

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE

Congratulations on making the decision to study abroad! While you may think the adventure starts when your plane lands, there are actually many things to take care of before you leave. It is important to take time before you go to plan ahead for life abroad. This section outlines some of the preparations you should make before leaving in order to avoid unwanted hassles and to make your experience more enjoyable.



Passports

A passport is an official government document that certifies your identity and citizenship. U.S. citizens need passports to enter most countries. You will need to apply for a new passport if you have never had one before, if your passport was issued before your 16th birthday, or if your passport is more than 15 years old. Passports cost \$135 for a new passport and \$110 to renew. This is a considerable amount of money, but your passport will last for ten years if you get one after

you turn 18 years old. Allow 4-6 weeks for processing. Passport applications are available on-line at: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html or they may be picked up from the Albany Main Branch of the Post Office at **1501 S. Slappey Blvd. Albany, GA 31701.**

Student Visas

A visa is an official government authorization appended to your passport that permits entry into and travel within a particular country for a designated period of time. Almost all countries require that you have a visa if you are planning to study there for longer than three months. Discuss with your program director how to obtain a visa for entrance into the country where you will be studying. Some programs do the work for you; other programs require you to obtain a visa on your own. Each country has its own regulations, so if your program sponsor does not provide the necessary information, contact the embassy or nearest consulate office of the country you are planning to enter. Make sure you have secured a visa before you buy a non-refundable plane ticket. There is almost always a fee attached to the visa application and the process can take several weeks, so don't wait until the last minute! Delays in obtaining a visa may cause you to miss your flight.

International Student Identity Card

Some students may wish to purchase the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) available through STA Travel. ISICs will entitle you to some insurance coverage while traveling, reduced airfares, and entrance tickets to cultural events and museums, as well as numerous travel benefits. It can also be used as a pre-paid telephone card. The ISIC can be purchased on the ISIC website or through STA Travel. The ISIC costs \$25 and is valid up to one year. For more information visit



<http://www.myisic.com/>

<http://www.statravel.com/discount-cards.htm>

Travel Arrangements

Most University System of Georgia programs have pre-arranged travel plans, which are included in the program costs, but there are some things to keep in mind before your trip. In most cases, your program coordinator may meet you at the airport, but others may require you to get around on your own at first. To avoid panic when your plane lands, make sure you have as much information ahead of time as possible.

If you will be expecting a time change at your destination, be sure to prepare to spend a day or two recovering from jet lag. International flights require that you check in at the airport at least two hours before departure, so plan to arrive early at the airport.

Airlines set limits on the size and weight of luggage. If you have an unusually large or heavy bag, call the airline to check on size/weight limits.

Packing

It is nearly impossible to pack everything you want. The trick is to pack what you need and what you can carry! Here are a few tips that may come in handy while you are deciding what you should take with you overseas.



Remember that you will probably want to make purchases abroad, so leave room or bring an extra bag for bringing things home.

Keep a list of what is in each bag and carry the list with your other documents. If your luggage is lost, this will aid you in making an insurance claim. It will also help you remember what you brought with you in case something is stolen, and it is not immediately obvious.

Due to increased airline security measures, be sure to put anything sharp, such as tweezers, nail clippers or pocket knives into your checked luggage. For more information on airline security, visit www.tsa.gov.

Assume you will over-pack

Keep in mind that it may be easier for you to carry two smaller bags than one large suitcase, although some may prefer one large rolling suitcase and one small carry-on. Many students find backpacks to be ideal because they won't strain your muscles and will leave your hands free. Pack your luggage and carry it around the block and up and down some stairs. Then re-evaluate what is absolutely necessary and empty half of it. You cannot bring too little. Make sure you put your name and address on a luggage tag and also inside your suitcase, in case the suitcase breaks or is lost during your travels.

*Never leave your bags unattended!

*Ask friends and family not to pack 'surprise packages' in your luggage.

Clothing

Take interchangeable clothing that can be layered. In many cases, people in other countries dress up more than most Americans, even to go shopping, so take something nice, as well as a sturdy pair of jeans. Depending on how long you will be abroad, you may be there through more than one season - plan ahead and take some clothes for changing weather. You will be walking far more than usual. Taking a good pair of comfortable shoes is a must! When packing, distribute the weight evenly: breakables and light to medium-weight clothing in the hard-sided suitcase and heavy sweaters, shoes, etc., in the packs or duffels. It's important to spend some time learning about how people dress in the part of the world you are traveling to. Wearing clothing with logos, English writing and Greek letters will make you stand out as an American.

Toiletries

Certain toiletry brands may not be available or may be very expensive abroad. Be sure to find out which items may be bought in your country. If you are tied to a particular brand, take it from home. Otherwise, purchase your items once you are in the host country.

Important documents

Passports and other documents should be carried with you, not packed in your checked luggage. These items should be secured yet readily accessible at customs. The same goes for money, credit cards and traveler's checks. Consider purchasing a small travel pack or money belt that may be worn underneath your clothing; keep all valuable items in this pack at all times.

Make a few photocopies of your passport and any necessary visas and put them in safe places apart from your passport. You should leave a copy at home with your family or a close friend. Always carry a photocopy of your passport with you but separate from the passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, report it to local police; get written confirmation of the police report and take the copies you have to the nearest U.S. Consulate to apply for a new passport.

Medications and Contact Lenses

Take along extra prescription medication, such as allergy medicines, asthma inhalers, birth control pills, etc. The amount should last you throughout your stay if possible. Medication sent from the US may not get through customs. Pharmacies in other countries will be able to fill most prescriptions, but the medication may be slightly different and cause abnormal side effects. Getting a new prescription will also necessitate a visit to the doctor. If you wear contact lenses, take an extra set of contacts, cleaning solutions, your written eye prescription and extra glasses.

Electricity

In the U.S., we use 110-volt alternating current; however, most European countries use a 220-volt direct current. If you try to use an American shaver, iron, or hair dryer in a European outlet, the high voltage will overheat and destroy the appliance and could shock you or start a fire. Verify the type of current and the voltage of the outlets in the country you will be visiting.

To use an American appliance in different voltage/current/shaped outlets, you will need a transformer and a plug converter. For a hair dryer, travel iron, or water-and-coffee heater, you need a 50-1600-watt transformer. If an outlet is labeled "for shavers only," it can handle an appliance operating at only 15 to 20 watts. For more thorough

Helpful Common Conversions

Linear Measures

1 mile = 1.61 kilometers
1 meter = 3.28 feet
1 yard = .91 meters

Measures of Weight/Liquid

1 pound = .45 kilograms
1 ounce = 28.35 grams
1 liter = 1.06 quarts
1 liter = .26 gallons

Temperature Conversions

From Celsius to Fahrenheit - $(1.8 \times \square C) + 32 = \square F$
From Fahrenheit to Celsius - $(\square F - 32) \div 1.8 = \square C$