all US-Americans really share them?

Answers to such questions depend upon who is observing and reporting. For example, a few of the most common conceptions held by people from other countries about US-Americans include:

- Ignorance of geography, world affairs, and other cultures
- Generosity and charity
- Wealth and materialism
- Informality
- Loud, uncultured, & naïve behavior and attitudes
- Living to work, not working to live
- Self-assurance and independence
- Stress upon practical, problem-solving solutions
- Arrogance and self-righteousness
- Showing little respect for authority
- Friendliness, want to be “liked”
- Relatively blunt and direct communication style



Obviously, US-Americans would see some of these characteristics as positive and worth emulating. Others are obviously negative and critical of US-Americans. While it is normal to reject criticism, to succeed abroad it is important to resist reacting negatively when people suggest that your values are not seen in the same way you see them. Trying to see things from another cultural perspective is always useful because the same behavior can often be interpreted completely differently. This is one of the first “rules” for going to a new culture.

For example, when a US-American is showing enthusiasm, high spirits, and normal excitement, local people may interpret that behavior as boorish, undisciplined, rude, and insensitive. The “normal” US-American tendency to be friendly towards strangers, smiling at them and making eye contact when walking down the street, is considered quite strange in many parts of Europe and Asia. This can be seen as inappropriate behavior often associated with the mentally ill or prostitutes! The US-American who insists that a relatively new acquaintance use first names can be particularly disconcerting to adults in those societies that value hierarchy and to whom maintaining status distinctions are important.

We need to pause here to clarify what “holding a US-American value” might mean. It doesn’t mean that absolutely every individual in the United States believes in every value that exists in the culture, nor does it mean that US-Americans always act according to these principles.

All cultures set goals and purpose ways of living that they think best. The difference between what people agree upon as worthy ideas and actual behavior has long been recognized as the tension between “ideal” versus “real” statements. The gap between the ideal of racial equality and the reality of US-American educational and housing patterns is but one example of the kind of inconsistencies that can exist in a society.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

Tangiers (Morocco)

The scene is a café in Tangiers. Tomorrow is Saturday. I've just invited a Moroccan friend to a picnic at the beach. Will he come? "Perhaps," he says in English, translating from Arabic "*Inshallah*," which literally means "if God is willing." I'm feeling hurt. What does that mean, "Perhaps"? Either he wants to come or he doesn't. It's up to him. If he doesn't want to come, he only has to say so. He doesn't understand why I seem upset, and I don't quite grasp "Perhaps." Our two cultures confront each other across the tea cups.

Only several years later, reading a book about culture, did I understand. He would come, he meant, *if Allah willed it*. His wanting to come and his being permitted to come were not one and the same. In Morocco, unlike in America, where there's a will there is not necessarily a way.

So who was I to demand an answer to my questions? And who was he to give one?



When US-Americans make friends overseas they do so for lots of reasons,

but at some level it involves feeling comfortable with the individual and liking them as people. However, all individuals are to some extent a product of their culture and in the situation discussed here there is a clash of worldviews at the deepest levels. For the Moroccan Muslim any assertion that they have personal autonomy and can predict future actions is close to religious blasphemy.

One Encounter in London, England

"I'm a napkin person. At every meal I tend to use a lot of napkins...say anywhere from 3-5, depending on whether the napkins are the flimsy paper kind or the cloth one. Out at a restaurant, I never seem to have enough napkins. I always ask for more napkins. While in London I ate out often and I noticed that every time I would ask the waiter/waitress for more "napkins" I would get funny looks. I felt as if I had a normal request, but they always gave me a weird look. Why the strange look???"

A: Napkin is the word for sanitary products in the UK! Ask for "serviettes."

The US-American simply wants the friend to respond directly (and positively) about a planned trip and does initially recognize that the issue is neither simple nor a matter of personal choice for the friend. The US-American is likely to be thinking, "What's the big problem?" while for the Moroccan, it is a very big deal that involves a lifetime of religious training and social enculturation. Even if he would like to go and wants to spend time with his friend, he would be reluctant to affirm the appointment without allowing for the possibility that fate or duty might intervene.

Their problem is clearly cultural, not personal. If issues like these happen to you while abroad, it would be far better if you were prepared to initially consider that the root cause of such difficulties or misunderstandings comes from cultural conflicts and not attribute them to personal quirks or failures in the friendship.

What is Culture SHOCK?

The term 'culture shock' was introduced for the first time in 1958 to describe the anxiety produced when a person moves to a completely new environment. This term expresses the lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. The feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first few weeks of coming to a new place—you feel like a fish out of water.

We can describe culture shock as the physical and emotional discomfort one suffers when coming to live in another country or a place different from the place of origin. Often, the way that we lived before is not accepted as or considered as normal in the new place. Everything is different, for example, not speaking the language, not knowing how to use banking machines, not speaking the language, not knowing how to use banking machines, not knowing how to use the telephone and so forth.

Why is it a GOOD sign that you are experiencing culture shock??

It is easy NOT to have a cross-cultural experience even though you are in a foreign country. Many students who study abroad experience isolation, sadness and frustration as environment. These feelings may cause you to subconsciously seek out people and places that make you feel more comfortable. Personal growth often requires trading in unfamiliar territory and attempting to be successful in the way success is defined locally. The

point of Study Abroad is to try on local traditions, values and behaviors of the host country until they almost feel like 'home.'

Symptoms of Culture Shock

Some symptoms of culture shock may be:

Excessive concern over cleanliness and health
Feelings of helplessness and withdrawal
Irritability
Fear of being cheated or robbed
An intense desire for home and friends
Loneliness, isolation and disorientation
Defensive communication
Physiological stress reactions such as upset stomach, or sleepiness

Can you think of any remedies for culture shock?

As you try to 'melt in' to the local culture you may experience more culture shock at first but you will gain a much greater understanding of your host culture and have much more fulfilling experience.

Culture shock has many symptoms, physical and emotional. They are simply a result of many changes happening in your life at the same time. Sometimes our bodies and minds have trouble processing all of the changes at one time.

Stages of Adjustment

The Honeymoon stage

Characterized by exhilaration, anticipation and excitement. The student is fascinated with everything new. The student is embarking on their 'dream come true.'

The Hostility stage

Characterized by frustration with the host country, anger, anxiety and sometimes depression, following the initial excitement. Students often react to these feelings by rejecting the new environment in which they feel discomfort. The internal reasoning may be, 'If I feel bad, it's because of them.' The student blames his or her external environment for his or her bad feelings. As this point the student usually displays hostility toward the new culture. Some of these hostilities are translated into fits or anger over minor irritants, excessive fear or mistrust of host nationals, or lack of motivation.

The Humor stage

This follows when the student begins to relax in the new situation and to laugh at minor mistakes which previously would have caused major headaches. This more relaxed state of being is accomplished by making some friends, and getting to know the host culture.

The Home stage

This occurs when the student not only retains allegiance to his home culture, but also feels at home in the new one. The student may feel some conflict on his or her return to his or her home culture.

Remedies for Culture Shock

Be aware that culture shock is normal.

Give yourself periods of rest and thought

You may need more sleep during the beginning of your trip. Also you need time to reflect and put your thoughts together. Don't expect too much of yourself in the beginning, take time for reflection, eat well and be patient!

Take time to learn the basic survival skills: where to shop, how to cook, where and what to eat, transportation etc.

Meet new people

Force yourself to go out of your way to meet others. By participating in these new friendships, you will gradually gain more self-confidence and ultimately learn more about the culture than any other way. A new friend can tell you things you may spend months trying to figure out.

Try new things.

Be creative! If you give it a chance, you may find that you enjoy aspects of the new culture very much!

Suspend judgments as much as possible toward things you do not yet understand.

Try to find logical reasons why the local people do what they do. Learn as much about the local culture as possible (and participate in it too!)

Develop a budget and manage your money wisely.

Write!

Whether it is a letter or journal, writing about your experiences and feelings can be a great way to relieve frustrations and tension. Looking back later in what you have written can provide a lot of insight into personal growth.

Learn the language!

Talk to a counselor or friend

Country: Sao Paulo, Brazil

Student: Female, 20



One night my friend Maria and I were getting ready to go out for the evening. Before we could leave, Maria had to call her friend Rodrigo to come and pick us up because Maria did not have a car. I was nervous because I had not yet met Rodrigo.

I had borrowed Maria's clothes and earrings so I would fit into the local style. Rodrigo finally arrived around midnight. Maria introduced us, and I, being culturally sensitive, remembered I had to kiss Rodrigo on the cheek instead of shaking his hand. I kissed Rodrigo once on each cheek. After the greeting Rodrigo gave me a strange look and glanced at my left hand. Maria started to laugh as Rodrigo remained puzzled.

In the Brazilian culture, if you are single you are expected to kiss each person you are introduced to three times. This indicates you are NOT married. When I kissed Rodrigo only twice, that was a signal to Rodrigo that I was married. Married women/men only greet people with TWO kisses.

Culture SHOCK Exercise

Now that you're actually there, here are some exercises to help you think about how culture shock may be affecting you.

What do you like about your new environment?

What don't you like about your new environment?

Do the locals know you're a foreigner? How? What do you say, do or look like that gives them that impression?

How do the locals respond to you? For example, some students who have been abroad report that they feel like they stand out or that people stare at them because they look different. What has your experience been like? Explain how the locals speak to you. Explain how they look at you.

How much contact have you had with local people? For example, what opportunities do you have during the day to interact with people from this area (e.g., in public places, your host family's house, or in class)?

Location: London, England

Student: Female, 21



My two friends, Michelle and Carolyn, and I had a four-day weekend, so we decided to spend them in London. One night we went dancing with three non-British men we met at the hotel. We left the dance club at about 2:30 am, so we all tried stopping a taxi since the underground had closed. No taxi would stop for us for the longest time, even though we could see that they were in service and empty. Finally one stopped, but only Michelle, Carolyn and I got in and left. Why were our three friends left behind?

Answer:

British taxis are only allowed by law to take a maximum of four passengers at a time, so if they see more than four people waiting as a group, they usually will not bother stopping. Even when one finally stopped, we had to separate into two groups.

I have seen groups of foreigners standing around and complaining how they are either being discriminated against or how rude British cabbies are. Neither is true, but if you don't know the rules you are likely to reach the wrong conclusion about why something is happening. Glad it wasn't raining that night!

The 4 Levels of Culture Awareness

As you go through the cycles of adjustment, your awareness of the host country culture naturally increases. This awareness tends to progress through a series of levels, describes below.

I. Unconscious incompetence

This has also been called the state of blissful ignorance. At this stage, you are unaware of culture differences. It does not occur to you that you may be making cultural mistakes or that you may be misinterpreting much of the behavior going on around you. You have no reason not to trust your instincts.

II. Conscious incompetence

You now realize that differences exist between the way you and the local people behave, though you understand very little about what these differences are, how numerous they might be, or how deep they might go. You know there's a problem here, but you're not sure about the size of it. You're not so sure of your instincts anymore, and you realize that there are some things you don't understand. You may start to worry about how hard it's going to be to figure these people out.

III. Conscious competence

You know cultural differences exist, you know what some of these differences are, and you try to adjust your own behavior accordingly. It doesn't come naturally yet—you have to make a conscious effort to behave in culturally appropriate ways—but you are much more aware of how your behavior is coming across to the local people. You are in the process of replacing old instincts with new ones. You know now that you will be able to figure these people out if you can remain objective.

IV. Unconscious competence

You no longer have to think about what you're doing in order to do the right thing. Culturally appropriate behavior is now second nature to you; you can trust your instincts because they have been reconditioned by the new culture. It takes little effort now for you to be culturally sensitive.

Useful Pre-Departure Websites

It is a good idea to find out as much as you can about your host country before you arrive. These websites can provide you with some basic information.

www.travel.state.gov/travel_warnings provide travel advisories for each country

www.cdc.gov/travel/travel provides health advisories for each country

www.lonelyplanet.com provides a large amount of general information

www.studyabroad.com provides country specific information guides, maps etc.

www.thebathroomdiaries.com provides the cleanliness rating for almost any bathroom in any city in any country

www.travellady.com provides numerous articles on the ins and outs of every country

www.cityvox.com provides information for almost every European city

www.cia.gov provides country specific information on politics,

geography, economy, etc for any country in the world

www.eurotrip.com provides information for European backpacking adventures

www.cnn.com or www.bbc.co.uk news and current affairs from various countries

www.blogabroad.com for an online diary for the Study Abroad student for family and friends to log on and read

Returning Home: Reverse Culture Shock

The reality is that returning home after a significant overseas experience is not without its stresses. There are many reasons why this is so, but the major contributing factors seem to be:

It Is Largely Unexpected

Few people prepare for the return because they expect it to be easy and surprised when it is not.

The Reality of Home Differs from Reality

When you are abroad, images of home life can become idealized or romanticized. It is easy to forget or minimize the problems or issues that once were sources of stress in your everyday life. Re-encountering them can be disconcerting.

Change Has Occurred to Everyone

However major or subtle, things are different. You, the people around you, and your culture have changed. Sometimes this is obvious and immediately observable; sometimes it is "hidden" and only comes out under certain circumstances which are usually unpredictable and therefore unsettling.

People May React to Returnees in Ways They Consider Inappropriate

People generally expect you to be the same person you were when you left and usually attempt to treat you that way. They often have little patience for a returnee who seems to be significantly "different" or who exhibits behaviors or attitudes that, to them, seem odd or uncharacteristic of that person.

Reverse Culture Shock Is Never Recognized nor Understood at Home

Few people in the home culture are likely to be familiar with the concept of reverse culture shock. Therefore, people often respond to a returnee having difficulty readjusting by bluntly suggesting they "get over it" as though it were a conscious act on their part or that they could control their emotions if they wanted to. Unlike undergoing culture shock while abroad where program directors and fellow students are likely to be at least sympathetic, the pressure to conform quickly upon re-entry can be intense and tolerance can be in short supply.

Thus, although there are always lots of reasons for looking forward to going home, re-entry into your home culture can seem both as challenging and as frustrating as living overseas. Contrary to the expectation that going "home" is a simple matter of resuming your earlier routines and reestablishing prior relationships, re-entry has its own special set of social and psychological adjustments.

Just as initial Culture Shock has definable stages and a relatively predictable progression, so does Reverse Culture Shock. The "Honeymoon" phase of initial euphoria or at least relief at being home is often present for some period, followed by some degree of irritation and alienation, with an eventual readjustment.

What Can I Do to Help Myself Before I Come Home?

What can you do to prepare to return home? Be aware of the re-entry process. Following some advice from those who have already returned can facilitate your re-entry. The following list is compiled from many sources, but all the tips come from returnees who have offered these ideas in the hope of making your initial re-entry easier for you and for those at home. They are offered to you as things to consider as you prepare to return from Study Abroad. First, say goodbye. Then:

1. Mentally prepare for the adjustment process

The more you consider your alternatives and understand that returning home is both similar to and different from going abroad, the easier the transition will be. Anticipating is useful. As one psychologist put it, "Worrying helps." However, obsessing does not, so be prepared—not paranoid!

2. Allow yourself time

Re-entry is a process that will take time, just as adjusting to a new foreign culture required a period of acculturation. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Give yourself permission to ease into the transition.

3. Understand that the familiar will seem different

You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps even unsettling. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological responses to being home. Everyone does.

4. There will be some "cultural catching up" to do

Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment and event topics may be unfamiliar to you. New academic programs or regulations, slang expressions, popular culture references, recent events, and even more social changes may have emerged since you left. You may have some learning to do about your own culture. The longer you have been gone, the more you may have to discover, and the more noticeable it will be to others that you are not culturally fully up-to-speed. Approach this challenge in the same way you approached cultural learning overseas, with a sense of humor and an open mind.

5. Reserve judgments

Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering the culture of a new foreign country, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first and your most valuable and valid analysis of events is likely to take place after allowing some time for thorough reflection. Most returnees report gaining major insights into themselves and their home countries during re-entry, but only after allowing a sufficient period of time for reflection and self-analysis.

6. Respond thoughtfully and slowly

Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom in the returnee can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions and situations; prepare to greet those that are less predictable with a calm, thoughtful approach.

If you find yourself being overly defensive or aggressive in responding to those around you, it is probably time to take a deep breath and relax. It is tempting when asked for the twentieth time, "How was London?" to sarcastically reply, "Very British!" but the momentary satisfaction will do little to open a real communication channel. As always thinking before answering is a good strategy.

What Can I Do to Help Myself Before I Come Home?

7. Cultivate sensitivity

Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is a sure way to re-establish rapport. Much of the annoyance with returnees results from the perception that returnees are so anxious to tell their stories and share their experiences that they are not interested in what happened to those who stayed at home. This is ironic because one of the most common frustrations reported by returnees is that those at home only ask superficial questions (e.g., so, how was it?) and want short answers. Returnees see this as a lack of opportunity to express their feelings fully. In such circumstances, being as good a listener as a talker is a key ingredient in mutual sharing and you may need to practice those skills upon return.

8. Beware of comparisons

Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after living abroad. However, a person must be careful not to be seen as too critical of home or too lavish in praise of things foreign. A balance of good and bad features is probably more accurate and certainly less threatening to those at home. The tendency to become an “instant expert” is to be avoided at all costs.

9. Remain flexible

Keeping as many options open as possible is an essential aspect of a successful return home. Attempting to re-integrate totally into old patterns and networks can be difficult, but remaining aloof is isolating and counterproductive. What you want to achieve is a balance between resuming earlier patterns and interests and establishing new ones.

10. Seek support networks

There are lots of people back home who have been through their own re-entry process and both understood and empathize with a returnee’s concerns. Returnees may find it useful to seek out people with international living experience such as academic faculty, exchange students, Peace Corps volunteers, international development staff, diplomatic or military personnel, church mission officials, and those doing business internationally. University Study Abroad and International Student offices may also be places where returnees can find support and empathy as they go through the re-entry process.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A GOOD TRAVELER

- I. Thou shalt not expect to find things as thou hast at home, for thou hast left thy home to find things different.
- II. Thou shalt count every moment as precious and use it well for thou might not pass this way again.
- III. Thou shalt not let other travelers get on thy nerves, for thou hast paid good money to take this trip and ENJOY thyself.
- IV. Remember to take half as many clothes that thou thinkest necessary and twice as much money.
- V. Know at all times where thy passport is, for a person without a passport is a person without a country.
- VI. Remember that if thou were expected to stay in one place, thou wouldst have been created without roots. Get thee out and EXPLORE!
- VII. Thou shalt not worry for thou that worrieth hath no pleasure. Take along a positive attitude with thee.
- VIII. When thou art in a foreign country, doest as the local people do. Observe their ways and try to understand them.
- IX. Thou shalt not judge the people of a country by the local person who hath given thee trouble.
- X. Remember thou art a guest in other lands and thou who treat the host with respect shall be honored.