

Non-IU Getting Started

Read this handbook *now* and again *before* you leave the U.S.
Consult it again before you register for classes overseas.



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PREDEPARTURE CHECKLIST

- Apply for a passport (<http://travel.state.gov/>).
- Submit your Credit Transfer Agreement (CTA) to International Admissions by the deadline listed (<http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/noniu/cta.pdf>).
- Submit your notification of acceptance to Overseas Study (<https://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/noniu/noniuapp.html>).
- Meet with your major advisor(s) for academic advising as needed.
- If you receive financial aid (loans, grants, scholarships), pick up the appropriate documentation from Overseas Study. (Deadlines: Nov. 1 for spring programs, April 15 for academic year, fall and summer programs)
- Attend the optional orientation meeting for your program (semester and academic year programs only).
- Selected programs: Apply for a visa when you receive further instructions from your program provider.
- Register yourself in the authorized OVST course as directed by Overseas Study.
- If you are studying abroad during your senior year, verify that you can fulfill the Senior Residency requirement of your School.
- Note deadline for financial aid applications (FAFSA). Apply through the Office of Student Financial Assistance or online to receive financial aid. If necessary, make arrangements to apply while abroad.
- Bloomington students with loans and scholarships arrange for Direct Deposit of bursar refunds if you're enrolled in OVST-Y 498 or OVST-Y 496. http://bursar.indiana.edu/direct_deposit.php
- In OneStart, change campus address to permanent address for time period abroad.
- Obtain Cirrus or Plus bank debit card with PIN, traveler's checks, major credit card with PIN and International Student ID card.
- Pay your program provider or make sure arrangements have been made to do so.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook contains general information pertinent to students on all study abroad programs offered by another university or program provider.

An electronic copy of this document can be found on our Web site at: *www.indiana.edu/~overseas/programs/handbooks/index.shtml*.

Preparing for Departure

Passport

Apply for a passport IMMEDIATELY; many participants will need to have passports in hand several months in advance of travel in order to secure required visa or residency permits. Pick up an application at the post office at Fourth and Washington in Bloomington, at a county clerk's office, or download it from the Internet (<http://travel.state.gov/>). You will be instructed to submit the completed application with two recent photos, a certified copy of your birth certificate, another ID with photo and a signature (such as your driver's license), and \$100. Your passport will be mailed to you in about four to six weeks. It will be valid for 10 years.

You can check the status of your passport application online at: http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/status/status_2567.html

Sign your passport as soon as you receive it.

Make two photocopies of the passport page that has your name on it. Leave one copy with your family when you go abroad and take the other with you. The copy will make it much easier for you to replace your passport if it should be lost or stolen.

Visa and Residency Permit

A visa is an authorization, usually a stamp in your passport, that permits you to travel into or reside in another country for a stated period of time. The visa is issued by the country's consulate in the U.S. Student visas are required for a number of programs. If the country you are studying in requires a visa, you should inquire with your program provider as to what information and documentation they will provide for your visa application.

The application process for some visas will require that applicants obtain supporting materials from other agencies, possibly including translated and/or notarized copies of official documents such as birth

certificates, high school diplomas and official transcripts, and may require submission well in advance of travel dates. Some applications must be submitted in person.

If you plan to leave the U.S. well in advance of the time the program begins, contact your program provider to obtain visa materials before you depart.

Early processing of visa applications may be complicated or, in some situations, not possible at all. Consulates process visa applications according to the start date of the study abroad program and not according to personal travel plans.

Visas are granted at the discretion of the consulate and may be denied for any reason including inadequate documentation, pending legal action, past criminal history, etc.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you are responsible for contacting the embassy of the country where you will study to determine its entry and visa requirements for citizens of your country. You are also responsible for arranging to remain in compliance with U.S. immigration regulations regarding an extended stay abroad and re-entry into this country.

Students on all programs will receive assistance at the program site in arranging official student or nonresident status.

Medical Checkup

You are strongly encouraged to schedule a medical exam at the Student Health Center (812-855-4011) or with your family physician. A thorough dental exam is also strongly recommended.

For information on necessary or suggested vaccinations for travel abroad, consult your family physician or the Student Health Center's Travel Clinic (812-855-7688 or www.indiana.edu/~health/travel.html). The Health Center receives up-to-date communiques from the Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/) and the World Health Organization (www.who.int/en/).

Living abroad can create stress. If you are currently under medical care, talk openly to your counselor, health provider or Overseas Study about the support you might need abroad.

Many programs will require you to complete a medical history form

before going abroad. The medical history form is important for your health and safety. It will help the staff on-site get assistance for you in case of accident or illness. Language barriers and incomplete medical records can delay treatment. For your own safety and benefit, provide full information about medications you take regularly, drug allergies, and chronic or recurring conditions, including eating disorders.

Medications Abroad

If you currently take medications, talk to your physician or nurse practitioner about arrangements for continuing the medications abroad.

Any medications taken overseas should be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled. You should carry a letter from your physician describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including generic names of prescription drugs. Be prepared for the possibility of having to see a physician abroad to authorize continued treatment during your time overseas.

Health Insurance

Most programs require students to purchase a medical insurance policy as a part of the program fees. You should inquire with your program provider about the details of the policy. If insurance is not provided by your program, contact your family's insurance company or STA Travel (www.statravel.com).

Discuss with your current insurance agent the advisability of maintaining your current health insurance as well. If circumstances force you to withdraw from the program and return to the U.S., you should have adequate medical coverage available here. Also, you may need to maintain continuing coverage with your own company to retain benefits for any pre-existing conditions.

Other Insurance

You may also want to consider purchasing supplemental insurance to reimburse you for theft or loss of personal items (personal property insurance), lost expenses due to travel cancellations (travelers insurance), or enrollment in a travel assistance plan (assistance to help you replace lost or stolen travel documents, to locate medical assistance while traveling, etc.).

Some students may already be covered for these expenses by current insurance plans of their parents or guardians. Additional plans, specifically designed for overseas travelers, are available through some program providers, travel agencies, frequent flyer programs and even credit card companies.

If you plan to travel after your program ends, you may need to purchase supplemental medical insurance to cover the additional time you stay abroad.

Travel to Program Site

You are responsible for making arrangements to arrive in the host city on your program's official arrival day. Travel agencies and Internet discount travel sites can be excellent resources. Overseas Study or your program provider will provide precise instructions about arrival dates and where to go when you arrive.

Travel agents or airlines may offer a flexible return ticket, meaning you can change the date of your return, although this may incur an additional charge. Check with your company to see what the charges are.

Overseas Tip

Once you have arrived at your program site, be sure to contact family and friends in the United States. They will be anxious to know you arrived safely. Contact them on a regular basis throughout your time abroad. If you plan to call, establish a mutually convenient time and day.

Proof of Onward Journey

Upon entering the country you will be expected to show proof of return transportation to the U.S. or onward travel to a third country (a round-trip ticket, even if the return date has not been finalized, or written confirmation of travel reservations). Failure to produce some confirmation of arranged departure may result in your having to purchase a return ticket on the spot, which could be very expensive.

Academic Credit

To verify the transfer credit you can receive for your program, check the Credit Transfer Service (<http://cts.admissions.indiana.edu/index.cfm>) to see whether the transcript has been accepted at IU. You will need to search by the location of the institution providing the transcript, NOT the location of your program. As an additional resource, you may also consult the list of previously approved programs in the Office of Overseas Study. You should then download the Credit Transfer Agreement at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/programs/noniu.shtml#credit, which you will submit to the Office of International Admissions.

All departments and schools reserve the right to determine how much and what type of credit students receive for study abroad. That is why it is important for you to discuss your proposed course of study with your departmental advisor and obtain permission to receive credit in your major for the coursework you expect to take abroad.

When you return to IU, expect to submit documentation of your course work abroad to your major and/or minor departments before they approve credit toward your degree requirements. Based on the information you bring back, they will also determine what level of credit you are entitled to receive.

In all cases, it is essential that you bring back from abroad all academic materials from each course (syllabi, bibliographies, papers, exams, etc.).

Registration

IU Registration for Study Abroad

The Office of Overseas Study will authorize you to register in a special OVST (Overseas Study) course number designated for non-IU programs. You will receive instructions from Overseas Study about enrolling in the specific section for your time abroad. You cannot register for the program if your Bursar record shows any principal balance (however small) from a preceding semester.

The administrative course number is for zero credit hours. This registration will verify your fulltime participation on an approved study abroad program; allow you to maintain your computer access at IU without interruption; demonstrate for IU that you are still a

degree candidate; facilitate your registration for your return semester by automatically providing you with an appointment time; enable advisors checking the system in your absence to know why you are not registered in on-campus classes for the period you are abroad.

After the conclusion of the program, course titles will be added to your record for the exact number of credits you actually earned for specific courses abroad. *(Please note: The administrative course number (OVST...) will remain on your record to account for the period you were abroad.)*

You may not withdraw from the administrative course at any time or change your registration status online without first contacting the Office of Overseas Study.

IU Registration for Post-Program Semester

IUB Registration materials will be available online (www.indiana.edu/~registra/ or <http://onestart.iu.edu/>). Overseas Study will e-mail instructions for registering yourself online from your program site.

Follow the same procedures to register for summer school. Note, however, that final exams at many program sites do not conclude until at least mid-June, which makes attendance at IU's summer school difficult for students on those programs.

Registration appointment times are calculated based on completed hours. Your appointment time is not impacted by staying abroad. It is not possible to change your registration appointment time due to time differences or travel plans.

Fee Payments

You will pay your fees directly to your program sponsor. If you were approved to use your financial aid (as indicated by your enrollment in OVST-Y 498 or OVST-Y 496), your aid will be released directly to you, not your program sponsor. Because financial aid is released as a refund from the Bursar's office, any previous balance or fees will be paid before the money is released. This may include the OVST course fees, which will be billed by the IU Bursar.

School of Record Fees

A School of Record is usually a partner college or university that has agreed to provide official transcripts for students studying abroad with a certain study abroad provider or organization. A School of Record transcript is necessary because the study abroad providers themselves are not accredited institutions, making their credit untransferable to many U.S. colleges and universities.

In order to transfer credit to IU, you may be required to obtain a School of Record transcript. There is usually an additional fee that is required to obtain this transcript, but it is the only way to transfer credit back to IU.

Financial Aid

Since March 1 is the annual application deadline for federal financial assistance, students who have not yet applied should contact the Financial Aid office immediately.

If you already have IU financial assistance (scholarships, loans, grants, etc), read the information at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/noniu/finaid.html.

Most IU financial aid may be applied to non-IU programs but **NOT** performance scholarships, Guaranteed Tuition certificates, fee courtesies, SSACI Indiana Higher Education awards, 21st Century Scholarships, assistance to children of disabled veterans, or other fee remissions. Students should verify the transferability of specific scholarships with their home campus financial aid office.

IU financial aid may be applied only if 1) you are enrolled for full-time study while abroad; 2) you have a GPA of at least 2.5; AND 3) if your courses will be accepted as transfer credit toward your degree requirements (major, minor, distributional or required electives).

Using Financial Aid towards Non-IU programs

Students who wish to continue receiving federal or state loans or grants while study abroad at a site where IU does not have an overseas study program **MUST** be enrolled at IU in a special course (OVST-Y 496), following the directions below, during their absence.

Students who do not receive federal or state aid but receive private or IU departmental or institutional scholarships or grants can continue

to receive these if they qualify to be enrolled in OVST-Y 498 and sign a contract attesting to the parameters that govern financial aid portability at IU.

To verify your financial aid award status, visit OneStart at <https://onestart.iu.edu/my-prd/Portal.do>.

Financial Aid and Non-IU Programs

Most IU financial aid may be applied to **non-IU programs** but **NOT** performance scholarships, Guaranteed Tuition certificates, fee courtesies, SSACI Indiana Higher Education awards, 21st Century Scholarships, assistance to children of disabled veterans, or other fee remissions.

Students should verify the transferability of specific scholarships with their home campus financial aid office. Visit www.indiana.edu/~overseas/basics/fnaid.shtml#national for information on national scholarships and other sources of financial assistance.

1) Eligibility for OVST-Y 496

1. To qualify for OVST-Y 496: Study Abroad/Non-IU Program, students **MUST** be enrolled full-time overseas and have endorsements from their department and the Office of Overseas Study based solely on academic need.
2. The credits **MUST** satisfy a student's degree requirements (major, minor, distributional, required electives, etc.). A program of elective credits abroad, above and beyond the minimum credits required for a degree program, does not qualify a student for enrollment in Y496.
3. Students with a cumulative GPA of less than 2.5 or any semester GPA less than 2.00 are not eligible for Y496.
4. The Y496 process cannot be initiated after your program abroad begins.
5. Credit from your program must be transferred within six months of the termination of the program otherwise all financial aid will need to be repaid and/or future financial aid will be cancelled. The transferred credit must show that you were enrolled full-time while abroad.

2) Eligibility for OVST-Y 498

1. To qualify for OVST-Y 498: Study Abroad/Non-IU Program, students must be registered in a credit-bearing program that has been approved by Indiana University.
2. Students must meet the enrollment expectations of their scholarship or grant provider.
3. Students must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0.
4. Credit from the program must be transferred within six months of the termination of the program otherwise all financial aid will need to be repaid and/or future financial aid will be cancelled.

Procedure

Visit Overseas Study to discuss whether you may use your financial aid abroad. Bring a detailed description of your program.

If approved, complete the proper documentation by November 1 for spring programs and by April 1 for summer and fall programs.

Applying Aid to Program Costs

Any IUB grants, scholarships and loans that are transferrable to the program will be reflected as credits on the invoices you receive from the IUB Bursar. Arrange to have the refunds directly deposited into your checking account (see www.indiana.edu/~blbursar/index.shtml) where the funds can be accessed abroad via ATM. If direct deposit is not an option for you, have the check mailed to a person in the U.S. who will deposit it for you. Use OneStart (<http://onestart.indiana.edu>) to supply the appropriate address.

Financial aid refunds are not disbursed until late August and early January for semester programs. Refund checks will be disbursed from the Bursar at the beginning of the Summer I session, regardless of the summer session for which you are enrolled. Stafford Loan money will be given in two disbursements.

Financial Aid for Post-Program Semester/Year

Each year, in late December or early January, financial aid applications (FAFSA) are available for the following academic year. Submit them by the March 1 priority deadline. A renewal FAFSA is available online (<http://fafsa.ed.gov/>) and in downloadable form to print (www.ed.gov/studentaid/index.html). You will need a PIN to complete an application online. If you do not already have one, you can request a PIN online (www.pin.ed.gov/), but it will be mailed to your home address.

Most financial aid, including scholarships, will not be affected by your having studied abroad as long as you continue to meet the eligibility and standards required by the funding source. If you have questions about how study abroad will impact your funding upon your return, please contact the office at IU responsible for your scholarship.

Graduating seniors with Perkins Loans

Graduating seniors with Perkins Loans (not Stafford Loans) must contact the Student Loan Administration (1-800-458-8756) for instructions regarding loan repayment schedules and methods. Perkins Loans repayments begin six months after *the end of your last semester at IU*, not six months after your official *graduation date*. The repayment schedule will not recognize the fact that you were still in classes abroad later than the end of the IU semester. The repayment clock starts ticking in the last month of the IU semester (May or December).

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Manage your money through a combination of the following:

- 1) **Cirrus or Plus debit card and 4-digit PIN** permits you to withdraw money directly from your U.S. checking account. This option is fast, convenient, and offers the best rate of exchange. Use your card at least once before you leave the U.S., and find out your bank's overseas ATM fees as well as limits on withdrawals. ATMs are plentiful throughout most areas of the world, but students going to non-traditional study abroad destinations should check a reliable guide book for more information.

2) **Major credit card and a 4-digit PIN** permits a cash advance on your credit card. This is a fast and simple option, but it involves a fee, and interest is charged. VISA, MasterCard and American Express are widely recognized throughout the world, but some regions favor one over the others. Check an up-to-date guidebook to find out which card is most recognized in your host country.

You may want to investigate whether special services for travelers are available through your credit card of choice. For example, **American Express card** holders are permitted to write and cash checks on their U.S. bank accounts at AmEx offices worldwide. Bring your U.S. check book and plenty of checks for this option.

If planning to use ATM, debit or credit cards, be sure to check with your bank(s) to confirm that you can do so in the country or countries in which you will be traveling. (Some banks blocked all transactions in Spain this past year due to increased incidents of fraud.)

3) **Traveler's checks.** You may want to bring *at least* \$500 (\$1,000 to \$1,500 for students participating in academic year programs) for initial expenses, traveling and as a fallback.

4) **Bank checks, personal checks, or scholarship checks** should be avoided. They must be sent by registered or insured mail and can take two to four weeks to clear before you have access to the cash. Instead have the sums deposited in your U.S. bank account and withdraw the funds with a debit card.

Be prepared in case of loss or theft of financial resources. Keep important information such as check serial numbers and credit card phone numbers separate from original documents.

E-mail

You will have e-mail access abroad. Given that Overseas Study will need to contact you throughout your time abroad for such things as advising and registration, it is important that you maintain regular e-mail contact at your IU e-mail address. Students who want to use other e-mail services should forward their IU e-mail messages to their preferred account.

Webmail is easy to access overseas, available at <http://webmail.iu.edu/>.

In case you encounter firewalls, filters, slow service or other problems

that might hinder using Webmail, you may also want to take instructions for telnetting or having IU e-mail forwarded to another address. The IU Knowledge Base (www.kb.iu.edu) explains Webmail as well as forwarding and telnetting.

IU Library Services

Online IU Library resources, including the IU catalog, library instruction pages and journal indexes with full-text articles, are available to all IU students via the Web at www.libraries.iub.edu. Library resources abroad might be limited so access to the IU Library resources may be beneficial.

Summer Address

If you are going on a fall or academic year program, leave your summer address and telephone number with your program provider. Program arrangements sometimes change at the last minute and they may need to know how to contact you. If you will be traveling during the vacation periods, provide a contact through whom you may be reached at all times.

U.S. Mailing Address

During the time you are overseas, IU will automatically direct its mailings to the address you specify in OneStart (<http://onestart.iu.edu/>) as your *campus* address. It is therefore essential that you list your U.S. permanent address as your campus address for the period that you are abroad. You should then have someone at that address screen your mail and forward important correspondence to you. IU offices will not send mail to foreign addresses.

IUB Campus Housing

To cancel campus housing for your period abroad, take a photocopy of your acceptance letter to Residential Programs and Services (801 N. Jordan, Bloomington, IN 47405).

To reserve housing for the semester you return, contact RPS before you leave. To maintain your priority status, fill out a reactivation form and give RPS a photocopy of your acceptance letter. You should also provide an address where RPS can send your contract. Consider approving a parent as a signatory if you will not return before contracts are due. E-mail RPS (housing@indiana.edu) two to three months before your return to confirm your housing status and change any housing preferences.

Housing Sublets

The OneStart system (<https://onestart.iu.edu>) has a section for Classified ads for Roommates & Sublets in Bloomington.

Absentee Voting

The Federal Voter Assistance Program can be found online at <http://www.fvap.gov>. The site includes links to online applications for the Federal Post Card Application as well as the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, a backup ballot available if a citizen outside the United States does not receive the regular absentee ballot from their state after having made a timely application. Since absentee voting regulations vary state by state, it's best to consult the instructions on the Web site or contact the Voting Assistance Officer at local embassies and consulates for specific questions. Democrats Abroad (<http://www.democratsabroad.org>) and Republicans Abroad (<http://www.republicansabroad.org>) also operate voter registration drives in individual countries and often have a great deal of experience and knowledge of individual state procedures.

International Student Identity Card

You can often get student discounts while studying abroad or traveling (e.g. hostel accommodations, museum entrances, theater tickets) with you own IU student identification card or a student identification card issued by your local host institution. Other international ID cards such as **ISIC** and **iNext** will also garner discounts and other benefits. Depending on your program, one of these might be included in your study abroad fee, but if not, you may get one of these cards on your own.

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) can provide discounts on international and local transportation, accommodations, and admissions to museums, theaters, historical sites, etc. For more information see the STA travel Web site (www.statravel.com).

The iNext card can make you eligible for travel, accommodation, entertainment, and cultural discounts worldwide. Cards include both health and travel insurance coverage — accident, sickness, hospital, transport, repatriation, baggage, and document replacement benefits. For more information see the iNext Web site (www.inext.com).

Telephoning

On most programs students find that having a cell phone is a convenient way to stay in touch locally, and some program sites now require every student to have a cell phone to facilitate communication. Many of the newer U.S. cell phones can accommodate a SIM card that you would purchase for a country abroad. You should contact your cell phone service provider to inquire if that would be an option, although it may be more costly than purchasing a pay-as-you-go cell phone abroad. Program providers very often provide detailed information about cell phone options.

Connection, maintenance and surcharge fees often apply to cell phones being used internationally — even to countries within the same world area — and the charge for minutes can vary significantly from provider to provider and vary based on the registration location of the SIM card. Check these details carefully before locking into a costly service plan.

All major U.S. carriers issue international calling cards that permit you to bill calls to a charge card or a U.S. telephone number. Calling cards work from public phones and cell phones. IU now offers a prepaid calling plan. For more information see this Web site: www.iu.edu/~longdist. Most students, however, rely on pre-paid phone cards purchased while abroad.

Some students stay in touch with friend and family via Internet services such as Vonage (www.vonage.com) or Skype (www.skype.com). Note that these require computers and high-speed Internet connections which may not be available at all sites abroad.

Travel Resources

Should you plan to travel around from your program site on weekends and breaks, plan ahead by bringing travel guidebooks for those destinations. Also, prepare and bring a list of useful travel Web sites. These may include sites for cheap hotels and youth hostels as well as discount airlines.

Academic Policies

While abroad, you must adhere to most of the same IU academic policies and regulations that you are subject to on your home campus. Take your own School Bulletin abroad. Bulletins can also be found at www.indiana.edu/~bulletin/iub.

You should know the basic policies of your school and your own degree requirements. You must also follow the specific requirements for your study abroad program.

Full-time Student Status

All students are encouraged to maintain full-time enrollment while studying abroad in order to continue making progress toward graduation. Students enrolled in OVST-Y 496 are required to transfer back to IU the equivalent of full-time enrollment (12 credit hours per semester and 6 credit hours during the summer). Failure to do so could result in being required to pay back your financial aid and jeopardize future loan eligibility.

Course Restrictions

Where a program site has an unlimited number of course options, you should be able to take a variety of courses in the humanities and social sciences, and in some locations, a limited number of science courses. However, some areas of study are restricted, particularly to students with majors outside those disciplines:

- **School-specific credit**

Special arrangements must be made ahead of time for IU credit from Schools of Business, HPER, SPEA, Journalism, Education, Fine Arts (studio) or Music while abroad.

- **Foreign Languages**

You may not begin a new language abroad, unless it is a requirement of the program, but you may continue the study of a language other than that of the host country if you have a major or minor in that

area. You must also clear the credit with the IU language department, which may require a test for placement in IU classes when you return. Check your program handbook for more information.

• **Honors**

You may receive honors credit only if you have already been accepted into the honors program in your department and if your advisor has previously approved your tentative schedule. The honors advisor and/or committee may require specific information before approving the credit. Do not plan on doing an honors thesis or research as part of your overseas credits.

• **Independent Study and Individualized Readings**

Students are not permitted to include independent study courses as part of their minimum course load abroad. Instead, Overseas Study encourages students to arrange ahead of time with an IU faculty member to do research while abroad but register for the independent study credit for the semester of their return.

Overseas Study strongly discourages students from taking correspondence courses through the School of Continuing Studies during their stay abroad. Such courses cannot form part of the term's minimum course load.

• **Internships**

If you plan to pursue an internship while abroad you should consult your major advisor before departing for your program. Some departments require prior approval for internships. Note that credit will not be given for internships with no academic component.

Withdrawal from the Program

If you do decide to withdraw from the program, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the administrative OVST enrollment after notifying Overseas Study (overseas@indiana.edu) of your intent.

If you were permitted to take your financial aid abroad, Overseas Study will notify the Office of Student Financial Assistance of your withdrawal. Please note that students who withdraw after a program

begins should expect to repay any financial assistance awarded for the program.

Credits and Grades

At the conclusion of the program, the program administration must send an official transcript to The Office of International Admission (300 N. Jordan Ave, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA). Transfer credit will be awarded only for courses in which a grade of “C” or better is earned (C- earns no credit). **Courses taken for pass/fail credit cannot earn transfer credit.** Grades will not be factored into your IU GPA, but original transcripts from all institutions you’ve attended, including your non-IU program, maybe considered when applying to graduate or professional schools.

If you had a CTA (Credit Transfer Agreement) approved before program participation and there were no changes in your original course schedule, you can assume that your courses will be transferred as agreed when the official transcript arrives at Admissions. Please note that Admissions reserves the right to reassess the credit hours if the actual program dates differ from those listed on the program literature (15-16 weeks constitutes a full semester. Note that quarter credits X 2/3 = semester credits.)

If you are in the College of Arts and Sciences or if you are in another school but working on a COAS minor or certificate, contact the appropriate College advisors in the relevant departments if you wish upper-level major or minor credit. You will need to provide them with course syllabi, reading lists and papers or exams you completed. They will then consider approving a match with courses in your major/minor area at the 300-400 level. Advisors should complete the Overseas Study online course approval form: https://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/courseapproval/course_memo.pl, authorizing the change from undistributed -UN 100 credit. For culture study and distributional requirements you will need to complete a petition form available at Kirkwood Hall 012.

If you are not in the College of Arts and Sciences and are not working on a minor or certificate in the College, you will need to contact your advisor in your own School. Once you provide him/her with course syllabi, reading lists and papers or exams you completed, a determination may be made regarding satisfying requirements in your own School.

If you did not have a CTA approved before you left, you can follow the procedures outlined above (depending on which School you are currently enrolled in). For courses not addressed by memos, you can assume that if the program is approved by IU you will receive undistributed elective credit for those classes. Undistributed credit can be applied toward graduation and in certain cases can be used to fulfill distributional requirements. It does not automatically count in the major or for 300/400 level requirements.

You should disregard the IU grade slip that arrives at your permanent address at the end of each semester. The “NR” (not reported) designation means your grades will be recorded at the end of the period abroad. The designation “NY” will appear on your transcript once your grades have been recorded with the original program title, but it will not affect your credits or GPA.

Senior Residence Requirement

Credit earned on a non-IU overseas study program does not satisfy the senior residency requirement. Check with your advisors regarding the impact of this.

Academic Integrity

All students must respect and abide by the academic regulations of IU, the program provider and the local host institution(s). Any acts of academic misconduct, including cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference, violation of course rules, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will be adjudicated by local academic officials and then be referred to the judicial process on the student’s home campus.

Personal Conduct

All students must respect and abide by the laws and customs of the host country, the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (<http://dsa.indiana.edu/Code/>) and any rules and regulations for student conduct made or adopted by IU, its employees, agents, consortium partners, and partner institutions abroad, from the published official program arrival date through the official program completion date, including but not limited to host institution rules and regulations for student conduct designed to safeguard health, well-being, and safety.

Athletic Scholarship Compliance

Student athletes must notify the athletics advisor of plans to study abroad as there are a number of compliance issues to consider. If your post-program transcript will need to be processed quickly in order to be eligible for competition, you must notify your program provider at the start of the term abroad.

Graduation

If you plan to graduate at the end of the term abroad, file an application for graduation prior to leaving your home campus. For most programs your grades will not arrive in time for you to be included on the graduation list for the same semester. Notify the program office abroad at the time your program begins that you intend to graduate at the end of the term, so that they may process grades or send your transcript to International Admissions as soon as possible.

Legal and Safety Issues

Legal Responsibilities

The host institution has primary responsibility for discipline in connection with violations of its regulations. Although host institution officials may consult with Indiana University concerning student misconduct, final disposition rests with the host institution and in extreme cases may also become a matter of concern to the host government. For example, student demonstrations that start out on a peaceful basis can rapidly escalate into confrontations with the police.

In criminal matters (which may be defined differently outside the U.S.) neither IU nor U.S. consular officials can intercede effectively on your behalf. In some countries the burden of proof rests with the defense and not with the prosecution.

Working Overseas

Do not count on earning any significant portion of your expenses by working while you are overseas. In most countries, student status does not grant the legal authorization to work, although you may find temporary employment (paid “off the books”) babysitting, waiting tables, or teaching English.

Illegal Drugs

Avoid illegal drugs. Drugs can impair your judgment in situations that require increased awareness. In addition, penalties abroad can be very severe if you violate local drug laws. Remember that you will not be eligible for U.S. legal protection, and you will be held to the laws of the country where you are living.

Health and Safety Abroad

You are encouraged to consult the State Department Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html and the Centers for Disease Control Web site at www.cdc.gov/.

Please be especially alert to the following aspects of living abroad, which may not at first appear to you as safety or health issues:

Alcohol

One of the best ways to protect yourself abroad is to avoid excessive drinking. Although alcohol may be more accessible at your program site than in the U.S., if you drink alcohol at all, do so in moderation. Not only may inebriation be culturally offensive, but more importantly, it can impair your judgment in critical moments when you most need to be alert (e.g., driving, finding your way home late at night, socializing with strangers, etc.).

Hazardous Activities

Students abroad sometimes participate in new activities in which they are not well-practiced or proficient. Be cautious if you are attempting any activity that has an element of danger or risk, particularly if you are far from assistance. These activities can include but are not limited to rock climbing, cliff jumping, snorkeling, bungee jumping, skydiving and skiing.

Many insurance companies will not cover accidents that occur during engagement in sports or activities deemed to be dangerous, including those listed above. For more information about insurance exclusions, participants on IU-administered programs should see Appendix A. Participants on co-sponsored programs should contact their co-sponsoring agency. Extra insurance or special riders can often be purchased.

Emotional Health

You are likely to experience some form of culture shock during your time abroad, but this should not be confused with a real emotional crisis. If you feel withdrawn or detached and cannot cope with your environment, ask the program director on-site for guidance and/or a recommendation for a skilled health care provider.

If your problem involves an eating disorder, share your burden with someone before you become seriously weakened.

Any medication that you take for a mental health condition should be continued during your time abroad since an interruption in medication can produce serious consequences.

Public Disturbances

Keep a low profile during political events abroad that may be anti-American in nature. At such times, avoid places that attract Americans and dress to fit in with the local culture. Be wary about unattended packages or backpacks in public places like subways, trains, and buses and report such unclaimed objects to a local authority.

In the event of public disturbances abroad—including violent demonstrations, terrorist acts and natural disasters—get in touch with your program staff to report on your own situation and to find out how the event may impact you as well as others around you. Also contact your friends and family, if possible, since they may hear about the disturbances on the news and will be concerned for your safety.

Sexual Harassment

If you feel you may be the victim of sexual harassment, consult the program administration immediately. They can help you sort out the difference between unacceptable harassment and culturally acceptable behavior which is nonetheless uncomfortable for you. In the case of sexual harassment, you may need to file a report at the local police station with the assistance of the program administrator on-site.

Dating and Sexual Behavior

A survey on dating and sexual behavior while abroad was recently conducted of IU study abroad returnees. Although each person will make individual choices regarding relationship(s) while abroad, knowing the experiences of some of your peers might provide some useful insights.

In terms of whom students date, they report dating more host nationals than program participants, and men seem to be involved in a greater number of relationships than women. Students also reported that sexual norms differed from the United States. It is important to understand the norms of the country where you will be studying. You can learn about these through various sources: books, guidebooks to some extent, discussions with host nationals and observing the behavior of others. Many students reported that their relationships

abroad gave them access to a greater understanding of the culture in which they lived. Others reported that by not engaging in serious relationships they were able to gain more since they could focus on other activities. Consider all these issues if you plan on being involved in a relationship, sexual or otherwise, while studying abroad.

The survey also indicates that the patterns students form while at IU in terms of (a) being sexually active or not, and (b) using methods of pregnancy prevention and STD protection, largely carry over when they study abroad. If you anticipate being sexually active while abroad, consider bringing a supply of the pregnancy and STD prevention protection you currently use.

PERSONAL SAFETY

When traveling abroad American visitors are generally safe and are not singled out or targeted based on their nationality, but rather for looking like a tourist. Americans tend not to experience crime in any large numbers. This does not mean that American students abroad are immune from crime. Most of the crimes committed against American tourists and visitors fall in the category of petty theft, such as pickpocketing and purse snatching.

General advice for safeguarding valuables is as follows:

•**While on Foot:** Be cognizant of your surroundings. Know where you need to go and walk with a purpose. Do not give the impression that you are off balance in your walking style or appear to be lost or wandering. There is evidence that criminals will observe these vulnerabilities and target these types of individuals. Also, do not walk close to the street or too close to the buildings. Whenever possible, walk against the traffic.

•**Public Transportation:** Be attentive to your surroundings and keep control of your personal items. While waiting in line, keep your luggage close to your person, or put the luggage straps through your arm or one of your legs to keep control of your personal belongings.

Recently the U.S. Department of State has reported a sharp increase in drug-spiking crimes. Motives include theft or robbery, kidnapping, extortion, sexual assaults, and even amusement. There are reportedly over 60 different drugs recognized as “spiking” agents. Many of them are cheap and readily available. These drugs, for the most part, are odorless, tasteless, and colorless, and most will leave the body before

72 hours of ingestion.

The following steps can help to avoid becoming a victim of a spiked drink by drugs and/or alcohol:

- Try not to go out alone. If possible, go to clubs, parties, and so on with a group of friends and plan to leave together.
- Before going out, bring a cell phone and make sure it is fully charged.
- Never accept a drink from a stranger.
- Never leave your drink unattended.
- If a drink looks or tastes different or has been moved or topped off, do not drink it.
- If an individual begins to feel sick, woozy, or intoxicated, they should tell a group member/friend or someone behind the bar, go somewhere safe, and call for help if needed. If someone collapses or becomes unconscious immediately call an ambulance, advise management of the establishment, and do not leave the friend alone.
- If sent to the hospital, tell the staff of the suspicion so they can run the proper tests.
- Do not think only alcoholic drinks are spiked; food, soft drinks, and cigarettes can be spiked as well.

TRAVEL SAFETY

Air travel

Security measures at airport facilities and on aircrafts will require that you take additional precautions when flying. You should be prepared to comply with multiple document checks, baggage searches, and inquiries. Be patient — these steps are being taken for your protection.

Packing: Examine everything that you normally pack in your suitcase and evaluate whether an object could be scrutinized by airport security. (This includes items found in manicure kits, etc.) Consider removing anything that could be perceived as threatening, or may raise suspicion at a security screening checkpoint. No knives of any size will be accepted. Avoid over-packing so that carry-on

luggage and checked suitcases can be opened and closed with ease.

Airport etiquette: Arrive at the airport early (at least two to three hours before scheduled departure). Be sure to have your ticket, paperwork and passport available. Be prepared to demonstrate the operation of electronic equipment such as laptops, cell phones, etc.

In transit: Maintain your sense of awareness and keep your possessions with you at all times.

Upon arrival: Have your luggage receipts available for verification when retrieving luggage.

Car travel

Everyday traffic accidents are the main cause of injury to students traveling abroad. The road-safety standards and risks for Western Europe are similar to those in the U.S., but the more adventuresome a destination you choose, the more primitive the roads, automobiles, trucks, buses, emergency medical resources, safety equipment, and licensing standards inevitably become. In developing countries you may be exposed to narrow, winding roads with no guardrails on hairpin turns, poorly maintained vehicles, and dangerously overcrowded buses. Even in developed countries drivers may be more aggressive than in the U.S., and speeding and passing may be more common.

- Keep track of local holidays that increase traffic and exercise the same caution you would on a holiday weekend in the U.S.
- Do not ride in a car without wearing a seat belt.
- Demand that taxi and bus drivers drive safely. “Slow down,” “Stop,” and “Let me out,” are three of the most powerful phrases you can learn.
- Do not hitchhike.

The Association for Safe International Road Travel (www.asirt.org) offers statistics, tips, and articles about road safety around the world.

Pedestrian travel

- Avoid crowded areas where you are most likely to be robbed: crowded bus stations, market places, festivals. Don't use narrow alleys or poorly-lit streets.
- Avoid traveling alone at night.

- Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will jostle you, ask for directions or the time, point to something spilled on your clothing, or distract you by causing a disturbance. Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.
- Try to seem purposeful while you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know what you are doing.
- Go into a store or a restaurant to look at a map. Standing on a street corner with your map is a clear sign that you are a tourist.

Hotel or Hostel stays

- Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby. Leave valuables at the front desk.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Take note of exitways and stairways for use in case of emergencies.
- Choose places to stay that offer a locker or safe. Buy padlocks for your backpacks and luggage.
- If a place you are staying feels uncomfortable, find a new place to stay.

Adjustment and Cultural Differences

Personal Adjustment

Part of your success abroad will depend on how well you have prepared the logistics covered earlier in this handbook, but even more depends on how you prepare yourself for cultural adjustments and personal growth abroad.

American Identity

Before you can understand another culture, you should understand your own. What does it mean to be American? What characteristics, values and attitudes define American culture? What generalizations can you make about American attitudes towards education, gender, family, money, politics, race, relationships, religion, success, time, work? How do American values affect your attitudes toward others, your friendship patterns, your work habits, the way you spend your time and money? How do Americans measure success in life? What role does tradition play in our culture? A clear understanding of what is characteristically American (and its many variations) will give you a better chance of appreciating similarities and differences in another culture.

How flexible are you? Once you have identified your American values, patterns and habits, think about the strategies that will help you adjust to different ways of dating, dressing, eating, shopping, banking, relating to professors and studying.

Learn about the U.S.

Every student abroad is inevitably put in the position of having to explain (or even defend) the home country's political or economic system or its stance on global issues. If you begin now to keep abreast of the U.S. role in global activities, you will be more articulate when you are questioned about U.S. policies and reactions to world issues. In addition, students often report that they wish they had brushed

up on such basics as how a bill becomes a law in the U.S. or the composition of the European Union before going abroad.

Remember, however, that you probably don't want to get into a hostile debate with questioners or automatically defend everything that is American. What are some strategies for deflecting potentially hostile questions so that they lead to conversations in which everybody listens and everyone learns?

Learn about the host country

Learn as much as possible about the country to which you are traveling, since understanding the culture will facilitate your adjustment to living there. How do you plan to inform yourself about the host country before arrival? Taking courses is one method, but you can also independently explore histories, periodicals, novels, travel books, videos and tapes that inform you about the differences in daily life you will encounter overseas.

Your expectations

Take a personal inventory of your expectations. What do you hope to get out of the experience overseas? Do you have any hidden or unspoken expectations? Identify your goals—linguistic, academic, career. How are you going to achieve them? How will you track your personal growth during this experience? Outlining your goals now and then keeping a journal abroad will help you map both your inner and outer journeys. Indeed, daily writing, which attempts to interpret the cross-cultural meanings of your experiences, may be your most powerful learning tool.

Your appearance

Carefully consider how you will dress. American students often comment that their clothing gives them away instantly as foreigners and can make them more vulnerable to derogatory remarks and as potential targets for petty thefts. While you shouldn't expect to buy a new wardrobe while abroad, you may want to plan to wear items of your own clothing that fit in better with the local culture. You'll discover that shorts, halters and revealing tops are mainly worn near seaside towns, rarely in urban centers except by tourists. You'll also discover that casual lounging clothes—including oversized t-shirts with humorous logos and flannel pants that are very common on

college campuses--are not worn in big cities abroad or at urban universities. And before you don what many cultures might interpret as revealing clothing (i.e. low-rise jeans, exposed midriffs, plunging necklines, exposed underwear) observe what native citizens who are your age in that country are wearing. You may also discover that flip flops and sneakers are not necessarily the norm for footwear outside of the U.S., at least not for all occasions. Part of the acculturation process is trying to blend in so that you minimize your role as an outsider. Be prepared to be as flexible about your clothing as you are about other aspects of your behavior.

Cultural Differences

You will adjust in many small ways over a long period of time to the new culture, even though the familiar term “Culture Shock,” leads you to expect a jolting and immediate clash of values.

While there are many differences between the U.S. and your host country to which you will have to adjust, the following are particularly significant. You can access additional information at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/basics/life/diversity.shtml.

Gender Roles

Both male and female students abroad will discover that growing up in the U.S. has prepared them for different roles in society than the ones their contemporaries in other countries expect. Many events in recent decades have heightened U.S. awareness of gender stereotypes, sexism, and the limitations of traditional male-female roles. However, it may not be politic to suggest to your host country friends that U.S. patterns are appropriate for their culture. Instead, look at gender difference in the host culture from its historical and sociological perspective. Since you will be viewed according to the gender expectations of the host culture, you may feel uncomfortable at times. This is particularly true for female students who may find themselves the targets of unwanted attention.

Sexual Orientation

Just as traditional gender roles have been questioned in the U.S., we also have had extensive dialogue regarding sexual orientation. It should come as no surprise that distinct cultures approach

the question of sexual orientation differently. A bibliography of international GLBT issues is available at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/. Feel free to approach Overseas Study staff here and the program staff abroad with questions regarding the situation in your host country.

Different Abilities

The passage of legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act has spurred schools in the U.S. to accommodate students with varying abilities. Other countries are not bound by U.S. legislation, of course, and physical facilities and academic resources vary significantly from one overseas site to another.

Overseas Study endeavors to provide reasonable accommodation for students with documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, etc.), but only if you disclose your needs to us well before the program begins. If you are currently receiving disability-related accommodations at IU or anticipate needing them at your program site, send Overseas Study documentation that confirms the disability, information about the accommodation currently provided and details about accommodation required abroad. Overseas Study will then be in a position to work with you, Disability Services for Students, and other relevant offices to seek appropriate responses for your needs.

Religion

Few countries have the religious diversity and pluralism that you find in the U.S. and few have such a strong tradition of separation of church and state. As a result, you may be struck by the number of public holidays that are based on a religious calendar and the extent of public prayer and public religious ceremonies. You will have to probe to understand the relationship between the external, ritual manifestations of religion and individual beliefs or the role of religion as a political element or an active social force.

If you wish to be affiliated with a religious community abroad, check with your local place of worship for contacts or discuss your interests with program staff overseas. Former students may also be able to advise you regarding your options. Some resource information is available at: www.indiana.edu/~overseas/basics/life/religion.shtml.

Ethnicity

U.S. citizens often identify strongly with their family's cultural and ethnic heritage and refer to themselves as Asian-American, Italian-American, African-American, or Hispanic-American. In other countries such ethnic differences are often overlooked, and U.S. students report that for the first time they have been identified (and have identified themselves) as simply "American." Students may find that physical features that distinguish them from the host population may result in stares, comments, or sometimes overt prejudice. Consult the program administration regarding these matters, particularly if there are certain areas to avoid and steps to take to minimize negative interactions.

Culture Shock

"Culture shock" is the term used to describe the disorientation that every student experiences to some degree when spending an extended period in a new culture. The common symptoms include homesickness, boredom, withdrawing from the culture by spending excessive amounts of time alone or with other Americans, excessive sleeping, compulsive eating, irritability, stereotyping of or hostility toward host country nationals, weepiness or even some psychosomatic illnesses. Although you will inevitably experience some degree of culture shock, you certainly won't have all these symptoms. If you recognize what is happening, keep busy, and ask friends and the program office staff for help when you need it; culture shock will not last long.

During your period abroad, you may experience several normal stages of cultural adaptation. These include:

- 1) **Initial euphoria.** When you first arrive in the new culture, everything seems wonderful and exciting, and you are struck with how similar people around the world can be.
- 2) **Irritation and hostility.** Your focus changes from the similarities between cultures to the differences, and the differences become irritating and frustrating. Small problems loom as major catastrophes.
- 3) **Gradual adjustment.** The crisis of adjustment passes. The new culture seems more familiar and you move more confidently in it. You make friends. You learn to interpret some of the subtle cultural clues and cues.

4) **Adaptation and biculturalism.** You are able to function in two cultures with confidence. You are so well adapted to the new culture that returning to the U.S. will provoke a “reverse culture shock.”

There are several ways you can minimize the impact of culture shock:

- Learn as much as you can about your host country before you go.
- Keep an open mind. Combine the best of your host country’s culture and life with all the good things in American culture. This “best of both worlds” approach will help you get the most out of the full cultural immersion you experience.
- Be flexible. There will be many surprises, and the more open you are to that, the more exciting and wonderful your experience will be.
- Go out and do things to meet students—remember, in most cases you will be the “outsider” and will have to make the first move. Pay attention to wall posters and read a local newspaper to learn what is going on in the city (festivals, exhibits, concerts). Read signs at the university announcing lectures, films, student organization. Attend programs where you can meet students who share your interests. Visit local student hangouts—cafes, pubs and movie theaters. Join a sports club; if you are active in church, take part in one of the local congregations.
- Look into local volunteer opportunities through a social service agency, a school or a church.

Re-entry: Reverse Culture Shock

Once you have adapted to life abroad, coming home will require readjustment to U.S. culture. You will have to integrate what you have learned abroad into your U.S. life. You will cope with re-entry at various levels:

1. **Family:** You may be expected to fit back into your family but find it difficult to communicate effectively because they have not shared your international experiences. They may have difficulty adjusting to your new independence and changed values.

Strategies: Try to share your experience with your family (photos, stories, etc.) and let them know how much you appreciate the chance they have given you to grow in new ways by studying and traveling overseas.

2. **Friends:** You and your friends may no longer be as close. Be sensitive about discussing your experience with them. You may also miss the new friends you made abroad.

Strategies: Ask and listen to what your friends experienced while you were away. Ask them to bring you up to date on local events. Try to do new things together to get the relationship on a new footing. Maintain contact with friends you met on your program.

3. **School:** You are likely to look at your home campus in a new light, and you may miss being part of a close-knit group of American students.

Strategies: Talk over your academic experience with your advisor, especially if you are considering new career goals. Make contacts with international students on your campus through the International Center. Contact the Overseas Study office and volunteer to talk to students who plan to study abroad. Seek out other students on campus who have studied overseas. Investigate the possibility of living in an international dormitory or take part in activities for international students.

4. **Country:** Aspects of the U.S. may no longer be entirely to your liking and you may have the sense that you no longer fit in. You will probably evaluate ideas and events in the context of the broader cultural perspective you acquired abroad.

Strategies: Recognize that we all tend to look past the shortcomings of our home culture when we are away, and to criticize it on the basis of changed perceptions when we return. Seek out others on your campus who are interested in international and intercultural matters. Keep up your interest through newspapers, literature, music, friends, etc.

5. **Self:** You have become accustomed to a level of activity and anticipation that your home and campus probably cannot match. It is natural to feel a little restless or a bit depressed for a while after your return.

Strategies: Recognize that we all tend to look past the shortcomings of our home culture when we are away, and to criticize it on the basis of changed perceptions when we return. Seek out others on your campus who are interested in international and intercultural matters. Keep up your interest through newspapers, literature, music, friends, etc.

5. **Self:** You have become accustomed to a level of activity and anticipation that your home and campus probably cannot match. It is natural to feel a little restless or a bit depressed for a while after your return.

Strategies: Recuperate from the physical journey. Think over the ways you have changed: Which of those do you like? What did you learn about yourself? How have your family and friends reacted to the new you? Keep a journal so you can see your thoughts evolve. Talk with other returning students.

If you are having difficulty readjusting to the U.S., your home, or IU community, please feel free to contact your Study Abroad Advisor or Overseas Study. Information for returning students can be found at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/basics/return.

Publication on Cultural Learning

Maximizing Study Abroad: A Students' Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use, Second Edition
By R. Michael Paige, Andrew Cohen, Barbara Kappler, Julie C. Chi, & James P. Lassegard. August 2006, 259 pp. \$12.00 + shipping

This book is aimed specifically at students who want to make the most of their study abroad experience. Its user-friendly design will help you identify and use a wide variety of language and culture learning strategies. It begins with three inventories designed to help you be more aware of how you currently learn language and culture. It will provide you with tools and creative activities that you can use to enhance your favored learning strategies and try out unfamiliar ones. You can use the guide as you prepare for study abroad, during the experience, and once you return.

Students can purchase a copy by contacting:

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition
University of Minnesota
619 Heller Hall
271 9th Avenue
South Minneapolis, MN 55455 612-626-8600
612-624-7514 (fax)
carla@tc.umn.edu

APPENDIX

HIV/AIDS AND TRAVELER'S HEALTH

Description

AIDS is a serious disease, first recognized as a distinct syndrome in 1981. AIDS represents the late clinical stage of infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which progressively damages the immune system. Without an effective immune system, life-threatening infections and other noninfectious conditions related to failing immunity (such as certain cancers) eventually develop.

Occurrence

AIDS and HIV infection occur worldwide. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS estimates that, as of the end of 2005, nearly 40 million persons were living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. Although the most globally affected part of the world remains sub-Saharan Africa, in recent years, the steepest increases in HIV infection have occurred in Eastern Europe, Northern, Central, and East Asia. Many countries lack comprehensive surveillance systems, and despite improvements, the true number of cases is likely greater than officially reported, particularly in developing countries. Because HIV infection and AIDS are distributed globally, the risk for international travelers is determined less by geographic destination and more by behaviors that put them at risk for becoming infected, such as sexual and drug-using behaviors.

Risk for Travelers

The risk of HIV infection for international travelers is generally low. Factors to consider in assessing risk include the extent of direct contact with blood or other potentially infectious secretions and the extent of sexual contact with potentially infected persons. In addition, the blood supply in developing countries might not be adequately screened.

Prevention

No vaccine is available to prevent infection with HIV. Travelers should be advised that HIV infection is preventable. HIV can be trans-

mitted through sexual intercourse and needle- or syringe-sharing; by medical use of blood, blood components, or organ or tissue transplantation; through artificial insemination; and perinatally from an infected woman to her infant. HIV is not transmitted through casual contact; air, food, or water routes; contact with inanimate objects; or by mosquitoes or other arthropod vectors. The use of any public conveyance (e.g., an airplane, an automobile, a boat, a bus, or a train) by persons with AIDS or HIV infection does not pose a risk of infection for the crew members or other travelers.

Travelers should be advised that they are at risk if they—

- Have sexual contact (heterosexual or homosexual) with an infected person.
- Use or allow the use of contaminated, unsterilized syringes or needles for any injections or other procedures that pierce the skin, including acupuncture, use of illicit drugs, steroid or vitamin injections, medical or dental procedures, ear or body piercing, or tattooing.
- Use infected blood, blood components, or clotting factor concentrates. HIV infection by this route is rare in countries or cities where donated blood and plasma are screened for antibodies to HIV.

Travelers should be advised to avoid sexual encounters with persons who are infected with HIV or whose HIV infection status is unknown. Travelers should also be advised to avoid sexual activity with persons who are at high risk for HIV infection, such as intravenous drug users, commercial sex workers (both male and female), and other persons with multiple sexual partners. In countries with high rates of HIV infection, many persons without these risk factors may be infected and be unaware of their status.

Condoms, when used consistently and correctly, prevent transmission of HIV. Travelers who engage in vaginal, anal, or oral-genital sexual contact with a person who is HIV-infected or whose HIV status is unknown should use a latex condom. Persons who are sensitive to latex should use condoms made of polyurethane or other synthetic materials. Some areas may have a limited supply and selection of condoms, or available condoms may be of inferior quality. Persons traveling to these areas who engage in sexual contact with persons

who are HIV-infected or whose HIV status is unknown should carry their own supply of condoms. When a male condom cannot be used properly, a female condom should be considered. When no condom is available, travelers should abstain from anal, vaginal, and oral-genital sexual contact with persons who are HIV-infected or whose HIV status is unknown. Barrier methods other than condoms have not been shown to be effective in the prevention of HIV transmission. Spermicides alone have also not been shown to be effective, and the widely used spermicide nonoxynol-9 can increase the risk of HIV transmission.

In many countries, needle-sharing by intravenous drug users is a major means of HIV transmission and transmission of other infections, such as hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Travelers should be advised not to use drugs intravenously or share needles for any purpose. Travelers should also be advised to avoid, if at all possible, receiving medications from multidose vials, which may have become contaminated by used needles.

In many developed countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, western European nations, United States), the risk of transfusion-associated HIV infection has been virtually eliminated through required testing of all donated blood for antibody to HIV. In the United States, donations of blood and plasma must be screened for HIV-1 and HIV-2 antibodies, the HIV-1 p24 antigen, and traces of HIV genetic material that may indicate infection. Developing countries may have no formal program for testing blood or biological products for contamination with HIV. In those countries, travelers should (when medically prudent) avoid use of unscreened blood-clotting factor concentrates or concentrates of uncertain purity. If transfusion is necessary, the blood should be tested, if at all possible, for HIV antibody by appropriately trained laboratory technicians using a reliable test.

Needles used to draw blood or administer injections should be sterile, single use, disposable, and prepackaged in a sealed container. Travelers with insulin-dependent diabetes, hemophilia, or other conditions that necessitate routine or frequent injections should be advised to carry a supply of syringes, needles, and disinfectant swabs (e.g., alcohol wipes) sufficient to last their entire stay abroad. Before traveling, such persons should consider requesting documentation of

the medical necessity for traveling with these items (e.g., a doctor's letter) in case their need is questioned by inspection personnel at ports of entry.

This information was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travelers Health Yellow Book (wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentYellowBook.aspx).

Additional Information

National Center for HIV/AIDS,
Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
1-800-232-4636

Indiana University
Health Center
812-855-7338