



France



France

<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3842.htm>

Fact Sheet

July 23, 2020

U.S.-FRANCE RELATIONS



The United States and France established diplomatic relations in 1778 following

the United States' declaration of independence from Great Britain, and France provided key assistance to the United States as an ally during its war of independence. The Vichy Government of France severed diplomatic relations with the United States in 1942 during World War II; relations were normalized in 1944. The United States and France are among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5).



Relations between the United States and

France are active and friendly. The two countries share common values and have parallel policies on most political, economic, and security issues. Differences are discussed frankly and have not generally been allowed to impair the pattern of close cooperation that characterizes relations between the two countries.

The U.S. and France work closely on many issues, most notably in combating terrorism, efforts to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and on regional problems, including in Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia. As one of the P5+1 powers and as a leader of the European Union, France is working to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. France is a major contributor to the Defeat-ISIL Coalition. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, France supports U.S. engagement in the peace process. France is one of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) top five troop contributors. The French support NATO modernization efforts and are leading contributors to the NATO Response Force. France also closely collaborates with the U.S. on international public health threats like Ebola.

U.S. Assistance to France

The United States provides no development assistance to France.

Bilateral Economic Relations

France is a member of the European Union and is the United States' third-largest trading partner in Europe (after Germany and the U.K.). Trade and investment between the United States and France are strong. In 2019, the United States and France traded more than \$138 billion in goods and services. U.S. exports to France include industrial chemicals, aircraft and engines, electronic components, telecommunications, computer software, computers and peripherals, analytical and scientific instrumentation, medical instruments and supplies, and broadcasting equipment. The United States is the top destination for French investment and the United States is the largest foreign investor in France. The United States and France have a bilateral convention on investment and a bilateral tax treaty addressing, among other things, double taxation and tax evasion.

France's Membership in International Organizations

France and the United States belong to a number of the same international organizations, including the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, G-20, G-7, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. France also is an observer to the Organization of American States.

Bilateral Representation

Principal embassy officials are listed in the [Department's Key Officers List](#).

France maintains an **embassy** in the United States at 4101 Reservoir Rd. NW, Washington, DC 20007 (tel. 202-944-6000).

More information about France is available from the Department of State and other sources, some of which are listed here:

[CIA World Factbook France Page](#)

[U.S. Embassy](#)

[History of U.S. Relations With France](#)

U.S. Census Bureau Foreign Trade Statistics

Export.gov International Offices Page

Travel Information



The Overseas Security Advisory Council's Travel Safety Reference Guide

November 2011

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Introduction

Globalization has made overseas travel – be it for business, academia, charity, personal, or mission work – quite common. International travelers are exposed to many new experiences and phenomena and among these, certain risks. This guide offers international travelers information, tactics, techniques, and procedures to mitigate risks inherent to international travel.

OSAC acknowledges that every destination is unique and that no one resource can address all eventualities. Therefore, we have developed this reference in coordination with our constituents to inform the private sector of best practices for personnel safety abroad. The risks of international travel are no longer just tied to local or transnational crime. It is our hope that the enclosed recommendations will both encourage individuals to seek overseas opportunities and provide greater comfort and confidence for those traveling internationally.

Pre-Departure

Know Before You Go

- Register with the U.S. State Department's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).
- Review the U.S. State Department's [country specific information](#) and OSAC's [country crime and safety reports](#).
- Do your homework. Visit country-specific websites for important information on your destination country.
- Understand the laws and currency exchange rates in your destination country.
- Be culturally aware; learn a few common phrases in the local language and the basics of the cultural values and norms.
- Get a map and study it. Identify potential hazards and safe havens; learn several routes to key places you will be staying/living/visiting.

Packing

- Pack your luggage wisely. Make sure to place any prohibited materials (scissors, files, other sharp objects) in your check-in luggage.
- Be sure to pack 2-3 day "survival items" in your carry-on bag. This includes: medicines and toiletries, an extra change of clothes (including undergarments), important documents, drinking water, snacks (e.g., Powerbars), and anything else you may want.
- Do not display company or other identifying logos on luggage. Place your pertinent contact information in a visible place inside each piece of luggage.
- Do not openly display your name tags on your luggage. Include only your name and contact number on your tags, and keep them covered or turn the paper over and write "see other side."
- Get a plain cover for your passport.

- Make out a will.
- Consider a privacy act waiver.
- Leave travel itinerary and contact information with family or friends; do not otherwise disclose.
- Consider getting a telephone calling card and a GSM (tri-band or “world”) cellular phone that allows access to most local cellular systems (and provides a single contact number). Depending on your situation, you may want to purchase a local phone or SIM card in country.
- Take out property insurance on necessary equipment (cameras, binoculars, laptops, etc.).
- Consider securing a new credit card with a low credit limit separate from existing credit cards; in the event of theft, your personal accounts will not be compromised.
- Notify your credit card company of your intent to travel; confirm credit limit and availability.

Health

- Make sure health insurance covers foreign medical providers and medical evacuation expenses.
- Take an extra pair of glasses; depending on the destination, contact lenses can be problematic.
- Visit a travel clinic, inform them of destination(s), and get any needed inoculations and medications.
- Get a dental cleaning and checkup if you had not recently had one.
- Prep and pack a travel med kit; some items you may want to include:
 - Anti-diarrheal medication
 - Antibiotics
 - Anti-malaria (if applicable)
 - Antihistamine and decongestant
 - Antacid and laxative
 - Anti-fungal/anti-bacterial and hydrocortisone cream
 - Anti-bacterial hand wipes/ hand sanitizer
 - Pain reliever/fever reducer, sleep aid
 - Gauze, bandages, and medical tape
 - Insect repellent with DEET 35%
 - Shaving razor, tweezers, manicure kits
 - Sunscreen and aloe
 - Thermometer

During Your Trip

Awareness

Situational Awareness is very important domestically but becomes critically important overseas in unfamiliar environments. Keep your head up, eyes and ears open, and listen to your intuition! Situational awareness can and should be practiced and will improve the more you do so. Focus on seeing and remembering everything around you. It will seem extremely arduous and time-consuming at first but will become increasingly easier as time passes and proficiency is gained. Your goal should be for these efforts to become habitual and completed sub-consciously. Some important practices are:

- Trust your instinct; if a place does not feel right, move to a safer location – immediately.
- Assess your emotional and physical strengths and limitations.
- Be attentive to how others perceive you; behave in an unprovocative manner that discourages unwanted attention.
- Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood and work environment.
- Use common sense. Beware of EVERYONE, including pickpockets, scam artists, etc.
- Remove name tags or convention badges when outside the venue.
- Pay attention to local media for any activities or events that might affect you.
- Be aware of surroundings, including the people, cars, and alleys nearby.

- Keep alert to potential trouble, and choose to avoid when possible. Trust your instincts.
- Educate yourself of any pending events (elections, demonstrations, anniversaries) that may cause civil disturbance, and avoid unnecessary risks.
- Establish a support network among your colleagues and when possible, embassy personnel.
- Inform yourself of the availability and reliability of local support services (police, security, medical, emergency, fire).
- Confirm (with your embassy) the procedures for you and your family in the event of a crisis or evacuation.
- Politely decline offers of food or drink from strangers.
- Accept beverages only in sealed containers; make sure there has been no tampering.

Personal Conduct

You can dress, behave, and move about in a manner that is respectful of local custom, but rest assured, YOU WILL NOT BLEND IN. Remember that whenever you travel anywhere, whether you realize it or not, you are representing yourself, your family, your organization, and your country. Your behavior and actions will be applied as a positive or negative impression of all that you represent. In many cultures, this will essentially make or break your ability to successfully function and interact in another culture. Always keep in mind the following:

- Behave maturely and in a manner befitting your status in the local society; insist on being treated with respect.
- Dress in a manner that is inoffensive to local cultural norms.
- Avoid clothing that shows your nationality or political views.
- Establish personal boundaries and act to protect them.
- Exercise additional caution when carrying and displaying valuable possessions (jewelry, phone, sunglasses, camera, etc.); what may be a simple, even disposable item to you, may be a sign of extreme affluence to another.
- Vary your patterns of life/behavior to be less predictable.
- Divide money among several pockets; if you carry a wallet, carry it in a front pocket.
- If you carry a purse, carry it close to your body. Do not set it down or leave it unattended.
- Take a patient and calm approach to ambiguity and conflict.
- Radiate confidence while walking in public places.
- Do not expect privacy, anywhere.
- Do not discuss personal, professional, or financial issues of your group or yourself; these can be used to exploit you and your group.
- Be cool when facing confrontation; focus on de-escalation and escape.
- Respect local sensitivities to photographing/videotaping, especially at airports, police, and government facilities.
- Carry required official identification with you at all times.
- Report any security incidents to your embassy or consulate (who will advise you of options including reporting to local authorities, prosecution, corrective measures, etc.).
- Maintain a low profile, especially in places where there may be hostility toward foreigners and/or citizens of your country; do not seek publicity.
- Avoid public expressions about local politics, religion, and other sensitive topics.
- Avoid being out alone late at night or after curfew.
- Stay alert.
- Be unpredictable.
- Carry yourself with confidence.
- Be aware of distractions.
- Watch for surveillance. If you see the same person/vehicle twice, it could be surveillance; if you see it three times, it probably is surveillance.

Electronics Security

- First and foremost: if you don't NEED it, don't bring it!
- If you need to bring a laptop and/or phone and have "clean" ones available, use them.
- Back up and then wipe (sanitize) your laptop, phone, and any other electronics to ensure that no sensitive or personal data is on them while [traveling](#).
- Carry laptop in a protective sleeve in a backpack/purse/bag that does not shout "there's a computer in here."
- DO NOT EXPECT PRIVACY, ANYWHERE.
- Do not leave your electronic devices unattended.
- Do not use local computers to connect to your organization's secure network.
- Clear your temporary files, to include your temporary internet files, browser history, caches, and cookies after each use.
- Consider opening a new e-mail account (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, AOL, etc.) for use during your trip.
- Ensure you update your computer's security software (antivirus, firewall, etc.) and download any outstanding security patches for your operating system and key programs.
- Upon return, change all of your passwords for devices and accounts (including voicemail) used while traveling.

Logistics

Air Travel

Air travel can be incredibly convenient and frustrating at the same time. While traveling you are extremely vulnerable and must bear this in mind that a distracted individual is a prime target for all kinds of nefarious actions. You must control what you can and readily adapt to, as well as what you cannot (i.e., flight schedules/delays and time to clear security). Here are some key considerations:

- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing.
- Arrive at the airport in plenty of time (1.5 – 2 hours before departure).
- Move through passenger security immediately after ticketing and locate your departure gate.
- Stay with your bags at all times.
- Set your watch to local time at destination upon take off.
- Be careful about how much of your personal/business information you share with fellow passengers; they are still strangers.
- Limit intake of alcohol in flight, and drink plenty of water to counteract "jet lag". This will help limit stress and increase alertness.
- If possible, pre-arrange transport from the airport to your hotel. Consider paying the additional room rate for a hotel that provides shuttle service to and from the airport.
- Have your immigration and customs documents in order and available. A durable folder secured by a buckle or elastic band may be useful.

Ground Travel

Ground travel poses several risks to the traveler. Not only are you more vulnerable, but many places do not have the traffic laws, enforcement, infrastructure, or assistance that you are accustomed to. Be prepared. You will be in an unfamiliar environment and may have to contend with, among other things, dangerous road conditions; untrained or unlicensed drivers; drivers operating under the influence of alcohol and/or narcotics; vehicles that are poorly maintained and therefore hazardous, police and/or criminal checkpoints or roadblocks, and others with malicious intentions. Some recommendations for ground travel are:

- Use a common vehicle model (local taxis may be a good indicator). If you rent, remove any markings that identify vehicle as a rental.
- If you have to drive, always leave a path for escape when you stop (at a light, stop sign, cross-walk, etc.).
- Park in a manner that expedites your departure.
- Carry a cell phone, first aid kit, maps, flashlight, and official documents in your vehicle.
- Keep the vehicle windows rolled up and the doors locked.
- Use the seat belts.
- Be alert to scam artists and carjackers while stopped in traffic.
- Understand the proper local procedures should you be involved in or witness a traffic accident. In some locales, stopping for an accident can put your life at risk.
- Only take official, licensed taxis; note the license plate number of taxi and write it down.
- Avoid getting into a taxi already occupied by others. If necessary, pay extra for a single fare. Negotiate a price before getting in taxi. Have money ready to pay in appropriate denominations.
- Take a seat on a bus or train that allows you to observe fellow passengers but does not preclude options to change seats if necessary.

Lodging

At the Hotel

For most destinations you travel to (in addition to being an obvious foreigner), you will be considered wealthy and a prime target. You should not consider a hotel a complete safe haven, there are still many threats and you are potentially very vulnerable at them. Some important considerations:

- Use reputable hotels, hostels, or boarding houses; your safety is worth any added cost.
- Remind hotel staff to not give out your room number.
- Meet visitors in the lobby; avoid entertaining strangers in your room.
- Take a walk around the hotel facilities to familiarize yourself with your environment. Are hotel personnel located on each floor? Are they in uniform? Do they display any identification? Who else has access to your floor?
- Ensure the phone in your room works. Call the front desk.
- Inspect the room carefully; look under the bed, in the showers and closets.
- Ensure door and window locks are working. Do not forget the sliding glass door, if the room has one.
- Ensure the door has a peephole and chain lock.
- Avoid ground floor rooms at the hotel. Third through fifth floors are normally desirable (harder to break into, but still accessible to firefighting equipment – where available).
- Read the safety instructions in your hotel room. Familiarize yourself with hotel emergency exits and fire extinguishers.
- Count the doors between your room and nearest emergency exit (in case of fire or blackout). Rehearse your escape plan.
- Keep all hotel doors locked with a dead bolt or chain at all times (do not forget the sliding glass door and windows).
- Consider traveling with a rubber door stop, smoke detector, and motion detector.
- Identify your visitor before you open the door.
- If you doubt room delivery, check with the front desk before opening the door.
- If you are out of your room, leave television/radio on at high volume. Place a “do not disturb” sign outside door.
- Do not leave sensitive documents or valuables visible and unattended in the room.
- Keep your laptop out of sight, in a safe, or in a locked suitcase. You may wish to use a laptop cable lock to secure your laptop to a window frame or bathroom plumbing.

- Keep your room number to yourself. If your room key is numbered or has your room number on a key holder, keep it out of sight. If a hotel clerk announces your room number loud enough for others to hear, ask for a new room.
- If you leave the hotel, carry the hotel business card with you; it may come in handy with a taxi driver who does not speak your language.

Residential

When residing overseas, it is critically important to understand the threat environment in which you will be living. Take the time to reach out to the resources available, including security professionals in your organization, the local embassy or consulate, and the appropriate crime and safety reports. Here are some security measures you might want to consider:

- Avoid housing on single-entry streets with a dead end or cul-de-sac.
- Housing near multiple intersections can be beneficial.
- Ensure the sound, secure structure of your residence.
- Strictly control access to and distribution of keys.
- Install adequate lighting, window grilles, alarm systems, and perimeter walls as necessary.
- Establish access procedures for strangers and visitors.
- Hire trained guards and night patrols; periodically check-up on guards.
- Set-up a safe room in your house; consider adding additional locks
- Establish rapport with neighbors. Is there a “neighborhood watch” program?
- Seek guidance from local colleagues or expatriates who have insight into local housing arrangements.
- Ensure adequate communications (telephone, radio, cell phone) with local colleagues, authorities, and your Embassy.
- Install a back-up generator and/or solar panels.
- Set aside emergency supplies (food, water, medicine, fuel, etc.).
- Install smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and carbon monoxide monitors, as appropriate.
- Avoid sleeping with the windows open or unlocked.
- Speak on the phone inside, somewhere that is and away from windows (through which you can be seen and heard).
- Ensure all windows have treatments that can prevent external observation.
- Lock up items, such as ladders and hand-tools, which could be used to facilitate forced entry.
- Store emergency funds in multiple places around the house.
- Keep a “go-bag” with clothes, water, and food (Powerbars, etc.) for three days packed and ready at all times. Keep copies of important documents and some emergency funds with the bag. Keep other necessary items (medications, etc.) in a centralized place for easy placement into bag. Key items include:
 - Documentation
 - Copies of all key documentation
 - Passport and/or national ID
 - Driver’s License
 - Health Insurance Card
 - Communication
 - Mobile phone – including a charger and extra battery
 - Work and emergency contact lists
 - Satellite Phone (if available)
 - GPS devise (if available)
 - Food and water
 - Water bottle
 - Purification tablets
 - Energy bars / dried fruit / nuts

- Other essentials
 - Cash (USD and local currency)
 - Full change of clothing
 - Rain jacket
 - Sweater
 - Walking shoes or boots (with heel and closed toe)
 - Insect repellent
 - Matches (ideally windproof and waterproof)
 - Flashlight (with extra batteries)
 - Medical/first aid kit
 - Sun screen
 - Sunglasses
 - Toiletries
 - Toilet paper
- Extended items
 - Sleeping bag or blanket
 - Mosquito net

Preparation for the “what if” scenarios

If You Become a Victim

Despite all of your efforts to reduce exposure to risks and to avoid threats, you may still become the victim of a crime or critical event. Following are some general response strategies:

- Remain calm and alert.
- Carefully note details of the environment around you (license plate number, distinguishing features, accents, clothing, etc.).
- First, try to defuse the situation. Culturally appropriate greetings or humor may reduce tensions.
- If an assailant demands property, give it up.
- You can create a timely diversion by tossing your wallet, watch, etc. to the ground in the opposite direction you choose to flee.
- Against overwhelming odds (weapons, multiple assailants) try reasoning, cajoling, begging, or any psychological ploy.
- If someone tries to grab you, make a scene and fight; kick, punch, claw, scratch, and grab as if your life depends on it, it very well could.
- If you feel your life is endangered and you decide to physically resist, commit to the decision with every fiber of your being; turn fear into fury.
- Report any incident your embassy.
- Seek support for post-traumatic stress (even if you exhibit no symptoms).

Hijacking/Kidnapping

- You may be targeted for kidnapping. As discussed previously, when traveling, you represent yourself, your family, your organization, and your homeland (or perceived homeland). You may be targeted due to any of these affiliations, or you may simply just end up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Because abduction situations vary greatly, the following considerations should be applied based on one’s best judgment at the time:
 - Know the “ransom” policy of your government. The United States of America will not pay a ransom.
 - The greatest risk of physical harm exists at the point of capture and during a rescue attempt or upon release.

- If you are going to resist at the point of capture, do so as if your life depends on it; it most probably does.
- Remain calm and alert; exert control on your emotions and behavior.
- Humanize yourself, quickly and continually.
- Be passively cooperative, but maintain your dignity.
- Assume an inconspicuous posture and avoid direct eye contact with captors.
- Avoid resistance, belligerence, or threatening movements.
- Make reasonable, low-key requests for personal comforts (bathroom breaks, a blanket, exercise, books to read, etc.)
- If questioned, keep answers short; volunteer nothing.
- As a captive situation draws out, try to establish some rapport with your captors.
- Avoid discussing contentious issues (politics, religion, ethnicity, etc.)
- Establish a daily regimen to maintain your body physically and mentally.
- Eat what your captors provide. Avoid alcohol.
- Keep a positive, hopeful attitude.
- Attempt to escape only after weighing the risks and when you are certain to succeed.

Resources

U.S. Department of State and OSAC

- Overseas Security Advisory Council: www.osac.gov
 - Country Crime and Safety Reports: www.osac.gov/Pages/ContentReports.aspx?cid=2
- Visit www.travel.state.gov for security advisories and other travel guidance
 - Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP): www.travel.state.gov/step
 - Country Specific Information: www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html
 - U.S. State Department's role in a crisis: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html

World Factbook

- CIA World Factbook: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html

Study Abroad

- To get the latest in education abroad security information and training, go to www.globalscholar.us
- U.S. State Department Students Abroad website: www.studentsabroad.state.gov
- NAFSA (Association of International Educators) and The Forum on Education Abroad: <http://nafsa.org/> <http://www.forumea.org/>

Weather

- Review the climate and weather at your point of destination and/or any layover cities: www.weather.com

Travel Medicine/Health

- Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/travel
- World Health Organization: www.who.int/ith

About OSAC

OSAC's Commitment

The Overseas Security Advisory Council is committed to providing the American private sector with customer service of the highest standard. As OSAC is a joint venture with the private sector, we strive to maintain standards equal to or surpassing those provided by private industry. OSAC activities directly correspond to requests from the private sector.

OSAC has received exceptional support for its initiatives from the chief executive officers and corporate security directors of many of the largest international corporations in the United States. The U.S. State Department and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security recognize the need in OSAC's goal to support the U.S. private sector by continuing to develop an effective and cost-efficient security information and communication network that will provide the private sector with the tools needed to cope with security-related issues in the foreign environment. OSAC's unique charter and continued success serve as an example of the benefits of mutual cooperation.

Mission

The U.S. State Department's Overseas Security Advisory Council (Council) is established to promote security cooperation between American private sector interests worldwide (Private Sector) and the U.S. Department of State.

The objectives of the Council, as outlined in its Charter, are:

- To establish continuing liaison and to provide for operational security cooperation between State Department security functions and the Private Sector.
- To provide for regular and timely interchange of information between the Private Sector and the State Department concerning developments in the overseas security environment.
- To recommend methods and provide material for coordinating security planning and implementation of security programs.
- To recommend methods to protect the competitiveness of American businesses operating worldwide.

For more information and to join the Overseas Security Advisory Council, please visit www.osac.gov.

This document is a compilation of constituent and OSAC efforts and is meant to serve as a reference guide for private sector best practices. OSAC wishes to thank all of our constituents who generously provided their input and assistance. A special thank you to Michael O'Neil, Director of Global Safety and Security, Save the Children International, whose contributions were vital and provided the foundation for this reference guide.



www.osac.gov

TRAVEL SAFETY GUIDE FOR STUDY ABROAD

If you become the victim of a crime, seek medical help if necessary, then immediately contact:

- the local police,
- your home nation's diplomacy or consular office
- your International Programs Office Director

If you have a medical emergency, seek immediate care, then contact:

- your host family/program director/international office at host institution
- IPO
- your family

PERSONAL SAFETY

- 🌐 Do - A thorough medical and dental check-up before departure.
- 🌐 Do - Travel with limited cash and one credit card keeping cash in more than one place.
- 🌐 Do - Use official currency outlets and use caution at ATM machines so as not to be a target for thieves. Make sure your card works abroad and notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be out of the country.
- 🌐 Do - Lock personal possessions and valuables in the hotel or room safe or use hotel security.
- 🌐 Do- Use a money belt rather than a purse. If you use a handbag, keep it close to the body. Wear backpacks in front.
- 🌐 Do - Maintain a security awareness of items on your person - i.e.: purse, wallet, keys, money and cell phones
- 🌐 Do - If you are sexually harassed, ignore the proposition and continue on your way.
- 🌐 Do not - Open your hotel room door for anyone not expected or known or does not have an official identification.
- 🌐 Do not - Wear expensive looking jewelry. Remember that thieves may not know the difference between pieces of real and costume jewelry.
- 🌐 Do not - Use ATM machines at night unless the area is open and well lit.
- 🌐 Do not - Walk in low-lighted areas without being surrounded by people and trust your instincts if something seems amiss, return to a safer surrounding, such as a hotel.
- 🌐 Do not - Walk, drive or travel alone and be aware of your surroundings when using public transportation, elevators or restrooms.

Travel Safety Pocket Guide

“Remember that no list can contemplate every possible “do” and “don’t” on safety issues. Every situation is unique. Be careful, don’t rush, think before you act, stay in a group whenever possible, and always use your own best judgment in any given circumstance.”

TRAVEL SAFETY

- 🌐 Do – Leave copy of travel itinerary with two or more known trusted people.
- 🌐 Do – Promise to call or email relatives or friends periodically.
- 🌐 Do – Dress according to the social and cultural norms in each country.
- 🌐 Do – Exclude titles, organization names or unnecessary data on luggage tags.
- 🌐 Do – Keep luggage near by and in view at all times and pack a small flashlight.
- 🌐 Do – Have alternative plans for unexpected events during traveling, keeping necessary items in your carry-on.
- 🌐 Do – Create and have handy detailed maps.
- 🌐 Do – Ask about surrounding and problem areas you may have to travel through. Check these sites:
 - **U.S. State Department: <http://www.state.gov/travel/>**
 - **<https://step.state.gov/>**
 - **<http://www.traveldocs.com/>**
- 🌐 Do – Be aware of your surroundings – not to be lulled with a false sense of security.
- 🌐 Do – Keep advised, via local media, of the current security situations in the area.
- 🌐 Do – Use main entrance of hotels and other buildings.
- 🌐 Do – Use all security locking devices when in your room and keep your room key in your pocket.
- 🌐 Do – Know the emergency number to call where you will be.
- 🌐 Do – Figure out how you will communicate: SIM card? App? Current phone number? What will work in an emergency?
- 🌐 Do – Have a backup plan if relying on your phone for directions or information. Be prepared in case you lose it.
- 🌐 Do – Research and know the laws of your host country. Ignorance is not an excuse.
Be aware of what transportation is official and if using ride shares (Uber/Lyft), verify your ride and driver before entering car.
- 🌐 Do – Consider buying RFID blockers to protect cards from identity theft.

FIRE SAFETY

- **www.firesafetyfoundation.org**
- 🌐 Do – Acquaint yourself with all hotel/residence hall/ etc. emergency procedures and locate all emergency exits nearest you.
- 🌐 Do – Ask about safety measures such as, fire alarms, evacuation procedures and if windows will open.
- 🌐 Do – Call fire department direct if fire occurs then call hotel/residence hall management.
- 🌐 Do – Feel door with palm of hand, if hot don’t open if not try to escape to nearest stairway exit-not elevator.
- 🌐 Do – Stay in room and wait for help when in doubt on what to do and DO NOT PANIC or DO NOT JUMP.
- 🌐 Do – Keep everything wet if you stay in room stuffing door cracks with wet sheets and towels.
- 🌐 Do – Fill the tub with water and douse the door and walls if you stay in room.

LINFIELD UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS IDST 031 SYLLABUS; 2024-25 Academic Year

IDST 031: Intercultural Communication: Pre-Departure, Experiences Abroad, and Re-entry (S/U; 1 credit)

Note: *Students do not register for this course. It will appear on your transcript after you return from your program and attend the re-entry session. IPO then submits the grades to the Registrar to post. Please read the information below which explains the details.*

Course Objective:

This three-part course, required of all semester abroad participants, is designed to prepare you for your semester abroad program, reflect on your experiences while you are abroad and challenge you to think about your encounter with your own culture/country upon returning home. Studies have shown that students who undergo a well-designed orientation program tend to have a higher probability of success when they encounter a cross-cultural conflict or difficulty or experience culture shock. This applies both to international students who study in the United States and American students preparing to study abroad. Some may think that the term “culture shock” is overplayed in some circles, but rest assured that just about everyone will face some level of stress and anxiety when placed in a cultural environment different than their own. The objective is to be able to identify and recognize the symptoms and be ready to cope with the stress so that the experience abroad will turn out to be a rewarding one.

The International Programs Office (IPO) will provide you with cross-cultural material, specific assignments and readings in order to satisfactorily fulfill this one-credit course.

This companion course to the actual on-site study will allow you to identify, examine and explore your personal objectives for undertaking the study. Linfield University has also identified some of the objectives and learning outcomes expected of all students who study abroad.

LEARNING OUTCOMES EXPECTED OF SEMESTER/YEAR ABROAD PARTICIPANTS:

At the end of the semester or year of participation in a Linfield-administered program, participants must be able to demonstrate the following:

- Language acquisition: participants must meet a desired level of proficiency in their language of study. This will be determined through a pre and post test instrument specifically designed and administered by the Global Languages & Cultural Studies. In some cases, the GLCS faculty will also conduct mid-year evaluations of language proficiency for their majors.
- Ability to adapt and be successful in a culturally (and systemically) different educational environment.
- Ability to see and articulate similarities and differences between your own country/culture and the culture of your host country
- Ability to recognize, synthesize and articulate the cultural differences, norms, mores, habits and lifestyles of families in your host country compared with your own.

- Ability to utilize experiences abroad for (international) career building: participants should be able to write a succinct paragraph to this effect to be included in their revised resume.
- Have the skills to be more self-confident, more tolerant and flexible and less reliant on others.

Assessment tools:

- Pre and post language tests, as well as mid-year evaluations **for year-long language majors.**
- Coursework and final grades
- Mid-Semester assignment
- Returnee questionnaire and evaluation
- Re-entry discussion and assignment

1. Pre-Departure Preparation:

A pre and a post orientation assignment will accompany a day and a half of cross-cultural orientation session (normally held in mid-March of each year), required of all participants. The pre-orientation assignment will be emailed to you after you have been accepted into the program and 1-2 weeks before orientation. It will be due the first day of orientation. The mandatory day and a half orientation session will include general discussion and presentation of various cross-cultural topics as well as information about the specific country of your destination. A post orientation assignment will allow you to summarize your thoughts about what you have gained from the sessions.

2. Your Experiences Abroad:

While you are abroad, we will send you a mid-semester assignment that is designed to reflect on your experience and to make comparisons across cultures, your own as well as the one you are experiencing in the host country. You are required to submit your reactions via email to ipo@linfield.edu. In completing this on-site mid-semester assessment, you should be aware that IPO will post select entries on the Linfield website so that others in the community would also benefit from your experience abroad.

Mid-Semester Assessment

Please respond to the question/assignment below, with 2-3 thoughtful paragraphs.

- Identify someone from your host country (such as a roommate, a classmate, a member of your host family, a clerk at a local store, a program assistant at the study center, someone you met at the study center) and conduct an interview. Write 2-3 paragraphs to report your findings on these salient points (*make up your own questions to address these points*):
 - What surprised you the most about the lifestyles, mores, norms and habits of the person you interviewed compared to yours or people you encounter with back home?
 - What are (cultural) similarities and differences you observed or learned (their preferences, tastes, outlook, values) between the person you interviewed and you?
 - How did the interview experience and what you learned changed your initial perceptions of the host country?

- At the end of your report, include the name(first name only) of the person you interviewed, who they are and the date of the interview.

At the conclusion of your study abroad program, you will be asked to complete a “study abroad returnee” assessment of your learning experiences.

3. *Returning home:*

Studies have shown (and the Linfield experience has confirmed) that study abroad returnees often experience some level of anxiety about returning home and getting back to their normal routine after spending some time (semester or year) living in another culture. Most feel the value of sharing these feelings with fellow students who have had similar experiences. Hence, we have developed a re-entry workshop to provide for this discussion. For the final part of this course, you will be required to attend one re-entry session held each term. The estimated dates for this session are provided below, along with information about the class meeting.

Grading:

You will receive a passing grade for this course once you have satisfactorily completed all assignments associated with the three segments to this course: pre-departure, experience abroad, returning home.

Mandatory Semester Abroad Orientation

- ↗ Attend the **mandatory** study abroad orientation sessions listed below. **Absences for any reason are not allowed. For all students:**
 - Friday, March 15, 2024 (from 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm); Jonasson Hall
 - Saturday, March 16, 2024 (from 8:30 am – 2:00 pm); Jonasson Hall
 - Country specific sessions, various locations, will be arranged separately

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Due Dates</u> <u>Fall 2024 Programs</u>	<u>Due Dates</u> <u>Spring 2025 Programs</u>
Pre-orientation Assignments	March 15, 2024	March 15, 2024
Post-orientation Review	March 22, 2024	March 22, 2024
Mid-semester assignment: Experiences Abroad	Questions sent by our office for responses. Select entries will be posted on the IPO website and Linfield’s Digital Commons website.	
Returnee Assessment/Questionnaire	Within 2 weeks of the end of your program.	
Reentry Class	Feb./March, 2025	Sept./Oct, 2025

Relevant texts:

These reference materials are available in Nicholson Library. Use these materials as a background to complete your assignments for this course.

Culture Shock publication for all destinations, published by Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company, Portland Oregon. Similar publications are also available through Lonely Planet Publications.

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodation, who have any emergency medical information of which IPO should be informed, or require special arrangements in order to **fully** participate in the abroad program or in the event of a necessary evacuation from the study abroad site, should meet with a staff member in IPO as early in the process as possible, no later than a week after receiving the acceptance letter.

Students who have been accepted to participate in a semester/year study abroad program are expected to adhere to the college policy on academic honesty, as published in the Linfield College catalogue, in fulfilling the requirements of this course and in all the courses they would be taking while abroad.

2/24

Fall 2024 Semester

Early Start Program Arrival	Saturday, August 24
Arrival	Saturday, August 31
Orientation	Sunday, September 1 - Monday, September 2
Classes Begin	Tuesday, September 3
Mid-Term Assessments	Monday, October 14 - Friday, October 25
Fall Break	Saturday, October 26 - Sunday, November 3
Last Day of Class	Friday, December 6
Exam Period	Monday, December 9 - Thursday, December 12
Closing Ceremony	Thursday, December 12
Departure	Friday, December 13

Spring 2025 Semester

Early Start Program Arrival	Saturday, January 18
Arrival	Saturday, January 25
Orientation	Sunday, January 26 - Monday, January 27
Classes Begin	Tuesday, January 28
Mid-Term Assessments	Monday, March 17 - Friday, March 28
Spring Break	Saturday, March 29 - Sunday, April 6
Last Day of Class	Friday, May 2
Exam Period	Monday, May 5 - Friday, May 9
Graduation and Spring Closing Ceremony	Friday, May 9
Departure	Saturday, May 10

STUDENT BUDGET – FRANCE 24-25

Keep in mind if you are a year-long student, that you are responsible for paying for housing and meals during winter vacation, which is usually 3-4 weeks between semesters. Students often use this time to travel.

The following figures are estimates based on students' budgets from last year. They are only estimates and vary widely according to the individual. It is important to remember that not all expenses are included! Be prepared for some additional small expenses (i.e. photographs, photocopies) that will be necessary for various reasons.

Be aware of the exchange rate while you are there. Currently, it is not in our favor at the rate of 1 US DOLLAR = 0.92 EURO (as of March 2024).

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, FRANCE

Food	\$500
Local transportation	\$300
Independent travel	\$300
Books	\$0
Postage	\$0
Phone	\$0
Gifts	\$300
Entertainment	\$400
Other	\$0

Total estimated cost: \$3000-5000

If you are on a tight budget, these items can be reduced considerably by concentrating on local travel and taking care with discretionary expenditures.

BANKING:

Plan to exchange \$100 USD into your country's currency, preferably at the airport of departure or you can exchange currency at most airports of arrival, but often arrival is a hectic time plus you might be experiencing jet-lag.

The easiest method for obtaining funds is to use an internationally recognized ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) card – such as PLUS or CIRRUS –for cash withdrawals. You will need to get a pin number from your bank, and you will probably be able to withdraw money only from checking accounts, not savings accounts. **Be sure to check with your bank here at home. Have a back-up plan in case your card does not work. ATM's are not always available outside of cities.**

Another practical solution to international banking is a VISA credit card. You can use the card to charge expenses in most stores, restaurants, and hotels throughout Western Europe. You can also get cash advances at exchange windows of many banks. Be aware, however, that there is often a fee for the advance plus interest charges that begin immediately after withdrawal.

It is also advisable to photocopy the backs of all your ATM/credit cards and keep that with a photocopy of your passport. If you lose any of your cards, you will have the phone numbers to call the companies.

Linfield University

Aix-en-Provence

Semester Abroad in France

Student Guide

Bienvenue! As you prepare for your semester abroad, it is certain you will feel a range of emotions: happy, excited, nervous, scared; but as long as you are prepared, you will be ready for your departure from the United States and for integration into southern French culture in Aix. This guide will help outline the main points of things to know before leaving on your semester-long overseas adventure!

1. Visa

2. Packing

3. Money

4. Host Family

5. Courses
6. Clubs and Activities
7. Volunteering
8. Work Study
9. Language Partner
10. Aix City
11. Travelling
12. OFII
13. My tips

1. VISA (follow closely the information provided by IPO)

Make sure your document follows the requirement of French Embassy in San Francisco, or the city in which you are required to go per district boundaries (most of the west coast goes to San Francisco but you may need to go elsewhere). The IPO is pretty helpful with getting your VISA started, but it is a tedious and time-consuming process, so absolutely do not put it off.

I. Campus France

- a. This is a French website, that is also available in English, to which you must apply and be accepted before beginning your actual VISA application. You have to wait to receive your acceptance letter from the university that you will attend (to prove you will be studying at an accredited institution), which should arrive nearly 4-5 months before you head off. The site is a little tedious, but it's basically like a job application

filling in information about yourself, your schooling, goals for your study abroad, etc. One thing to note is that when making the application payment, make sure that you send them a *money order* like they ask, (similar to a travelers check, but not quite the same) which you can buy at places like the US Post Office or if you're at Winco if you're in McMinnville. Do not send them a regular check, because they will simply send it back to you.

II. VISA consulate appointment

- a. You need to wait for your CampusFrance acceptance, which usually takes 2-3 weeks, before you can make an appointment to get your VISA. Once you get your acceptance from CampusFrance, schedule your appointment ASAP because they fill up quickly, and the sooner you can book airline tickets (if necessary), the cheaper they will be. However, keep in mind that you cannot make an appointment for more than 3 months ahead of your departure date.

III. Prepare for your appointment

- a. Make sure to check carefully the required documents for your VISA. Go over and over the list of documents you need and make sure you have the proper copies the consulate has asked for. If you forget something at your visit, you will pretty much have to schedule a new appointment and come back again- so make sure to get it right the first time.

DO NOT APPLY MORE THAN THREE MONTHS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE DATE; applications cannot be processed that far in advance

- If there is any chance that you will want to extend your study abroad to a whole year or work to get paid a salary that is taxable by the government make sure you fill out and follow through with the OFII forms. It is unnecessary if you are only staying for one semester, but it will make it much easier to extend your visa if you have already filled out the form for the French government.

2. PACKING

1. Pack early: make lists of things you absolutely *need* and remember the more you bring the more you have to lug around.
2. Check with the airlines about the weight limit: weights differ from airline to airline and international vs domestic flights. In general the weight is about 50 pounds for your checked luggage, but make sure to pack a pound of two light, because the scale you have at home may not be the same as the scale in the airport, and you do not want to pay an extra \$100.
3. Carry-ons: On most airlines you can have one carry-on plus a "personal item" which can be a purse, briefcase or backpack that fits the dimensions. I took a small rolling suitcase and my backpack (Michaela).
4. Tag your luggage with your name and the address of the university you will attend in France. Also, put a piece of paper with the schools address and your host families along with a photo copy of your VISA and passport inside any checked luggage in case the tags come off, they will be able to send your luggage along.

What to pack:

It is pretty warm when you first get to Aix, but it is pretty cold by the time you leave for the fall semester or vice-versa for the Spring semester. Bring basics that you are

comfortable in that you can easily mixed and matched and layered. So bring both summer and winter clothes. Remember that once the weather cools down, so will your house- the French prefer to layer than use a lot of heat, so bring one or two good sweatshirts or sweaters for evenings. You may also want to bring a few nicer items to wear to events, out, dinners, dates, holidays etc. People dress WELL in Aix and you don't want to go out feeling inferiorly dressed. The French love their blacks, grays and whites for their wardrobe so if you are trying to blend completely in I advise keeping your packed wardrobe more neutral. There is lots of good shopping, and while good deals can be found, in general things are more expensive in Aix and with the euro conversion. The markets, especially Saturday mornings, have good, inexpensive clothes. There is also a huge H&M, the Gap, Promod, Mango, Zara's, and hundreds of other stores. Monoprix is also popular. It's kind of the French Target, although not as inexpensive. The main one on the Cours Mirabeau has three levels- a grocery in the basement; clothing, make-up, cosmetics on the main floor; and house-hold goods, school supplies and other miscellaneous items on the top floor.

It's hard, but try not to pack too much, you will want space in your suitcase to buy souvenirs for you and your friends and family. If you purposefully leave your winter coat or boots at home with the intentions of buying abroad, start looking early so you can scout out good prices and you don't find yourself without a coat when it starts to get cold. I recommend bringing one coat (maybe down) that you are positive you will not get cold in, especially if you plan on traveling north during the break in late October. I cannot stress this enough...be sure to pack an extra change of clothes, underwear, socks, and your toothbrush in your carry-on just in case you want to freshen up in the airport during

long lay-overs or in case your suitcase gets lost, which can happen.

3. MONEY

You'll need a lot of money to live in Aix. It's the second most expensive city in France. And you have to pay for your social life if you want to have one. Be prepared to spend lots of money for your phone credit, lunch, and dinners during the weekend. You might not be the type of person who likes going to bars and nightclubs, but most sociable French students are, so it's the best way you can meet lots of French students. But there is also Coco Bohème, a tea salon with lots of comfy places to sit and board and card games; even though drinks are fairly expensive, the atmosphere is much calmer if you're not wanting to party that night. The French only invite their really close friends to their homes, and it takes awhile to build those close friendships, so be patient and enjoy the nightlife!

The average baguette is .80€ and pain-au-chocolat is around .95€. Pizza Capri has awesome pizza to go-either by the slice or whole pies. They have an incredible "miel et chèvre" pizza that is only available as a whole pizza, and you must get one while you are there. Slices range from 2-3€. Restaurants are more expensive than taking anything to-go (to-go or "à emporter" is generally rare in French society) but there are some reasonable deals to be found. Crêpes-à-GoGo has some of the least expensive and largest variety of crêpes in Aix and can be found under the Rotonde at the end of the Cours Mirabeau. A favorite of many students during my stay in Aix (Michaela), was a pizza/sandwich cart located just down the road from the AUCP, on the corner in front of l'Ecole des Arts et Métiers; pizza-frites was extremely popular. For close food, there is also a bakery across

the street from the pizza cart, as well as a handful of restaurants down the Rue Portalis. And Aix is full of Kebab places (a Middle-Eastern version of fast food) and bakeries, which both offer fairly good prices for food. My favorite was la Lavarenne. (Gilberto) Ask your host family some of their favorites, but don't be afraid to chose something different- there are Indian, Senegalese, Chinese, Italian, Greek, and Japanese restaurants. And make sure to ask which restaurants you shouldn't go to as well, because while Aix may be known for its good food, there are always places that are better than others. The street *Rue de la Couronne* is the best place to start exploring for your favorite restaurants. Although it can be hard to want to spend money for dinner all the time, it's a great way to experience different cuisines and spend time with friends. But if you want to save money, for lunches and your university as a student kitchen that can be a good option after buying ingredients from Monoprix, a bakery and/or the local markets (great for fruits and vegetables and cheese and bread).

Check to see if your bank has a sister bank in Europe. Bank of America, for example, is a subsidiary of BNP in France, so there are no charges for ATM withdrawals on your Bank of American account when you use a BNP ATM. Not all banks have a sister bank in France and will often charge interest ranging from 1-3% per transaction- debit and credit alike. If you have to pay an interest rate, you may find it less expensive to withdraw the maximum amount from the ATM (usually 300€) and then carry only what you need around with you. Euros may seem more like Monopoly money than anything else, so remember to still be responsible and check your balance often so you can budget accordingly- you would hate to run out of money in the last few weeks when everyone is trying to make the most of their last days!

4. HOST FAMILY

You might not know who your host family is until a day or two before your flight. The front desk assistant will then email you your host family information. You will most likely arrive on Saturday and will arrive either at the Marseille Airport, about 30 minutes away, or the Aix-en-Provence TGV station, about 15 minutes from town and your host family will be there waiting for you. Be prepared to start talking about yourself and ask questions about your family. They will most likely have some activities planned for your first few days before orientation begins Monday. Try to stay out of your room the first few days and get yourself acclimated to your family- and them to you- by helping with dinner, dishes, cleaning, whatever you can to let them know that you intend to be an important, helpful part of the family. It's good to get in the habit of having a regular chore like this, which in a way affirms your role as part of the family. Also, don't try to go to sleep right away. The best way to avoid jetlag is to get go to bed when your family does and wake up when they do. And as tempting as it will be, don't just sit in your room and cry- push yourself to interact with your family and go through the house rules your family has set up. While you'll learn their rules as you go, it's not a bad idea to ask about their general rules in advance. Be open and communicate about expectations, how you work and how they work and make a plan to live harmoniously together.

Your host family will be your greatest resource—they know all the best restaurants, cheap stores, transportation, and the language. Most likely they have had students in the past so they understand the challenges that you are going through and will be patient and willing to help you through them. My host mom helped me a lot with my grammar class

(Katherine); all you have to do is ask! It is definitely hard to ask for help because Americans are proud of their independence, but the French are much more willing to work together and offer or ask for help. It is hard for us to ask for help or to not want to do everything on our own, but you will soon learn that is not the French way of living. Everyone will be more than willing (and often times annoyingly) anxious to help you out and give you advice. Try to put aside that independent streak and sort of go with the flow. There probably has not been and will not ever be again a time when you are so dependent on other people, but this dependence is a sign of the strength of your relationships rather than a weakness. This is how the French society works and something you will learn and adjust to more and more. The host family is an amazing aspect of this program and I encourage you to take advantage of it. You should really try to get to know your host family as best as you possibly can so that you really feel a bond with them. If it is one person or a whole family, spend time with them and really see what a French lifestyle is like. Immerse yourself fully and you will get the most out of this experience by learning the language as the French speak, and also cultural quirks and mannerisms. Your language skills will improve and you may even receive an offer to return to their residence when you come back to France.

Your host family will take you to school on the first day so that they can show you the best ways to go- either by the bus or walking. You may get lost your first few times getting there by yourself so remember to give yourself extra time, and that getting lost provides a good opportunity to explore more of the city; keeping a map on hand is always a good idea, but you can also practice your French skills and ask someone for directions. During orientation you will take the French language evaluation test (TEF), get to know

your classmates, take some language and etiquette classes, and explore the city getting lunches with friends. At the end of the week you will be registering for your classes. For the most part the courses you pick initially are the ones you end up with, so think carefully about what you will want to take.

(Mae) I found that I had the most success when I participated fully in the life of my host with an open mind. Always expect the best intentions from your hosts. Normally a problem can be chalked up to a misunderstanding (cultural or verbal) and both parties have the best intentions usually. Be generous and forgiving. Asking lots of questions is a beautiful way to learn, build a relationship with your host and practice your French.

5. CLASSES

First of all, you will be registering for classes. Don't worry if you are not sure what you want to take. When you arrive you will get a chance to re-select all of your classes and change around any classes that you aren't sure about. They will tell you a lot about the courses as well as what sort of classes will help with the goals you have. Choose wisely because the opportunity to study any field of your interest in another country is priceless. You will be taking 15 credits which is 5 classes at 3 credits per class. I would highly recommend either painting or drawing with the art professor. It is a great addition to any other classes you will be taking and there isn't any reading and your homework is just drawing.

You will learn a lot, and can earn good grades if you put the effort in. You will have homework every night, so be prepared for lots of reading and critical thinking-in French. The all-French thing is pretty difficult at first, but they strongly enforce the

language contract, and it is the best way to really improve your French. Although it's tempting, and not necessarily bad to have your closest friends as the other Americans in the program, make sure you are all speaking French with each other all the time. Some people will speak better and worse than you, but you will all help each other out and grow immensely in your language skills if you keep with it. Although it can be intimidating to speak with other French university students, especially by yourself, the students are super friendly and would love to know an American, so take the step and just start talking – grab a café and see where things go! This is your experience, so make the most of it and you won't leave with any regrets.

The language contract is intimidating when you first arrive. You will most likely be overwhelmed with thinking, speaking, reading, and writing in French. In all cases, stick with it because it gets much easier. I was shocked by my improvement by the end of the first week (Katherine). Stick with the kids who also want to speak exclusively in French-English speaking will only hold you back. The time frame for feeling integrated into society and comfortable with the language varies from a few days to a few weeks- but your time abroad will be a continuous evolution. There will be some days that are really hard, but remember that those days will always pass and you will be a stronger speaker, student, and person because of it.

The hardest time for many students is around the midterms. For me, (Katherine) I began to speak well enough to feel very self-conscious about my lack of a true French accent, and I wanted to stop talking altogether. I didn't of course, and after mid-term exams we have a week of vacation, which is a great time to recharge and get reinvigorated about your French studies. I came back from break excited to see how

much further I could push myself in my studies and language abilities. It can be challenging to know what you want to say but not quite be able to express yourself, and you will learn the most from listening to how others talk and you will learn to express yourself the way you want. For me (Michaela), after a while French actually became normal, and understanding came so much more naturally after hearing and speaking it day and night. By the end of the semester you will be amazed how much you have learned not just linguistically, but culturally, and personally.

I recommend bringing paper, notebooks and a few folders and pens but you can also buy those at a stationary store or Monoprix if you wish.

6. CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

Your classes and host family are only two of the segments of the program. A third portion is joining an extracurricular activity. There are hundreds of opportunities for activities you can join. The first or second weekend you will be in Aix, there is a two-day activity fair that your family will probably take you to at least one day. There are sports ranging from tennis to karate to rock climbing, a wide variety of dance classes, yoga, zumba, pottery, choir, you name it you can find it. This is a great chance to try something new and will be a great opportunity to meet new people and possibly make some friends. Some clubs can be pretty pricy so be prepared to make some choices regarding a club and costs, but the school should reimburse you. Your host family may know of a community center nearby that has inexpensive exercise. (Mae) I did a flamenco class near at maison d'Espagne.

7. VOLUNTEERING

Your school might connect you to an opportunity to volunteer. Generally students contribute 2 hours a week to their organization. Opportunities range from volunteering at a nursing home, elementary schools, middle schools, the Red Cross, and several others. It is a great way to get involved in the community and meet a different group and generation of the French population.

8. WORK STUDY

(Mae) I was able to find a job by posting an ad on the french version of Craigslist called le bon coin. Ask your host family for help on making your profile. Offer lessons on English or anything else you may be skilled in!

9. LANGUAGE PARTNER

If your university matches you with a french student as a partner for speaking that is great! If not you may be able to go to l'école des Arts et Métiers and ask if there is any interest. The idea of the language partner is to be someone to help you get to know some French students, take you to different French experiences, let you know some good restaurants, or even help you out with your homework. Usually you will get together with them a few hours a week to talk and improve your language skills, maybe grab some meals, or go to some clubs together. Sometimes your schedule doesn't match up well with your partners, or you two just don't have a great connection. In that case it's totally fine to ask for another partner. Sometimes people ask for another one just because they

want to have several partners as an opportunity to make more friends.

It might take a while until you can find a partner but be patient and continue to make an effort. Several of them had conflicting schedules or didn't seem interested and committed at the level you might wish them to be. I (Katherine) finally ended up with two amazing language partners. Texting them every once in a while asking about their day is a good way to let them know your commitment to your relationship. We spent lots of time walking around to discover Aix and hanging out with their friends. Partners are crucial for providing social connections with other French students to learn about modern French culture.

I (Michaela) had a really good experience with my language partner. I only had one, and we both had pretty busy schedules, but we got pretty close. She even invited me twice to spend the weekend with her at her grandparents' house in Marseille. And now that I'm home, I still keep contact with her, skyping and sending her postcards.

10. AIX-EN-PROVENCE

The city of Aix is pretty small. There are some suburbs and neighborhoods outside of the center of town, but without a car or the bus you really won't go there. The downtown is split into two main sections architecturally, which you will learn during the tour the first week. The oldest part of town has very winding, narrow streets, which are pretty easy to get lost in, and then the newer part of the city has more of a grid layout of streets. It can be hard to find your way around at first because everything looks the same, but you will start recognizing landmarks and eventually be able to help other people with directions!

There are always tons of people in the streets of Aix shopping, students hanging out, and pigeons getting in the way. The buildings are cute and it is fun to just be able to walk around and enjoy the differences of city living between France and the United States. Aix is pretty expensive as already mentioned, and it is a populated city with some discrepancies in income, so as is smart in any city, it is important to be cautious of your surroundings and your valuables.

As far as transportation is concerned, walking is by far the best way to go. Most places can be reached in 20 minutes, which may seem like a long time when you are used to driving everywhere, but it is a great way to relax and get to know the city. There are buses, which run with some frequency, and if you live far enough out of the city the AUCP will refund you your monthly bus pass. The buses stop running at 8pm so taxis are the best way to go home at night. Depending on where you live a taxi ride costs between 8 and 15 euros, and like the bus pass, some families can get refunded for the cost of one taxi per week. Starting in October there is a service called “le navette de nuit”, which is a night bus that will pick you up and take you home. You pay a one-time fee of 15 euros to get your card, and after that it’s free. The Navette is great because for most people it is a much more cost effective option for getting home at night, however it doesn’t run on Saturday nights.

There are so many great places to see and experience in Aix. There are several museums, lots of different theater and dance performances, movies, and even bowling. Of course there is always lots of great restaurants and cafés to try, shops to wander through, people to watch, and markets to shop at. Almost every day of the week there is a market in some part of the city, you just need to ask your family or language partner (or you can

consult one of the large tourism machines that are placed around the Rotonde). Markets are great ways to get fresh food for much less than in grocery stores.

11. TRAVELLING

The great thing about being in Europe is that everywhere is fairly close together. It is relatively easy and quick to get around either by bus, train, or airplane. Although the program at the AUCP is a little too rigorous for travelling every weekend, after mid-terms there is a week off break which is a great opportunity to get a lot of travelling in. Start planning early and carefully where you want to go to maximize your time and get the cheapest transportation and lodging. Pick a few cities to explore during the week and you will have a greater appreciation of your life in France as well as a desire to return to Europe. You should also plan a few weekends to explore France a little and visit cities like Paris, Nice, Lyon, and wherever else you are interested in. There are a few excursions that the AUCP will put on which are great opportunities to visit some smaller cities with a guide who knows some interesting facts about the people and places in Provence. If you are lucky your host family may also take you on a few weekend trips. Just remember to pack light everywhere you go. Bring the essentials but don't worry about bringing more than that- you won't want to feel burdened by your stuff while you're trying to enjoy your trips. There are buses that go almost everywhere around Aix, and guides can be found at the Office de Tourisme. The buses leave from the Gare Routière and go to Ste. Victoire, Marseille, the airport, the train station, etc. From the TGV train station you can go pretty much everywhere in France and get connecting trains to other countries. Trains are usually the cheapest and easiest way to travel in France, but

airplanes are great for getting to other countries quickly. The website for the TGV is <http://snCF.com/> and has all the information for stations, tickets, etc. If you're going for a whole year, or if you know you're going to be taking the train a lot, look into getting the special youth card called the 12-125 carte which gets you reduced tickets. RyanAir is usually the cheapest airline but they charge you for any sort of checked bag and they put a weight limit on your carry on so just be prepared to have a good small suitcase and pack carefully.

If you are planning to travel outside of France, and to travel a lot, you can do what I did (Michaela) and buy a Eurail pass. It allows you to take as many trains as you want during the time frame you choose, all for a flat rate. But be careful because sometimes it's cheaper to buy the individual train tickets. It can also be tricky sometimes because you need to reserve a seat for TGV trains, which costs extra. So **ALWAYS** compare costs before you buy. Since it requires your passport, you can only get these at the train station in **Marseille**. For 5 days (within 2 months) for access to 4 countries of your choice, is €270, which is worth about \$306 while I'm writing this. It can be an interesting process, but if you plan to do some a lot of traveling it can also really save you money. As a note, while going to a lot of places is fun, it's also very tiring. I went to Saint-Étienne, Grindelwald in Switzerland, Chamonix, Geneva and Dublin, spending a day to a day and a half at each place, and now I think that it might have been better to stay longer at few places. But it was an adventure. You can find more information about Eurail passes here: <http://www.eurail.com/eurail-passes>.

For lodging, I (Michaela) used <https://www.airbnb.com/>, which allows you to rent out rooms in peoples' houses or full apartments. You can choose your own price range,

but often you can get good lodging for usually much cheaper than hotels and about the same price as hostels. Plus, you get to meet those who live in the city and get information from them about the best places to go and to eat. All of the hosts (and also Airbnb users) go through background checks, and many hosts already have multiple reviews which are nice to help choose good quality and safe rooms.

Many students also stay in hostels. Hostels are cheap, a great way to meet many other young travelers like yourself, and sometimes even include a free breakfast which is a great way to save money. A great place to find hostels is at <http://www.hostelworld.com/>

12. OFII

When you get your visa, you will also receive the OFII paper. Don't forget to bring it with you. The American Center will take care of that paper and help you to schedule an appointment. Most students, unless you're staying for a year, do not need to worry about getting this document taken care of. If you do need to though (if you're a full-year student or want to do the work study option) you will receive the letter at your host family address, you are supposed to follow the instruction in that letter to pay \$55 service fee and prepare the paper work. Then you will be on your own getting to Marseille to have your health checked; however, this appointment actually doesn't usually happen until late in the semester. It will be easier to understand what you are supposed to do when you actually have the paper on your hand.

13. MY TIPS

- *Go with the flow- but to a point:* Do your best to fit in with the people around you, especially the French so that you can learn their behaviors and act appropriately. It's one thing to be yourself, but it's another thing to be an obnoxious and rude American. If your friends are going out somewhere, go out with them- experience everything you can. The French don't often make plans, and when they do they are frequently fluid and likely to change, so go with the flow and don't force anything. You will have the best experiences when you are flexible and willing to live like the French do. However, that said, some university students can be fairly busy, especially near the end of the semester when they're prepping for exams, so sometimes it's necessary to ask ahead of time. Just play it by ear.
- *Spend your time with people around you.* At first, I thought I was going crazy without Internet at home (Katherine). But it turned out very well because it gives me an excuse to get out of my room and spend as much time with real people as possible. My host mom became my best friend since we talk to each other a lot. I spent 10- 20 hours with my language partners and their friends. Therefore, I have made a giant progress in my French abilities as well as my self-confidence.
- *Some little things make big:* Despite the expensive life in Aix, don't forget to get your want-to-be-loved-by some small presents such as a bag of figs at the market for 2 euros for your host mom, or a small English book for your language partner on the discount section. Oftentimes I (Michaela) would bring my host mom little presents when I found something that I knew she liked to let her know that I paid attention to what she said, and that I appreciated her. Those are the little things

you can easily get to please your host family rather than making a mess in their kitchen although your cooking is wonderful. Remember French culture can be much different from your culture.

- *Open your heart and mind in any situations:* In general, anything that happens in other country might go beyond your expectation and comprehension. No matter if you are being chased by a stranger who wants to get your phone number, watching a woman screaming to the bus driver, or being asked to act with French morals and cultural expectations, remember that you are in Aix-en Provence, France, not Linfield in McMinnville. Observe what you see first without any bias, and from what you know of French culture try to imagine what really happened. Don't condemn before you don't understand. Then when cultural "bumps" happen, it's easier to identify them as just a misunderstanding.
- *Focus on the today, and on France:* While you're probably going to be missing your friends and family, and they're going to want to know everything about your incredible adventure, don't focus on documenting everything for them or on going home. Focus on being in France, making relationships, and having adventures—you'll have plenty to tell them when you get back. The first time I went to France (Michaela), two years before I went to Aix, I spent most of my time taking pictures and writing blog posts, enumerating every detail of that day as if it was my job to live there for my loved ones and tell them all about it. It was exhausting, and that was in summer. So enjoy France while you can—the semester is short. Profitez!
- *Be adventurous!* : Nothing ventured, nothing gained. You've already ventured to go

to France, now venture to experience it.

- *Don't lose heart:* No one every said living and studying in a foreign country would be easy. But it's totally worth it. Your mind will open up, and *you'll learn things you never knew you never knew*, especially about yourself and your own culture. You never know what you can do until you're pushed to limit.
- *Have fun!* : This is one of the most important things to remember. Being abroad is supposed to be enjoyable and amazing. Work hard and step outside your comfort zone, but most of all enjoy yourself!

For more information, check out the student blogs on the IPO's website to read about student's experiences.

Lastly, have a great during your time abroad! Live, laugh, and love- your friends, your family, and the French. Times will be hard, but times will be great and you only get this opportunity once so do all you can to make it the best you can.

4 Ways People Steal Your Passport

by [Katherine LaGrave](#)

Beware of these four occurrences when traveling with a passport.

Sometimes, a bump, nudge, or distraction is all it takes.

The stolen passport market is huge: There are more than 40 million passports listed as missing on a database created by Interpol in 2002, and according to the U.S. Department of State, more than 300,000 American passports are lost or stolen in the U.S. each year. And given that these are the most common ways thieves have been known to pilfer a passport, it pays to be aware.

The set-down

It's easy enough to make a mistake with your documents when traveling—after all, how natural is it to put your passport on the table at a restaurant as you pull out a chair, or rest it on top of your suitcase as you check the departure board at an airport? I've done it, and I'm guessing you have, too. But take your eye off the document for a moment, and you open yourself up to the possibility of someone bumping your table (or bag) as a distraction—and walking away with your passport. Another one of the most common places for thieves to grab a passport is in a place where we actually need to produce it: checking in at a hotel overseas. Be wary of putting it to the left or right of you as you shuffle for your confirmation number or booking details, as someone could come along and create a distraction—think returning a key, or asking a question—and slip away with your document. Instead, place your passport on the counter in front of you, and immediately return it to its secure location after it is passed back to you.

The spill

It sounds slightly out of a Charlie Chaplin movie: seemingly innocent passers-by "spilling" anything from ice cream to juice on people they

pass. Yet there are worldwide reports of such instances, wherein a distraction is created, and in the process of aiding and cleaning the hapless victim, the "spillers"—or their associates—lift a passport. If you have the misfortune of being spilled on, refuse attendance and instead, avoid contact with the offender by quickly walking away.

[5 Ways to Keep Your Passport Safe When Traveling](#)

The pocket

It's obvious, sure, but one of the easiest ways for people to snatch your passport is if it's carried in your pockets: All it takes is a crowded train and a nudge—or a coat that's been draped over the back of a chair, and a sleight of hand. If you need to carry your passport with you, look for a flat money belt, which can be worn around your waist and neck and concealed under your clothing. If you're in the market for something a bit more comfortable, try a travel wallet or passport cover. Both conceal your passport (and nationality), and the travel wallet also has room for other valuables, including credit cards and emergency cash. Avoid carrying your passport and spending money together if you can, as taking out cash will alert potential thieves.

The authorities

In countries around the world, you'll most often be asked to produce your original passport at hotels and airports, or when crossing borders. Travelers have also reported instances in which policemen, plain-clothed or uniformed, approach them and ask to see their passports. Sometimes, the officials are actually as they say they are—numerous countries have plain-clothed officers asking for passports in order to catch illegal immigrants—but it's better to be safe than sorry. Signs that it probably isn't a scam: everyone else in your surrounding area is also being checked, security badges and patches are visible on the officer's uniform, and officials are not asking for anything but photo ID. If you feel you are being singled out and are still uncomfortable, agree to show your passport in the nearest police station or hotel lobby, where you can confirm with a clerk who speaks the native language.

TRAVEL TIPS

How to Make Sure You Travel with Medication Legally

Traveling with medication — even prescription drugs — isn't as simple as packing it. Here's how to stay on the right side of the law, anywhere you go.



By Tanya Mohn

Jan. 19, 2018

Travelers often pack medications when they go abroad, but some popular prescription and over-the-counter ones Americans use for things like pain relief, better sleep, allergies and even the common cold are illegal in some countries.

The United Arab Emirates and Japan, for example, are among the most restrictive nations, but many ban or restrict importing narcotics, sedatives, amphetamines and other common over-the-counter medications.

Most travelers won't run into problems for carrying small amounts for personal use, said Katherine L. Harmon, who oversees health analysis for [iJET International](#), a travel risk management company. But noncompliance can result in confiscation, (which could, in turn, have severe medical consequences), deportation, jail time, and even the death penalty. "Does it happen a lot? No. Could it? Yes," Ms. Harmon said. "Consumers need to understand this and how it might adversely impact them *before* they book that awesome trip to an exotic location."

She shared a few tips to keep you on the right side of the law, whatever you take and wherever you roam.

Plan Ahead

Laws vary by country and there is no central, up-to date repository, so Ms. Harmon suggests consulting your physician, travel medical insurance company, or local pharmacist four to six weeks before traveling. "When you inquire about your shots, ask about medications. Odds are they may not know off the top of their head, but they have the resources to find out."

She also suggests checking with the embassy of your destination country. The [State Department](#) website lists foreign [embassies](#) in the United States, and their contact information. It also lists [insurance providers](#) that offer overseas health coverage. Comparison websites [Insure My Trip](#) and [SquareMouth](#) can help assess those insurance plans, if they're necessary.

Label and Pack Your Medication Properly

Carry all of your medication — even vitamins and supplements — in their original, clearly marked containers or packaging in a clear plastic bag in carry on luggage. Make sure the name on the prescription, the medicine container and your passport (or one for the recipient of the medication) all match. If you lost the product information insert, ask the pharmacist to print a new one for you.

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[Here's more on our standards and practices.](#)

Also, check [the Transportation Security Administration's website](#) for up-to-date rules and regulations on packing and carrying your medication when you depart. The standard rules

for liquid carry-ons don't apply to medications in liquid or gel form, but you need to inform the T.S.A. when you pass through security so they don't confiscate it.

Obtain and Carry Necessary Documentation

Keep copies of your original prescriptions, if you can. Better yet, obtain a letter on official letterhead from your physician that lists the medicines you need and why they were prescribed. Ideally, you would get this translated to the language of your destination country, so it's easy to read.

For some medication and specialized equipment used to administer them, some countries require documents to be submitted to government officials well in advance of your arrival. Ms. Harmon, for example, was questioned at the Singapore airport once for entering with an EpiPen, but she had prior authorization allowing its transport.

Know the Names and Amounts of Active Ingredients

The documentation you carry should also indicate the generic and chemical names of the active ingredients, which determines permissibility, not brand names.

For example, the active ingredient in Benadryl, diphenhydramine, is banned in Zambia in over-the-counter products. In Japan, it is allowed only if the amount in a tablet or injection is limited. However, a typical 25 milligram tablet of Tylenol PM in the United States exceeds the 10 milligram maximum amount in a tablet you can bring into Japan. Some countries restrict the overall total amount of an active ingredient an individual traveler can legally import, which may impact longer stays.

Reduce or Substitute Medication

In countries where a medication is allowed, but its amount is capped, reducing your dosage or switching to another available medication is the best way to stay compliant. Allow enough time beforehand to ensure the smaller dose or new medicine works effectively, and consider making the switch before your trip to give yourself time to adjust.

Some medications can be used for several diagnoses. Hormones used for birth control may also be used to treat excessive menstrual bleeding, Ms. Harmon said. "Doctors need to get creative sometimes. Substitutions can allow authorities to accept the drug as a medical need rather than going against the country's religious or moral code."

Reassess Your Travel Plans

Parents with a child doing well on Adderall for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder who prefer not to make adjustments on the fly, or a student with bipolar disorder may want to

consider vacation or study abroad locations where the medications they rely on for mental health are not banned or restricted.

“Viewpoints on treatment and diagnoses can vary widely,” Ms. Harmon said. “Western Europe and North America understand that brain chemistry is often at the root of these problems. But some countries, like Russia, do not consider mental health challenges as medical problems and often treat them criminally.”



Surviving a Protest

Product of the Research & Information Support Center (RISC)

The following report is based on open source reporting.

August 7, 2014

Introduction

Travelers are regularly cautioned about protest activity when visiting a foreign country. The U.S. Department of State, for example, consistently encourages citizens to “avoid all demonstrations, since even peaceful gatherings can quickly turn violent” – a phrase common to many Consular messages. However, a deeper understanding of what motivates protest activity, and who or what the intended targets are, can be useful tools for educating travelers.

The Nature of a Protest

According to a 2013 [report](#) by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a German non-profit organization that promotes democracy and political education, the global number of protests has increased every year from 2006 (59) through the first half of 2013 (112). [Note: these were protests covered in online news media. The countries analyzed represent 92 percent of the world’s population] While protests take place throughout the world, where

Protests by Region – 2006-2013

	Total	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013*
High-Income (Region)	304	17	25	25	35	44	57	60	41
Latin America/Caribbean	141	14	12	15	12	21	22	25	20
East Asia/ Pacific	83	3	9	10	9	12	20	11	9
Sub-Saharan Africa	78	7	6	8	8	5	18	15	11
Middle East/North Africa	77	3	11	6	7	11	18	15	6
Global	70	7	5	8	8	8	10	14	10
Europe/Central Asia	47	3	4	4	4	7	6	11	8
South Asia	43	5	5	4	4	8	2	9	6
World Total	843	59	77	80	87	116	153	160	111

Data provided by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
* As of July 2013

they occur is not always a good indicator of how they will proceed. A country with a peaceful tradition of rallying can experience violence, while another with a more acrimonious style can experience no incidents at all. For example, in Cambodia, generally known for a peaceful tradition, demonstrators and police have recently come to blows over anti-government sentiment as well as a demand for a higher minimum wage among garment workers. In South Africa, known as the “[protest capital of the world](#)” and where violence is not a rarity, most demonstrations end peacefully and without incident. Demonstrations can also take place in countries not known for having any protest tradition at all, such as in Iran during the 2009 Green Movement, or in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Libya during the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

By their nature, protests also attract attention. They can be exciting events, and for a foreigner, provide an up-close look at a country’s political landscape. But the advice to avoid them is not dispensed arbitrarily. An overzealous demonstrator can incite a crowd; individuals with ulterior motives can infiltrate an otherwise peaceful rally; a heavy-handed police response can provoke an aggressive reaction from gatherers. When this happens, onlookers can pay the price. This past May, a bystander was killed by a stray bullet during an anti-government protest in Istanbul, Turkey. Authorities in southern China acknowledged that police “may have accidentally injured...bystanders” during an April protest against a chemical plant in Guangdong province. During Egyptian riots in June 2013, an American college student was stabbed to death as he took photographs of the unfolding violence. What starts as simple curiosity can easily turn into a fight to stay out of harm’s way.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.

Indicators Can Help

There are indicators, however, that can be helpful to any traveler when assessing the probability for protests, and how they will play out. Anti-government protests, for instance, may not be as likely to target foreigners as they would police officers or nearby property (although the death of the American student referenced above shows this is not always true). Destroying property can be a way of not only displaying intense dissatisfaction with conditions in the country, but also attempting to undermine the government. This was the case in Thailand in 2010, when anti-government protesters targeted not only government buildings, but also commercial facilities. The same was true for 2010 anti-government/-austerity protests in Greece. In both cases, foreigners were not directly targeted, and in Thailand, they were actually greeted warmly if they happened to pass by the event.

A protest against another country, on the other hand, might not result in widespread violence, but particular people and properties could be vulnerable. This past May, [anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam](#) targeted what were perceived to be Chinese-affiliated companies and factories following a maritime dispute between the two countries. In July, [anti-Israeli protests in Germany and France](#) led to the attack of synagogues and Jewish businesses in those countries.

There are also a number of issues that seem to bring protesters to the street regardless of location. For example, citizens accustomed to government subsidies (fuel, transportation, etc.) can quickly mobilize if their entitlements are threatened in any way; violent clashes in the streets of Jakarta in 2013 following a reduction of fuel subsidies are a prime example. The suspicion of electoral fraud is another key catalyst, as was evident during protests in Russia following disputed 2011 legislative elections. Another major indicator pertains to infringements-- real or perceived-- on basic democratic rights. Residents of Hong Kong, for example, regularly take to the streets to demand greater democratic freedom.

The Likeliest Scenario

More than likely, the biggest impact to travelers during a demonstration will be transportation difficulties, including blocked roads, crowded public transportation, and congested traffic. A lot of protests advertise in advance where and when they will take place, which makes a traveler's job of planning to get around them easier. Even for the ones that do not, it should become pretty clear what area(s) to avoid as numbers amass. Social media can be a great tool for collecting information; organizers and participants are likely to tweet about the event or post pictures to Facebook, Instagram, or a popular local social network (such as VKontakte in Russia). During past protests, OSAC constituents have allowed employees to work remotely or even take the day off when demonstration activity encroaches on work sites or precludes safe commuting. Over periods of sustained protest activity, employers have deferred travel, and in some cases, removed personnel from the city or country entirely. Each organization is responsible for its own plan, but understanding the fundamentals is a good start to making one.

Additional Information

For recent OSAC analysis on other regional protests, please see the below reports:

[Middle East Conflict Fuels Europe Protests](#)
[Haiti Opposition Protests](#)
[Northern Ireland Orangemen Parade Volatility](#)
[Royal Thai Army Invokes Martial Law](#)
[May Day](#)

For Further Information

Please direct any questions regarding this report to OSAC's [Cross Regional Analyst](#).

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Don't Go Soft on Study Abroad: a Call for Academic Rigor

*The following is a guest post by **William G. Moseley**, chair and professor of geography at Macalester College. He has worked and conducted research in Africa for 25 years.*

Study abroad can be a powerful experience for many students. A student's trip overseas can be one of those transformative educational periods after which a young person will never look at the world the same way again. Yet many students, faculty members, and college administrators don't take this education as seriously as they should.



Study-abroad students bird watching in Botswana's Okavango Delta.

Let's be frank, some students view study abroad as a vacation or at least a time when normal academic standards ought to be relaxed. But as an instructor and director on two different study-abroad programs for undergraduates in South Africa and Botswana, I have sought to expose participants to new cultures and provide academically rigorous courses.

Many students initially chafed at the large amount of reading and writing, in addition to original fieldwork, that I assigned during these programs. Not only did some start

the program with an educational holiday in mind, but they saw students in other study-abroad programs not working as hard. Knowing my interest in having them have cross-cultural experiences, my students would couch their concerns about the workload in terms of not having sufficient time to travel and interact with the local population. How could I deny them exploring southern Africa?, they asked.

Occasionally, a class of students confronts me directly about the workload. This happened a little over halfway through the term in my most recent study-abroad teaching experience in Botswana. Students asked me point-blank how my courses compared in difficulty to those I teach at my home institution. I indicated that the classes I offered in Africa were actually a little less challenging as I was trying to account for the added stress of unfamiliar surroundings and less reliable infrastructure. Their collective gasp was audible; they shook their heads in disbelief. However, in explaining why the academic requirements of the program could not be relaxed, we had one of the more interesting discussions of the term.

I shared my view that a successful study-abroad experience often means at least two things: 1) getting outside of your own cultural head space (that is, coming to understand that other cultures may have very different, yet equally valid, approaches to life); and 2) knowing enough background information about a place, its history, and connections to other parts of the world to really understand what you are seeing. Of course the two criteria are often linked; you can't set aside your own cultural prejudices until you understand why other people do things the way they do. Furthermore, learning enough to get a handle on what you are seeing requires hard work. That is, it means critically reading the academic publications about a place, discussing those insights with your peers, and synthesizing your understanding by writing.

Over time, my students began to value the rigor with which we explored this new area of the world, and the nuanced insights and deeper personal growth that it eventually yielded. For example, these students lived in a rural home for a time in the second half of the semester. This experience produced some beautiful reflections on what it meant to be with a local family. Gone were the shallow complaints about inefficient bureaucracy, the slow pace of life, or bad food from earlier in the term. Instead, the students showed a better ability to contextualize poverty, a greater appreciation for taking the time to get to know someone, or understanding Botswana on its own terms and in relation to the region, rather than just comparing it with American norms and practices.

Could we have done better? Yes, certainly. But I am also aware of the fact that we could have done a lot worse. It is expensive to have someone like me, a scholar of western and southern Africa, to relocate for a term (with his family no less) to teach a

course or two. It is far cheaper to subcontract study abroad to third-party providers. While many such organizations are excellent, some may be tempted to hire less-than-qualified teachers who were never (or are no longer) active scholars, and succumb to student pressure for less academic rigor because their business model demands it.

The reality is that the study-abroad experiences can be orchestrated quite poorly, potentially leaving students with a highly superficial, if not deeply flawed, understanding of another area of the world, not to mention a false sense of regional expertise.

So my hard advice is this: If you are a student looking for a study-abroad “vacation,” then either think about this opportunity anew and look for a rigorous program, or don’t go at all. If you are a faculty member looking to take a group of students overseas, get the necessary training and make sure you have the place-relevant research background to be a competent study-abroad instructor.

Finally, if you are an administrator that oversees study-abroad programs, then please treat this semester the same as you would the rest of an undergraduate’s career. If you are unwilling to compromise quality and provide education on the cheap at home, then a semester abroad should be no different.

[Photo courtesy of William G. Moseley]