

HARVARD COLLEGE

Study and
Travel Abroad
Handbook



photo by Arin Hotz '05

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2005, The Staff of the Harvard College Office of International Programs

I. PRE-DEPARTURE PLANNING CHECKLIST

- ✓ Get your travel documents in order and purchase tickets
- ✓ Plan your budget and strategies for handling money; learn about the local currency
- ✓ Obtain health insurance coverage
- ✓ Make a plan for communicating with family when you arrive and during your stay
- ✓ Plan for your health in advance, inform yourself about health and safety issues for your intended destination and , discuss your health with your physician before you go
- ✓ Arrange for Exams in Absentia if necessary
- ✓ Contact Student Disability Resources (SDR) if overseas accommodations will be required.
- ✓ Learn about your destination
- ✓ Learn about culture shock
- ✓ If you are leaving for a semester or a year, find out in advance what plans you will need to make to return to Harvard
- ✓ Make your life easier while you are abroad: please take this handbook with you

II. LEAVING HARVARD FOR A SEMESTER OR YEAR

Change of Address

If you are leaving for a semester or a year away, you should file a change of address form at Holyoke Center 550, and students with telephones and e-mail accounts should settle those accounts before leaving.

Financial Aid

If you receive a scholarship or financial aid, you should consult the Financial Aid Office before leaving for a semester or year away. All students who plan to study abroad and who receive financial aid will be required to attend a financial aid meeting before leaving campus. Student Loan deferment forms will be completed at this meeting.

Term Bills

If you are studying abroad, you will be billed for the Harvard Student Services fee for your term abroad; however, your term bill may also show tuition, room and board charges for several months until it is appropriately adjusted. In order to be billed correctly, it is essential that you notify your Allston Burr Senior Tutor of your house when you will be studying out of residence and when you will return. It is your house tutor who, in collaboration with the Office of International Programs notifies the registrar, who in turn, notifies the billing office of your status.

If you have questions about your term bill, contact the Student Billing Office in Holyoke Ctr. Room 556 at 617-495-2739. Susan Schnare, Manager of Billing Office, may be reached by phone at 617-495-4670 and e-mail at susan_schnare@harvard.edu

If you receive a threatening-sounding letter from the Collections Department, don't ignore it. Ellen McCullough handles Student Billing Collections and may be reached at (617-496-0952) and by e-mail at student_billing@harvard.edu.

III. PREPARING FOR TRAVEL

Passport

Information and forms for U.S. citizens acquiring a passport are available at the local United States post office and at http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html. You will need two passport size photos, a copy of your birth certificate and a driver's license, or your expired passport. A new passport costs \$60.00; a renewal costs \$40.00. **Allow two to six weeks to obtain a passport.** If you need a passport quickly, you may pay a rush fee.

If you already have a passport, make sure it will be valid through the end of your time abroad, leaving time for travel. Some countries require that your passport be valid for several months after your planned stay, so check the expiration dates before applying for a visa. If you lose your passport abroad, notify the nearest consulate or embassy immediately. Passport and visa photos may be obtained at CVS, next to Fleet Bank in the 1400 block of Mass. Ave., in a sheet of 16 photos for \$7.99. The extra photos can be useful in country for ID cards there.

Visa

A visa is a stamp or document that is pasted into your passport that grants foreigners permission from a foreign government to enter their country on or after a certain date for a defined length of time and purpose, i.e. work, tourism, study. Student visas can be obtained from the consulate office or embassy for a country, and require the submission of your passport, so plan in advance, as you will be without your passport while the visa application is processed. Embassy and consulate information and locations are available on the list of foreign embassies in the United States (<http://www.embassy.org>) Embassy sites provide information about entry requirements and whether or not a visa is needed. Your program will advise you as well. You must have your passport first in order to obtain a visa and **in some countries, such as Spain, obtaining a visa can take more than two months, so it is prudent to begin the application process early.**

Visa services will allow you to obtain a visa by mail when it is not convenient to go to the consulate yourself. You mail your visa application with your passport, and the visa can be obtain in 7-10 working days. Zierer Visa Service is one company that offers passport and visa services: www.zvs.com

Other Entry Requirements

To enter a country, with or without a visa, you may be required to show any of the following:

- a bank statement that shows proof of sufficient funds for the duration of your stay
- a letter of acceptance from your overseas university
- a letter of support from your home university
- proof of medical insurance and required vaccinations
- a letter of good conduct from local police department (required for Brazil)
- an HIV/AIDS test (required for Chile and Argentina)

Check the entry requirements at the website of the embassy for your destination.

Harvard International Students

International Students *must* see a foreign student advisor in the International Office, located in Holyoke Center, regarding travel plans and how they will affect your immigration documents so that you will be able to reenter the U.S. to return to Harvard. Contact the International Office to make an appointment: 617-495-2789.

Tickets

One source of discount travel tickets for students is STA Travel, which offers the option of a low-priced, \$25.00 flight change charge. See the section on Health insurance for the locations of STA stores. Studentuniverse.com, Orbitz, Expedia and Travelocity are good sources for reasonably priced tickets, and some programs arrange group flights.

Voting from Abroad

Vote! Contact your local board of elections to find out how to vote with an absentee ballot while abroad.

Computers Abroad

Laptop computers can be useful, but whether or not you should take one depends upon where you are going. Check with the returned students, program, or university for advice specific to your location. If you decide to bring a laptop, you should consider the following:

- Know how to hook up your laptop to print documents and access the Internet.
- All new laptops have internal electric currency conversion, but you may need an adaptor and certainly will need a surge protector.
- Take the manual, warranty, and service information for your laptop with you and know how to get service abroad.
- Keep your laptop in sight at all times in an airport. Do not put your laptop on the conveyor belt at security until you will be the next person through security.

Packing Tips

Label your luggage with your name and the address of your destination, and put the same information inside your luggage in case your tags are lost. Luggage may no longer be locked during airline travel to allow searches by airport security, but locks will be useful when you travel by rail and stay in hostels. **Never leave your luggage unattended.**

Put all items that you cannot live without in your carry-on bag, including prescriptions, extra glasses, and whatever else is essential to your well-being. You may no longer carry pocket-knives, matches, scissors, or other sharp objects in your carry-on luggage, and some countries now prohibit carrying these items in checked luggage.

Take with you, or plan to buy a small flashlight to carry at night. A small photo album with pictures of family, pets and friends will serve two purposes abroad: your hosts will be

interested, and you will enjoy having the pictures around. Take some small gifts for hosts, homestay families, and friends, such as calendars, pens and CDs.

Pack light. A few links to packing lists are given below.

<http://www.afn.org/~afn11300/packing.html>

<http://www.ricksteves.com/news/0206/womenpack.htm>

<http://www.ricksteves.com/plan/tips/packlist.htm>

http://www.davidco.com/tips_tools.php?id=3

Choosing Appropriate Clothing

When you travel abroad, you can often be easily identified as a foreigner by the clothing you wear. Baseball caps and name brand T-shirts mark you as American (even if you aren't!) The expectations for appropriate clothing for men and women naturally vary by region, and taking the time to pay attention to the expectations and plan for them is wise and can have a positive affect on your time in the country.

In some countries, your hosts will like it very much when you wear local attire, such as in parts of India, where women wear a sari or a salwar kameeze. Shorts on men and women are frowned upon a number of destinations. Bare upper arms, shoulders and legs on women can be viewed as provocative in some countries. Take the time to learn and do what is appropriate and respectful in your host country.

IV. MONEY MATTERS

Planning for your Expenses

Formulate a budget for the duration of your program and plan how you will manage your resources in advance. Consult with your sponsoring office at Harvard, your hosts abroad, and especially with students who have gone before you about your destination. Estimate the cost of housing, food, books, international and local travel, and photocopying expenses for research students. Be sure that you understand what your financial aid, grants, scholarships or loans will cover and what additional funds you will need to provide, if any.

Forms of Currency

Take several forms of money with you because you may not be able to use certain types of payment in some places. Credit cards and ATM cards usually offer the best exchange rate, but you may not be able to use them where you go, so take some cash in small denominations that may be converted to local currency, or convert a small amount of cash at a bank before you go. With an (ATM) card you may withdraw money from your home account in the local currency. Before you leave, inquire with your bank about the amount of funds that may be drawn per day and the charge for overseas withdrawals, which may be as low as \$1.00 at host ATMs abroad. Find out if there are ATM machines in your host city that are on NYCE, CIRRUS or PLUS. One advantage of using your ATM card is that if you need additional funds while overseas, they may be deposited into your home account and you will be able to withdraw them.

American Express will cash its own traveler's checks at no charge; hotels and railroad stations may charge you a percent of the amount; banks may offer you a good rate, but charge a commission. A money belt that can be worn under your clothes is useful in some countries where it is best to keep on you at all times your passport, visa, insurance and contact phone information, travelers checks, and credit cards.

It may or may not be possible to open a local bank account overseas, depending on the policies of your host country and the duration of your stay.

Currency Conversion Web-Sites

Calculate, compare and convert currencies at these sites:

<http://www.expedia.com/pub/agent.dll?qscr=curc>

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

View currency exchange rates at this site:

<http://moneycentral.msn.com/investor/market/rates.asp>

Worldwide ATM locators:

<http://www.mastercard.com/cardholderservices/atm/>

http://visaatm.infonow.net/bin/findNow?CLIENT_ID=VISA

V. HEALTH INSURANCE

Required Medical Insurance

Comprehensive medical insurance is **required** for study abroad and recommended for students who are doing internships, research or volunteer work abroad. Find out if your existing policy covers you outside the United States by calling your insurance provider. Ask your study abroad program provider about insurance options as some programs and countries provide insurance for students. Several insurance coverage options are described below. *The Harvard College Office of International Programs does not recommend a specific health insurance provider; it is up to you and your family to choose an option that will best meet your health needs.*

Consider the following when making your health insurance decision, and choose insurance which best fits your needs.

- Length of coverage (choose coverage for the **entire length of time abroad**, including orientation and leisure travel, and **plan for coverage for when you return**)
- Basic medical expense coverage (for broken limbs, etc.)
- Emergency evacuation and repatriation coverage

Submit Claim Forms Promptly

If you receive medical services abroad and need to submit a claim form for reimbursement when you return, be sure to do this promptly, as some plans limit the time period for making a claim. Keep the contact information for your insurance provider and your policy number on your person while you are abroad, and leave a copy with your family or a friend at home.

ISIC

The International student Identity Card (ISIC) provides emergency evacuation coverage, repatriation sickness and accident-related insurance. This card can be used to supplement major medical health insurance. www.myISIC.com

Cost: \$22

Return benefits:

- \$250,000 Emergency Evacuation
- \$25,000 Repatriation of Remains
- \$5,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- \$1,000 (Excluding Air) Accidental Death & Dismemberment

Medical expense coverage:

- No U.S. coverage
 - \$10,000 Accident Medical Expense
 - \$250 Passport replacement
 - \$100 Per day Sickness & Hospital
 - \$100 Domestic Travel Delay
-
- Emergency Help Line that can be used from anywhere in the world
 - Services include 4 months of coverage

Seabury & Smith

Two reasonably priced insurance plans designed for student travelers include medical expense coverage, emergency medical evacuation, accidental death & dismemberment coverage. For more information call 1-800-282-4495 or visit <http://www.gatewayplans.com/>.

International SOS provides individual short-term supplemental and comprehensive plans for student travelers at a reasonable price, including an emergency evacuation benefit up to \$1,000,000. For more information visit their website at www.internationalsos.com and read about the SOS Scholastic Traveler Insurance, or call 1-800-767-1403.

National Health Coverage Abroad

Some countries provide national health care coverage for visiting students.

- **United Kingdom:** Visiting student are covered for emergency care; students studying longer than six months are covered for routine medical check-ups or procedures
- **Australia:** All visiting student must enroll in Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC), which is organized through the universities. The form for this is completed once a student arrives in Australia. OSHC does not cover pre-existing conditions
- **Germany:** Student on semester or year programs will be covered by the German health service.
- **Spain:** Emergency use of the medics, health stations or hospitals of the Spanish national health services, called INSS are free for short-term stays with use of the E111 form

VI. COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Plan for several ways to reach family and friends, such as mail—either e-mail or snail mail, and phone—this could be a cell phone that you purchase while abroad, a tri-band cell phone purchased before leaving the US, that can be used abroad, a local line with international capacity or pre-paid phone cards, which are relatively inexpensive. Costs vary enormously, so check with program staff and returned students for advice on making a phone purchase. Discuss in advance with family members your plan to contact them, when you will be writing or calling, and how they can reach you. It may be easier and more economical for family and friends from home to call you at an agreed upon time. Be sure to contact them when you arrive to let them know that you have reached your destination, but consider limiting your contact with friends and family at home so that you can become less involved with you life back home and more involved with your new life abroad.

VII. HEALTH AND SAFETY ABROAD

Physical and Mental Health before Departure

You take your preexisting conditions with you when you travel abroad. Consult with your physician in advance if you have a medical condition that will require regular treatment while abroad. Many travelers opt to have a complete physical before leaving to live abroad for an extended period of time. It is wise to see a dentist well in advance of leaving in case you require additional dental work before you go. Women may want to schedule a gynecological appointment before departure. If you are under a doctor's care for a specific condition, be sure to discuss what you should do to maintain your health while you are away. Consider factors such as climate and air quality, food and living conditions, and access to medical facilities that might be necessary for your particular health concerns.

The Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel offers pre-departure planning and consultation for students. Anticipated stressors and challenges require careful consideration for those students who are already coping with heightened emotional or psychological concerns. We very strongly encourage you to have conversations where you can anticipate the impact of stressors that will emerge at a time when current supports are no longer accessible. Our goal is for you to feel confident that this is the right time for you to study abroad, and if so, to ensure that due consideration is given to anticipating new stressors and establishing the necessary supports. We hope you will consult with us honestly and openly in our shared interest in meeting these goals.

Students with asthma, diabetes, and allergies to penicillin or other drugs should carry some kind of identification explaining the condition in case they are unable to communicate about it during an emergency situation. Those needing to use syringes regularly should investigate the availability of sterile syringes in their host country and whether they need to take disposable syringes with them.

Prescriptions

If you will be using a prescription for the duration of your program, ask your physician to prescribe in advance, when clinically appropriate, a supply that will last the entire length of your stay. Minimize risks at international borders by taking copies of your prescription with you and keeping all medications in the bottles in which they are dispensed. In some cases, it may not be possible to purchase in advance the amount of medication necessary for your planned time away, so discuss with your physician how you will be able to obtain your prescriptions while you are away.

Immunizations

Immunizations are needed primarily for destinations in Africa, Asia or Latin America, or locations where you may be exposed to tropical diseases, but certain vaccinations may also be required for destinations in Europe. You should consult with your physician about required vaccinations. Should you decide that you need vaccines or medications, you should call your physician or your local travel health clinic early to arrange appointments and start to get immunizations several months in advance, since some require several shots over a period of time or several weeks to become effective. Be sure to obtain a certificate of

immunization and carry it with you since some countries require it at the border. The **Harvard University Health Services Travel Clinic** can give you all immunizations, including Yellow Fever, which is not available at many clinics. It is located on the 3rd floor of Holyoke Center (617-495-5182).

The U.S. Centers for Disease Controls (CDC) is source of information on international health and risks, recommended vaccinations, food and water precautions, world and regional health conditions, and disease outbreaks. The Centers provides traveler's health information online at www.cdc.gov/travel and maintains an International Travelers Hotline (404-332-4559). The CDC provided detailed information about vaccination requirements, countries for which they are required or recommended, current recommendations for how the vaccine is administered, and the diseases for which the vaccines are provided. The World Health Organization (WHO) also offers health conditions and information on country pages at <http://www.who.int/country/en/>

Traveling with AIDS

Individuals who test positive for the human immune deficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS, will find useful recommendations for traveling with HIV at the following web link: <http://www.aegis.com/topics/travel.html>. Some locations overseas may present greater risks to those who are HIV positive or are living with AIDS due to limited medical facilities or availability of sterile needles and screened blood.

This site also lists the countries that require incoming foreigners to have an HIV antibody test. It is wise to know your HIV status in advance. Testing takes about two weeks. It is possible to be anonymously tested through state organizations, which offers you the privacy to decide if you want to get a second test through a physician who can provide you the doctor's certificate which may be used for immigration.

Medical Care Abroad

The most experienced world travelers take precautions and use strategies such as altering their diet, getting additional rest, and adding stress-reducing exercise to maintain their health while living abroad. They become familiar in advance with the health care system of the country, including the quality and cost of medical care. Learn in advance the name and location of the hospital nearest to your residence abroad. Know what your insurance policy will and will not cover. Know how to refill your prescriptions while you are abroad if you run out or lose what you have brought. Identify a contact person in the United States for medical emergencies. Take a small medical kit with over the counter remedies that are appropriate to your needs. It is wise to learn about the risks of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS as you plan your travels. Use condoms and caution in sexual relations, consider abstinence, and avoid contact with needles and blood.

Food and Water

Learn about the quality of the water and what precautions to take. If you limit your diet now for any reason, research in advance where to buy or how to cook food that will suit your dietary needs.

Drug and Alcohol Use/ Different Patterns in Different Countries

An unsuspected development for some students can be that they abuse alcohol in a country where the patterns of consumption are different. In places where there are many pubs, perhaps located in campus dining facilities, or where alcoholic beverages are served with every meal, students may find that they need to monitor or adjust their consumption habits. The use of alcohol and drugs increases your risk of accident and injury.

We implore you to not buy, carry, sell or use an illegal drug while abroad. If you have any question about the differences in drug laws from one country to another, watch the videos “Doing Time, Doing Vipassana” and “Midnight Express” to learn what can happen to foreigners who find themselves in foreign jails as a result of being arrested for drug use or possession. You are not protected by the laws of the U.S. if you are arrested for any drug in any amount in another country, and your program, Harvard, your family, and your government may not be able to help you.

The Laws of The Host Country Apply To You

When you are overseas, you are not protected by the laws of your home country. This applies to everything from drug possession and alcohol laws to currency exchanges, dress codes, and drunk driving. It is not unusual to receive a prison sentence for crimes, or to be held in a prison for several years while you await a trial. Read pertinent sections in Guidebooks such as Lonely Planet, Let’s Go and Rough Guides, which are prepared with students in mind. You may also find information about the laws of countries provided by the U.S. State Department on line at the following webs sites.

Consular Information Sheets

http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

The U.S. State Department background Notes on Countries

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

Embassy or consulate information

www.embassy.org

VIII. WORLD EVENTS

Sources of Information

Assess potential health, safety, crime and political instability factors in countries and specific areas within a country where you intend to travel. If unanticipated events take place while you are abroad, keep informed, know the emergency plan for your program or university, and speak with others, such as the program director, family and friends, and advisers in our office about your concerns. The following resources will provide current information in the event of an emergency.

State Department Advisories: Travel Warnings, Public Announcements

http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

The U.S. State Department may be called in an emergency at 202-647-5225.

U.S. State Department

<http://travel.state.gov/acs.html>

Visit their website for assistance while abroad.

U.S. Embassy

<http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Review in advance what the U.S. Embassy and the Consulate in your country can do for you in the event of a crisis. You are strongly encouraged to periodically check the U.S. Embassy home page in your country while you are there.

Harvard College Travel Policy Governing Harvard Sponsored Undergraduate Activities Abroad

These guidelines apply to Travel Warnings issued before and during the application process, and during the period before you actually begin the program abroad.

Harvard College strongly supports international activity for its undergraduates, but we are also very much aware of the risks associated with international travel. In the spring of 2003, we made the decision that in respect to the sponsorship of undergraduate activities abroad we would be guided by the Travel Warnings issued by the U.S. Department of State. This policy was reviewed and reaffirmed with modifications in July 2004.

It is the policy of Harvard College that undergraduates may not receive credit for study abroad, funding for internships, research or volunteer activities, or sponsorship for extracurricular activities such as music or sport, in countries for which the State Department has issued a current Travel Warning.

The decision to withhold sponsorship can be made until the date of departure. For countries for which a warning is in place, the lifting of the warning must occur at least 30 days before the date of departure for sponsorship to be given.

The only exception to this policy allows sponsorship or credit to be awarded to students traveling to be with their parents or guardians who reside in a country for which a Warning is current, provided that the students' well-being will be monitored by their parents or guardians throughout their time in the country.

Should a travel warning be issued while students are in the country, then the staff of the Office of International Programs will discuss the situation with program or local university staff, monitor State Department documents, Overseas Security Advisory Council briefings and other sources of information, confer with colleagues in the United States, and with Harvard's General Counsel, if necessary, and coordinate a response with colleagues at Harvard. Harvard may respond by withdrawing its sponsorship and requiring that students leave the country. Students will be notified of the warning and of Harvard's response, and will be given appropriate guidance on steps to take, with a copy sent to their emergency contact.

All students traveling abroad under Harvard sponsorship are required to read and sign an "assumption of risk and general release" form prior to departure. They will receive a copy of this form, and a copy will be kept with their Harvard records.

Political Harassment toward both American and International Harvard Students

As an American, and even as an international student who is affiliated with Harvard, you may be a target for political harassment, or other crimes, whether or not you oppose U.S. foreign policy. The following suggestions may help you avoid problems:

- Participate in the program orientation that will be offered by your overseas university or program. They have a great deal of experience and country specific knowledge that will be valuable to you. Be aware of your vulnerability
- Keep a low profile in your manner, speech and dress
- Do not wear clothes, baseball caps or accessories with U.S. logos
- Speak the language of the country when possible
- Travel locally with at least one other person, and leave your itinerary with a friend or program director
- Be discreet about your money, wear a money belt and do not pull it out in public
- Keep your money stored in two places
- Do not drive someone else's car abroad, and never across a national border
- Avoid American hangouts, embassies, restaurants, hotels, political demonstrations
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption

Precautions against Terrorism and Violence

According to the U.S. Department of State, terrorist attacks typically occur in a random, unpredictable fashion. Your best protection is to avoid unsafe areas or areas with a record of recent terrorism. If you must travel to such areas, don't go into the situation without giving your actions careful thought.

Tourists are not usually the target of terrorism, but sometimes are conspicuous for their relative wealth and privilege. Maintain a low profile during your stay and avoid active involvement in local controversies. Keep alert in airports, hotels, restaurants, and crowds and be cautious about what you discuss with strangers. Register with your home embassy upon arrival and keep the embassy and your family or other contact people informed if you make any changes in your itinerary.

Reducing the Risk of Crime, Violence, Terrorism, and Accidents

Because this is a time of increasing political and military tension, the Office of International Programs urges you to take simple precautions to ensure your safety. Please read this information carefully and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions at all. You may also wish to share this information to your parents or the person with whom you are in contact at home. We recommend that you:

- Keep with you at all times a copy of your passport and the emergency contact numbers for your study abroad program representative and office, and your consulate
- Register at the consulate of your home country
- If you are on a study abroad program, acquaint yourself with the program's emergency plan. If you need more information about the program's emergency plan, ask for details
- Periodically consult the U.S. State Department bulletins at <http://travel.state.gov/index.html> and http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html
- Read the local papers and listen to the international news to stay informed of developments in the days and weeks ahead
- Know the local laws. Laws and systems of justice are not universal. Do not assume that because something is legal in the United States, it is legal abroad
- Consider any plans for leisure travel carefully, taking into account the safety of your intended destinations. If you travel to countries beyond your program site, make sure the resident director, host family or foreign university official who is responsible for your welfare always knows where and how to contact you in an emergency. When you travel, even if only overnight, leave your itinerary
- Be wary of unexpected packages and stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, and other areas of uncontrolled public access

- Avoid moving around in large groups of Americans, and speaking English loudly. Speak respectfully in the language of your host country. Be careful to observe local laws and be sensitive to local customs. Make an effort to be polite and inconspicuous
- Keep a low profile and try not to identify yourself by dress, speech, or behavior as a targetable individual. Do not draw attention to yourself through expensive dress, and personal accessories
- Be careful in large crowds, especially political gatherings, and be aware of risks in areas where there are many tourists
- If you are the subject of anti-American sentiment, we suggest that you avoid verbal confrontations

Government Assistance Abroad

Foreign embassies and consulates exist to provide assistance to their citizens abroad, including information about current social and political events, climate, health and safety concerns, and educational and cultural affairs. Register with your nearest embassy or consulate on arrival. This will make it easier for you to be contacted should an emergency arise or in the unlikely event that citizens need to be evacuated. If your travel documents are lost or stolen, report this fact to the nearest embassy or consulate immediately so that they can be replaced as soon as possible. If you find yourself in legal difficulties abroad, contact your nearest embassy or consulate. While consular officials cannot act as attorneys, they can help you get in touch with people at home, provide assistance about local laws, and try to make sure that you are treated humanely under international conventions.

U.S. citizens can find the location of the embassy or consulate in their host countries through the web site **www.state.gov**

Non-U.S. citizens should check with their nearest embassy or consulate in the U.S. to find out what services will be available to them while abroad. All foreign embassies in Washington D.C. are listed on the web site **www.embassy.org**

IX. KNOW YOUR DESTINATION

Students who have studied abroad emphatically agree that learning as much as possible about the country before you leave is your best preparation. Know your destination by gathering information about your host culture from various sources. An excellent source is people from the country to which you plan to go, and also other students who have just returned. The Office of International Programs maintains an **e-mail list of Harvard students who have just returned or are abroad now** and who have volunteered to speak about their experiences with other Harvard students.

You can effectively begin your own orientation now by learning as much as possible about the country in advance of your departure. Watch films about the country. Use the Internet Movie Database to search for recent and upcoming releases around the world, by language and by country: <http://www.us.imdb.com/>. Read fiction to learn about the history, customs and culture of a country. Read ethnographies and travel essays and buy a good guide book. Excellent travel books are available for sale at the many bookstores in Harvard Square, most notably at the Globe Corner Bookstore on Church Street. The Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress has completed country studies that you can view at this link: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

Non-Verbal Communication

Learn the non-verbal behaviors that are considered appropriate, inappropriate or offensive and which are commonly used, such as: using the right or wrong hand to give or receive things, showing the soles of your feet, certain hand gestures, greetings by bowing, kissing, shaking hands, etc.

Foreign Language Abilities

Brush up on your language skills by joining a conversation group on campus, taking a short summer refresher course before you go, reading foreign language newspapers and watching films about your destination in the language of the country. If your skills are weak, learn key words and phrases for conversation and emergencies. The University of Southern California Center for Global Education offers two checklists of phrases and words that you should know at the following sites:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/phrases.html>

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/words.html>

Destination Research Checklist

One of the best ways to get the most out of your experience abroad is to become knowledgeable beforehand about your destination. You will want to have some knowledge about the following topics before you go:

- ❑ What is the country's history? What is the current form of government and the present political and economic situation in the country? What are the names of the political parties and which is in the majority?
- ❑ Who is the current leader/ruler and when and how did he/she come to power?
- ❑ What was the biggest headline in the past year? What are the popular newspapers?
- ❑ Has there been a major national crisis recently? If so, when did it occur and what was it about?
- ❑ What is the most likely health problem you could encounter?
- ❑ What will be one of the biggest cultural adjustments you'll have to make? Are gender, race and sexual orientation viewed as they are in the U.S.?
- ❑ What aspect of your typical behavior at home might be inappropriate there? What are the local customs, mores, and modes of behavior? What are the cultural norms for gender roles and attitudes toward BGLT and minority populations?
- ❑ What is the most extreme weather you might encounter?
- ❑ How do most people travel around your host city/country? Which areas are safe and which are risky? Is public transportation safe at all hours?
- ❑ What languages are spoken in the country?
- ❑ What is the currency and the exchange rate?
- ❑ What religious, ethnic, and/or cultural groups are represented? Are there conflicts among them? What religions are practiced?
- ❑ Where is your nearest home embassy or consulate located, if you need assistance?
- ❑ What is the current situation for travelers? Are there areas of the country you should avoid for security or health reasons?
- ❑ Who are the famous writers, poets, scientists, photographers, artists, and musicians?
- ❑ What are the culturally appropriate ways to show appreciation and give gifts? Are there cultural expectations for guests and hosts?

Ethnic and Racial Minorities Abroad

The meaning of gender, ethnicity, race and sexual orientation is perceived and treated differently from country to country. Anyone is a potential racial or ethnic minority member in another country and it is important to be realistic about this in advance. By being informed about particular conditions in a country before you go, you may be able to anticipate and handle them. Reports from ethnic and racial minority students vary on the treatment they have received around the world. It is helpful to speak with program directors, and with past participants who have similar backgrounds about their treatment in specific countries and how they managed.

GLBT Students Abroad

Attitudes and laws pertaining to sexual orientation vary throughout the world and it is important to know the laws and mores of the country in which you will be living since there can be serious penalties for breaking them. The Harvard Office of International Programs, along with the Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus, <http://www.hglc.org/hglc/index.shtml> encourages all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, to study abroad. Use GLBT travelers groups to get advice and answers to your questions. Seek assistance from the Office of International Programs if needed, or guidance from your study program. Get a GLBT travel guide-book.

The Rainbow Special Interest Group of NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, is a group whose goals are to counsel international and study abroad students who are gay, lesbian and bisexual; to support gay, lesbian, and bisexual professionals in international education; and to combat homophobia within NAFSA.
www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/biblio.html

Behind the Mask: Gay and Lesbian Affairs in Africa
www.mask.org.za/index2.html

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
www.iglhrc.org

The International Lesbian and Gay Association
www.ilga.org

Disabilities and Accommodations Abroad

Students registered with Student Disability Resources who are eligible for academic and other accommodations are also eligible for overseas accommodations where such accommodations can be arranged. SDR is able to facilitate this process with *a great deal of notice*. Contact sdr@fas.harvard.edu for more information.

Mobility International USA (MIUSA) is a US-based national non-profit organization whose mission is to empower people with disabilities around the world through international exchange, information, technical assistance and training. It is their goal to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in the international exchange and development programs.
<http://www.miusa.org/>

For a listing of disability travel organizations, publications, and web sites see the *Alternative Travel Directory: The Complete Guide to Traveling, Studying & Living Overseas*, edited by Clayton A. Hubbs.

Women Abroad

Risks are increased for women abroad as they may encounter attitudes or expectations that are restricting. American men should be aware of these risks and provide support. Stereotypes of U.S. women drawn from the media generate expectations about U.S. women's behavior abroad. As a woman, you may take offense at certain behaviors, such as unwanted attention, or feel limited in your mobility or frustrated by the different norms for women's conduct. Strategies to avoid harassment include: understanding the cultural differences, seeking support from others, conservative dress, and knowledge of how to handle unwanted attention. It is important to differentiate between sexual harassment and cultural differences. If you are having difficulty making this distinction, seek assistance from your program director or from OIP. Travel guides, including Lonely Planet, Let's Go and Rough Guide all offer useful recommendations for women travelers.

Women's Guide to Overseas Living, 2nd edition, Nancy J. Piet-Pelon and Barbara Hornby, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME, 1992

Web-Sites for Specific Destinations

The British Council promotes UK education. This page has information for students planning to study in the UK.

<http://www.britishcouncil-usa.org/learning/students/studentlife/>

British Culture and Life is explained at this website:

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

Cape Town International Student Support Network—recommended by a Harvard student who used this service. To use this service, contact Ida Cooper at idaca@iafrica.com

<http://web.uct.ac.za/misc/iapo/homepage.html>

X. CULTURE SHOCK

Living and studying overseas successfully usually means that you are able to adjust to a different lifestyle, schedule, environment, food, climate, time zone, social habits and sometimes a new language. The same things that make the experience exciting can cause psychological and social disorientation, frustration, confusion and other stressful responses. The phenomenon called “culture shock” is actually a natural wave of reactions to the array of differences one encounters in a new place while one is adapting to the new environment. Culture shock can include mood swings alternating between heady exhilaration and mild depression. Phases of adjustment to a new culture usually include:

1. Initial euphoria
2. Irritability
3. Gradual adjustment
4. Adaptation and biculturalism
5. Re-entry

In the early weeks of your new life abroad, you may feel excited about your experiences and environment, and for many people, that feeling may last for a long time. For others, the exhilaration will give way to frustration with how so many things are different from home. Symptoms of culture shock can include sleeping difficulties, as well as the urge to sleep a lot due to the fatigue associated with stress, homesickness, trouble concentrating, an urge to isolate yourself, irritation with your host culture, feeling overwhelmed, and depression. Even if you are accustomed to being away from your family and friends for long periods of time, you may still have problems because you are away from everything that is familiar. There are many ways to cope with your feelings of disorientation until they pass, as they usually do.

- Learn as much as possible from local residents about their culture. Ask questions.
- Observe how others are acting.
- Keep in touch with other students with whom you can discuss your feelings, but avoid gripe sessions that may not be helpful.
- Identify similarities and differences.
- Do things you enjoy. Go out and explore. Learn language skills.
- Keep in touch with family and friends to avoid feeling isolated.
- Keep your long-range goals in mind.
- Keep your sense of humor!

If you accept that culture shock is part of the pattern of adjustment, you will be able to move through it effectively. Awareness of the process may be enough to help you get through it. For most students, the symptoms of culture shock wane after the first few weeks as they begin to understand the host culture better. If your own symptoms do not seem to be passing, the best advice is to seek help by reaching out to a program provider or health care provider. For further reading on the stages of culture shock, refer to the book, *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, by Robert L. Kohls. The fourth edition of this book was published in June 2001 by Intercultural Press, and it is available through bookstores.

LASPAU, a nonprofit organization affiliated with Harvard University, has a terrific page on cultural adjustment. http://www.laspau.harvard.edu/grantee_guide/oas/cross_cul.htm

Re-entry to Your Home Country and Harvard

Re-entry can for some people be more difficult than the culture shock that they experienced when they went abroad. One's own country can stand in sharp contrast to the adopted country in the days just after coming home. People returning from abroad can feel disoriented and startled by their perceptions of their own culture. Time has passed, everyone at home has changed and things are not the same, and you have changed while away.

Articulating your feelings about being away and returning can be helpful. What are the things that you wish you could have brought back from abroad that you left behind? What is one thing that you have learned about yourself? In what ways have you come in contact with your culture since you returned and what have your responses been? What do your friends and family understand about your journey, and what do they seem to misunderstand?

Some students find that it is useful to write about their months away, while others prefer to reconnect with friends that they made abroad to discuss the process of coming home and missing their host country.

Students looking ahead may begin to explore the possible outcomes of their international experience, building on skills, qualities and experience gained, and how to market those skills. They may start to plan additional travel abroad, and consider international volunteer, work, internships, fellowships, or graduate study in the future.

XI. RETURNING TO HARVARD from a Semester or Year Abroad

Housing

To return to Harvard from a semester or year away, you must notify the Allston Burr Senior Tutor of your house eight weeks in advance of the term you plan to return. If you did not reserve housing before you left, obtain an application for Returning Students from the Undergraduate Housing Office, University Hall, First Floor South, or from the OIP office. These applications are due quite early in the preceding term in order to permit the College to provide housing for as many students as possible. Check the Undergraduate Housing Office web site for deadlines and forms. <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~uho/> Students who do not file the application for returning students by the appropriate deadline will be charged a fee and housed on a space-available basis only.

Health Insurance

Make arrangements for your medical insurance coverage to continue when you return to Harvard. For information on Harvard University Group Health Insurance plans contact **UHS Member Services at 617-495-2008**. If you received medical services abroad and need to submit a claim form for reimbursement when you return, be sure to do this promptly, as some plans limit the time period for making a claim.

Registration for Classes at Harvard

The *Handbook for Students* publishes the deadlines for course registration for returning students at <http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu/handbooks/student/index.html> Students register in person when they return to campus. Students will not be allowed to register in the University until all previous term-bill and telephone charges have been paid and no loan is in default.

Financial Aid for Returning Students

Students who receive financial aid must plan well in advance to assure that their aid when they return will not be interrupted. Students wishing to apply for financial aid must request a financial aid application from the Financial Aid Office by February 1 for the following fall term and by October 1 for the following spring term. Late applicants cannot be assured financial aid. Students should complete a term bill worksheet, obtained from the Senior Tutor or Assistant Dean and returned to the Student Billing Office, Holyoke Center 556, with payment before August 9 for the fall term return and before January 17 for the spring term return.

XII. TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

If possible, establish an affiliation with a local institution or university. This will help you establish contacts and give you greater access to local resources.

Always go to the top when trying to schedule interviews. Even though you will most likely be interviewing with assistants, supervisors are more likely to respond positively to informational interviews.

Research can take a lot longer than you might expect. Try to map out your courses of research before you go as much as possible. Have your questions ready before you go. And don't expect to come back with all of your questions answered; you may come back with lots of questions of your own.

It is often helpful to bring a laptop computer or a recorder with you, but keep in mind that some people are not comfortable being recorded.

Don't waste time doing research that could be done here. Check out the resources at Widener before leaving.

Arrange for two interviews with each person if possible, scheduling other interviews in between. You might come up with many more questions after talking to someone else. Ask your interview if they have particular suggestion of other you might interview. Diversify your sources as much as possible.

Be careful about trying to meet with people in August in Europe, especially in France. They go on vacation this month.

Learning to make your way around in a foreign bureaucracy can be very difficult and time consuming. Try to cut down wasted time by arranging interviews ahead of time.

Mention Harvard wherever you go. Bring letters of introduction. Business cards are an excellent tool for introduction when trying to schedule interviews. In some countries, it is customary to exchange cards upon introduction.

Try to begin writing early. They will help you sort through your thoughts.

XIII. STUDYING ABROAD FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT

In a Nutshell:

- You are responsible for taking enough credit abroad to earn your requested number of Harvard half courses
- All courses taken abroad must be approved or your credit will not transfer:
Concentration credit must be approved by the concentration
Pure elective credit must be approved by OIP
- Courses must be taken for grades. Although your grades will not appear on your Harvard transcript, the titles of your courses and the name of your host institution will be listed on your Harvard transcript
- You may receive one core reduction of your choice for transferring four half courses of Harvard credit, and two for transferring eight half courses
- You must request that your official transcript from abroad be sent directly to OIP in University Hall
- You must stay for the duration of the program and take the regular final exams
- You must take at least one course in the language of the country if studying in a non-Anglophone country

Credit Requirements

When you enroll in courses abroad, be sure that you are taking enough courses and credit to earn 4 half courses of Harvard credit. Course weights abroad vary. To earn 4 half courses at Harvard, you may be required to take from 2 to 7 courses, and from 4 to 30 credits. **Confirm your courses and credit with the Office of International Programs as soon as you enroll and while you still have an opportunity to add or change a course.** Take your OIP approval letter with you so that you will remember which courses were pre-approved by your concentration and by the OIP for Harvard elective credit.

You must be enrolled in your program or university abroad for the duration of the semester, take your courses for grades, and take final exams, finishing your courses with the regular students at the university. If you study in a non-Anglophone country, but take courses in English, you are expected to take at least one course in the language of the country.

Course Selection and Changes Abroad

For approval of new concentration courses and Harvard elective courses, write directly to your concentration head tutor, copying Leslie Hill in OIP at hill2@fas.harvard.edu. OIP needs a copy of correspondence with your department in order to award concentration credit for your work, and information about any new courses for which you hope to earn pure elective credit. Send the following information for ALL of your courses:

1. Course title
2. Hours per week and amount of credit offered for the course
3. Type of credit you are seeking: concentration or elective
4. Course Description and or Syllabus

Some departments change the concentration tutor at the beginning of the fall. The name and e-mail address for the current concentration tutor for your department is listed at the end of the Harvard Guide to Study Abroad, which is available on the OIP website, www.fas.harvard.edu/~oip

Grades Will Not Transfer: Course Titles Will Be Listed on your Harvard Transcript

The grades you earn abroad transfer as credit to Harvard. They are not like pass/fail courses at Harvard, which earn a P or F. Study abroad credit is posted as an amount of credit transferred with the name of the university where you studied and the titles of your courses. The grades will not appear on your Harvard transcript; therefore, the grades you earn abroad will not be calculated in to your Harvard GPA. However, bear in mind that should you apply to graduate school, you will be required to submit your study abroad transcript with your application.

You must receive a passing grade to have the credit accepted at Harvard. The minimum acceptable grade in order to apply courses toward a foreign language citation is a B-, and some departments have a minimum acceptable grade for the awarding of concentration credit. When a course abroad is offered only pass/fail, it may be taken for elective credit only with prior approval from the Office of International Programs.

Transcripts

Your transcript is a confidential academic record, so you must give permission for it to be mailed to our office. Make arrangements with your university or program to have your transcript mailed to:

Jane Edwards
Harvard University, Office of International Programs
University Hall, Ground Floor South
Cambridge, MA 02138 USA

Study Abroad Program and University Evaluations

Your comments about your study abroad experience are invaluable to your peers and to those of us in the Office of International Programs who advise students planning to study abroad. You will be asked to complete an evaluation of your term abroad that can be shared with prospective study abroad students. We feel that this is so important to the student community, that we will hold your credit until you have completed this evaluation.

Exams in Absentia

Students who will not be in Cambridge for final exams in January because they have already departed for spring semester study abroad may apply to the FAS Exams Office of the Registrar to take their examinations in absentia. Exams taken in absentia follow the same rules and regulations as if they were administered at Harvard College in Cambridge.

Applications, which must be submitted for each exam, are available in the offices of the Freshman Dean, the Houses, the Registrar, and the Office of International Programs, and are due to the Registrar ***at least thirty days before the scheduled examination date***. You are responsible for arranging for a proctor at the examination site; contact your study abroad program director for assistance with arranging a proctor abroad. ***The in absentia examination fee is waived*** for students who are studying abroad for Harvard degree credit, and the OIP will cover mailing costs for returning exams upon receipt of invoices. For more information on Exams Taken in Absentia, contact:

Office of Examinations

Harvard University, 20 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Telephone: 617-495-1542 FAX: 617-485-0815

Email: fasexams@fas.harvard.edu

Enrollment in a Program or University Abroad

You are responsible for enrolling in and arranging payment for your chosen study abroad program. Communicate with your overseas program advisor in advance concerning visa requirements, group travel options, housing, courses, and costs. If the program offers an orientation, it is very important that you attend it.

Withdrawal from a Program Abroad

If you are considering withdrawing from a program at the beginning or during a semester abroad, we in the Office of International Programs would like to speak with you to help you weigh your options and to make sure that you understand the academic and financial implications. Programs and universities have published refund policies with which you should become familiar as you make your decision to enroll in the program. The costs of air travel, health insurance and travel documents are usually not refundable. **If you decide that you want to withdraw from a program, speak with the host university program director and also call OIP: 617-496-2722.**

Your Foreign Address and Emergency Contact Information

You must keep OIP informed of your study abroad plans to be sure you have the right status at Harvard for the semester. We will use your Harvard FAS e-mail address to contact you. We will ask you to provide the Office of International Programs with emergency contact information at the pre-departure orientation.

Working as a Peer Advisor at the Office of International Programs

You are invited to put your international experience and intercultural skills to work by becoming a peer advisor for Harvard students who plan to study abroad. Peer advisors spend time each week in the Office of International Programs during regular walk-in hours, meeting students, answering their questions, and helping them explore options and find resources for study abroad. If you are interested in working in our office, please contact Lauren Oliver at 496-2722 or oip@fas.harvard.edu

Contact Information for Harvard Offices Sponsoring International Experience

Asia Center Jorge Espada	617-496-3918	jespada@fas
Center for Basic Research in the Social Sciences Kim Popielski Kriz		kkriz@latte.harvard.edu
Center for European Studies Lisa Eschenbach	617-495-4303 x231	Imeschen@fas
Center for International Development Melissa Wojciechowski		melissa_wojciechowski@ksg.harvard.edu
Center for Middle Eastern Studies Susan Kahn		skahn@fas
Committee on African Studies Rita Breen	617-495-5265	rbreen@fas
David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies Erin Goodman	617-496-9153	egoodman@fas
Davis Center Donna Griesenbeck	617-495-1194	griesenb@fas
Fellowships Office, Office of Career Services Paul Bohlmann	617-495-8126	bohlmann@fas
Harvard Initiative on Global Health Nell Perlmutter		nperlmut@camail.harvard.edu
Harvard Summer School Study Abroad Programs Lisa Laskin	617-495-4024	elaskin@fas
Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Lubomyr Hajda	617-495-9828	hajda@fas
International Experience, Office of Career Services Loredana George	617-495-2595	george3@fas
Korea Institute Susan Lee Laurence	617-494-7388	korea@fas
National Resource Center for Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies Mary Giles	617-495-8095	nrc@fas
Office of International Programs Leslie Hill	617-496-2722	oip@fas
Reischauer Institute Stacie Matsumoto	617-496-3314	matsumot@fas
South Asia Initiative Rena Fonseca	617-496-4862	rfonseca@fas
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Clare Putnam	617-495-9899	cputnam@wcfia.harvard.edu

Further Reading and Reference

It's Your World. The StudyAbroad.com Handbook
<http://www.studyabroad.com/handbook/handbook.html>

Study Abroad Safety Handbook
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globalized/studentsabroad/index.html>

Fisher, Glen. (1997). *Mindsets: The role of culture and perceptions in international relations*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Kohls, L. Robert and Knight, John M. (1994). *Developing intercultural awareness: A cross-cultural training handbook*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Kohls, Robert L. (2001). *Survival kit for overseas living: For Americans planning to live and work abroad*. Fourth Edition. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Lodge, David. (1992). *Changing places: A tale of two campuses*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. An amusing account of the differences between American and British academic institutions.

Intercultural Press publishes other guides to help people understand specific cultures. These include books on Thailand, China, Australia, Russia, Mexico, Spain, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. <http://interculturalpress.com/shop/index.html>

www.countryreports.org provides a country profile with information on the geography, history, economics, government, communication, transportation, military, transnational information, maps and other details

Let's Go and *The Rough Guide* are excellent sources of information for young travelers. We recommend that you take a guide-book for your destination.