

Checklist

All students

- _____ Register for your program
- _____ Apply for your passport
- _____ Apply for your visa, if required
- _____ Make housing arrangements, if necessary
- _____ Make arrangements for payment of your program expenses
- _____ Make medical and dental appointments
- _____ Check with your health insurance provider
- _____ Apply for an International Student Identity Card
- _____ Make travel arrangements, if not included in your program
- _____ Make a realistic budget
- _____ Learn about where you're going
- _____ Learn about where you'll be staying
- _____ Make copies of all your important documents
- _____ Find out how to communicate from abroad
- _____ Get photos of home and of campus
- _____ Learn about the educational system in your host country
- _____ Prepare yourself to be an ambassador

If you'll be gone more than 2-3 weeks

- _____ Make arrangements to have your mail forwarded

If you'll be gone more than one semester

- _____ Make plans to pre-register for your semester of return
- _____ Make graduation arrangements, if necessary
- _____ Make plans for your return

If you will be traveling before or after your program

- _____ Make travel arrangement

Register for your program

- **If you're doing a short-term or group study abroad program receiving ISU credit**—this includes the programs offered over Spring Break, Winter Interim, Summer, Design in Rome, Semester in Florence, and the Cuernavaca language program—you will register for your program by on-line registration, using the ISU course number provided by your program leader, unless otherwise instructed.
- **If you're transferring credit back to ISU and are NOT going on an exchange**—this includes Iowa Regents' Semester in Wales, Australia, or Ireland; Semester in New Zealand; or any program not coordinated through ISU—complete the Preliminary Transfer and Registration form available on the “Applications” link of the Study Abroad Center website. There are equivalency guides for several ISU programs at the “Applications” link, as well.

For students going on any program NOT coordinated through ISU—you'll register by completing the Application for Non-ISU Study Abroad Programs, available on the “Applications” link of the Study Abroad Center website.

After filling out the top portion of the Preliminary Transfer and Registration form, you will meet with and have it signed by 1) your academic adviser and 2) the Registrar's Office. This will enable you to register as taking credit abroad (typically 12 credits per semester of IntEd, regardless of how many classes you'll actually be taking overseas—this keeps you in full-time status); may let you know in advance how those credits will transfer back to ISU; and will release your ISU financial aid.

- **If you're doing an exchange program**—complete the Preliminary Transfer and Registration form available on the Study Abroad Center website under the “Applications” link.
- **For ANY program (exchange, non-exchange, or non-ISU) receiving transfer credit**—You will register for your classes at your host school, typically during the week or day prior to the opening of the semester (few non-U.S. institutions have pre-registration a semester ahead as you are familiar with here at ISU).
- At the conclusion of your term of study, make sure that an **official transcript** will be sent to ISU from the school you attend. Your credits, but not your grades, will be entered onto your ISU transcript and will appear as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory; the **grades for transfer credit will appear** on the “Credit Transfer Evaluation” that is sent to your adviser and may affect whether or not your credits earned can be used toward graduation and/or toward your course requirements.

Apply for your passport

You will need:

- an official passport application (which you can download from the State

Department website at <http://travel.state.gov> or pick up at the Downtown Post Office in Ames—check with your local Post Office or Courthouse if you're applying from outside of the Ames area);

- a previous passport or a certified copy of your birth certificate (If you don't have this, write to the Records Department at the courthouse in the county in which you were born to request one; it must have the raised seal to be accepted as a certified copy)
- two identical 2"x 2" passport photos (these can be done at the Study Abroad Center or any of several other places in town);
- a photo ID (your Driver's License is good); and
- two checks: one to the Postmaster for \$30 to execute the application and another to the U.S. Department of State for \$67.

• **Processing time** varies from 2 to 6 weeks. If you're in a hurry, talk to the personnel at the Passport Office about expediting your application (there's an additional charge for this service). There are also services that will walk your application through for you for \$150 or less. Get your passport as soon as you have been accepted by your program!

Apply for your visa, if required

• **If a visa is required**, you can obtain the necessary application forms from the Consulate or the Embassy of the country you're visiting or through your travel agent. Some countries require that you send photos, a financial statement, a medical report, your acceptance letter from the school you'll be attending, and payment for a visa. You will have to send your passport with your application (the visa will be stamped into your passport). This is another good reason not to delay obtaining your passport: If you must wait the full six weeks for the passport, and then send it along and wait an additional several weeks for your visa, you might not be prepared in time for your program!

Make housing arrangements, if necessary

• **On short-term programs**, housing is usually included in the cost of the program, and arrangements for housing (and often for meals) will have already been made. A few programs offer a home-stay option for at least part of the duration of the program, which you may want to consider. It's a great way to get a feel for the country you're visiting and really get to know some people who live there.

• **On semester programs and exchange programs**, you will sometimes have a choice of lodging arrangements (such as dormitory, home-stay, and private apartments). If you're staying in a dormitory or apartment, you might have the option of whether to share a room with someone from the host country (or with another international student) instead of someone from your own program. Take your lifestyle preferences into account when choosing, of course, but don't automatically select the "safe" approach of rooming with someone you already know. Having a roommate from the host country or another country can be a

wonderful way of exploring other cultures. Check with the coordinator of your program if you're unsure of the housing options available or don't know whether housing and meals are included in the cost of your program. Be aware that you may have to pay for room and/or board in advance.

Make arrangements for payment of your program expenses

- **ISU programs**, whether short-term or semester-long or for a full academic year, will be billed to your ISU account, visible on AccessPlus. Instructions regarding due dates and installment payments will accompany your bill. Typically, the cost of a program will be added to your bill at the same point in the semester that financial aid for that term is released. As a result, especially for short-term Summer programs, you may have already returned from your program before the bill for it arrives. Academic-year programs will be billed as two separate semester charges, just as when you're here on campus.
- If your financial aid is greater than the cost of your program, or if you've prepaid part or all of your program fee before financial aid is released, the difference will be refunded to you if all your other university obligations (parking tickets, overdue library book fines, etc.) have been met. The funds will be direct-deposited to your bank. Be sure you have completed a direct deposit authorization.
- If you are participating in a semester or exchange program that includes tuition and fees but not room and board, you will be responsible for those additional charges at the host institution. Some home-stays are paid directly to the family, but in most cases your lodging, and often your meal plan, will be billed to you by the host institution. A few programs have housing (and some meals) built into the program cost but allow the students to choose to live off-campus. In that case, the host institution will be responsible for refunding to you the costs of accommodations (and meals, if included).
- **If your program is not through ISU**, you are responsible for arranging billing and payment with the institution sponsoring your program. If you're receiving ISU financial aid, and if you have no outstanding debts to the university (parking tickets, overdue library book fines, etc.), the funds will be direct-deposited to your bank. You can then use these funds to pay for your program through the sponsoring institution.

If your financial aid will be released after your program departs

- Make arrangements **through AccessPlus** for automatic deposit into your bank account.
- Be sure the **Registrar's Office** has your forwarding address, or the address of a friend or family member in this country, especially if you are not going to make arrangements for automatic deposit.

- Release your aid via AccessPlus (contact Clay Gurganus in **Student Financial Aid** if you're uncertain how to do this; 294-2223).

Make medical and dental appointments

- **Update your immunizations**, regardless of where you're going. Don't ruin a trip to the beach by wondering whether that scratch you got on the coral will result in tetanus! Depending on where you're going, you may need to begin medication or injections to prevent malaria, yellow fever, and a host of other diseases not common in the U.S. Check with the Travel Clinic (294-4474) on campus or with your personal physician regarding what you'll need.
- **Medical and dental check-ups** are a good idea, too, especially if your program is going to be physically rigorous or if you'll be gone more than a few weeks. Get any problems taken care of before you travel, and get any prescriptions you'll need written and refilled. A toothache is no fun at home and is even worse when you're nowhere near a dentist who speaks English!

Check with your health insurance provider

- **Medical insurance** is a necessity (In fact, ISU requires that all students going abroad have proof of health insurance before leaving). Check your current policy to see whether you have coverage when outside the U.S. If not, see if such coverage is available on a short-term basis (for the length of your studies plus your travel time) for policy-holders. Be aware that you will have to pay the doctor's or hospital's bill and then submit a claim to be reimbursed.
- **If your insurance carrier won't cover you outside the U.S.** and doesn't have a supplemental policy you can purchase through them, there are other sources to consider. Check with the company that provides your auto or renter/homeowner insurance to see whether they have a policy that will meet your needs. Check, too, with the Study Abroad Center. Brochures are available from several companies that offer health insurance on a short-term basis to students who will be studying abroad. Be aware, however, that most of these companies only offer basic coverage for accidents and health emergencies and that you will have to pay the doctor's or hospital's bill and then submit a claim and wait to be reimbursed.

Apply for an International Student Identity Card

- **The International Student Identity Card (ISIC)** is required of all students studying abroad on an Iowa State University program. At \$22 (plus a photograph), it can prove to be one of your best investments. Not only will it make you eligible for discounted airfare (domestic and international), but it also provides a supplemental health insurance policy (for such unforeseen but expensive events such as emergency medical evacuation or repatriation of remains) and a 24-hour-a-day traveler's assistance service (for assistance in any language in the event of theft of your passport, need for medical or legal referral,

etc.). Application forms and processing of applications are available at the Study Abroad Center or at any STA Travel office.

Make travel arrangements, if not included in your program

- **Airline tickets** may have been purchased for you in advance by your program leader, especially if you're participating in a short-term group program. If you are responsible for making your own flight arrangements, you'll want to start making phone inquiries as soon as you know your required arrival date. Several agencies give discounts to students; ask for this when you contact an agent. Also consider contacting some or all of the agencies listed below; they specialize in discounted fares for students (not just airfare, either: many also handle BritRail and Eurail passes, bus tickets, etc.).

- **Rail passes** (bus and plane passes, if you're going to Australia) are another consideration, especially if you will be doing a lot of traveling on your own before, during, and/or after your program. The passes are only available for purchase in the U.S. (you can't get them in Europe, though regular tickets are available there, and Interrail Passes can be purchased if you've been a resident for at least six months). Several different types of passes exist, and which one you need depends on how much traveling you'll be doing over what period of time. Available from your travel agent, your agent will be able to help you determine what kind of pass, if any, will be best for you.

- **Discounts** are available to students for all kinds of travel-related services. Several agencies give student discounts on airfare, rail passes, and other transportation. The agencies used most often by ISU students include:

- STA Travel (296-2326 in Ames; 1-800-226-8624 elsewhere)
- KITT (1-800-282-8212)
- Educational Travel Center (1-800-747-5551)
- AAA (233-6636 in Ames; 1-800-222-1333 elsewhere)

These agencies typically purchase blocks of seats from various airlines and then resell the seats to students at prices that are usually lower than those available from commercial travel agencies or from the airlines. Because one agency might have sold out its seats on a certain flight while another may still have seats available, it's always a good idea to contact more than one discount agency when making flight arrangements. Talk to these agencies, too, about rail passes, bus schedules, etc.

Make a realistic budget

- **Use the budget worksheet** in the "Money" section of this handbook to help you determine what your expenses will be. Be sure to include airfare, ground transportation (taxi, bus, train), and other "major" expenses as well as the "little things" like phone calls (local and international), snacks, gifts for friends and family, postage, etc.

- **Get your finances under control.** Pay any outstanding bills (including

rent and utilities) before you go, or turn them over to a trusted friend to pay (consider temporary Power of Attorney status for whoever will be taking care of things for you). Buy **travelers' checks** and check with your bank to learn whether your **credit card** and/or **ATM card** will be accepted in the country where you'll be.

Learn about where you're going

- For less-expensive armchair traveling, check out the resources at the **public library**, or stop by the **Study Abroad Center** library and borrow videotapes and/or books on a variety of topics, including specific countries, how to pack, traveling alone, tour options, etc.
- **Travel information** can be obtained in a variety of ways. **Bookstores** stock or can order books, maps, travel guides, videotapes, etc., on any country you'd like. *Survival Kit for Overseas Living* (see the Bibliography in the "Resources" section of this handbook) is an excellent resource, too.
- **Country-specific information** also be obtained through the State Department Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets (on the Web at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html), through the State Department Background Notes (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>), and in the CultureGrams (Study Abroad Center library in the Memorial Union, or on-line at <http://www.onlineedition.culturegrams.com>).
- Talk to your **travel agent**, too, about places to see, places to avoid, and average costs. Check the **World-Wide Web** for information (use the country name and "tourism" as keywords), and check the "Resources" section of this Handbook.
- For **health-related information**, including necessary vaccinations and medications, check the Centers for Disease Control's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm> or contact the ISU Travel Nurse at 294-4474.
- **News broadcasts and newspapers** are other good sources of current information on the various countries you'll be visiting. Visit www.onlinenewspapers.com. Check for magazine articles in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature at the library.
- **The Travel, Culture, and Resources** sections of this handbook also have valuable information and websites for country-specific information, travel information and discounts, cultural differences, etc.

Learn about where you'll be studying

- **Information about your program** can be obtained in a variety of ways. Ask your program coordinator for names of former participants.

Checklist

- Stop by the **International Students and Scholars office** in the Memorial Union and obtain names of students from the country (and perhaps the school) where you'll be studying.
- If you're going to a university abroad, check their **website** to learn more about the campus.
- **Learn a few words** of the local language, if you don't already speak it.

Make copies of all your important documents

- **Your passport/visa(s) and Travelers' Checks** are prime candidates for the photocopier. So are your credit cards, your acceptance letter if you're attending a school abroad, your airline and train tickets, and anything else that seems important enough to need a copy or would be difficult to replace without the information that it contains.
- **Carry the copies** separate from the originals! Also carry an extra set of passport photos. Leave a set of copies at home, too, with family or a trusted friend. These copies will come in handy if, like all other human beings, you lose or misplace the originals or if you are "relieved" of them by a pick-pocket.

Find out how to communicate from abroad

- Keeping in touch isn't all that hard from overseas, but it may take some planning on your part. Check with your **long-distance telephone** carrier about discount opportunities available to you while you're abroad. A "calling home" card can save considerable expense, though each card is only valid for a single telephone number. **Phone debit cards** are also available. These allow you to pay in advance for the calls you plan to make, simplifying your budgeting for the trip and eliminating the need to carry coins for each country you're visiting. **Postcards and letters** are always welcomed by those at home, though they'll mean finding time to sit down and write. Postcards will also provide a pictorial record of what you've seen during your travels. **E-mail** may be available to you, depending on your program.
- If you'll be gone more than a few weeks, learn how to access your **e-mail account** from overseas.

Get photos of home and of campus

- Photos of **family and friends** will not only keep you "connected" while you're abroad but will enable you to "introduce" your new friends and acquaintances to your U.S. connections.
- Photos of **ISU**, or ISU postcards from the University Book Store, will let you show off the campus and might help encourage students at your host school to try an exchange here!

Learn about the educational system in your host country

- See the **Resources** pages of this handbook to learn about the structure of higher education in the country in which you'll be studying. Not all countries have 12 years of public education followed by 4 years of college or university study, and knowing how your classmates are taught will help you prepare for classroom life.

Prepare yourself to be an ambassador

- Remember that you'll be representing **ISU, your home state, and the U.S.**, and that you're going abroad to experience a different way of life and learning. Don't expect everything to be the same as at home, and don't try to change the way things are done in your host country or at your host school.
- Do some reading about your home community and state so you'll become aware of population size, economic activity, famous people, etc.

If you will be gone for more than 2-3 weeks

Make arrangements to have your mail forwarded

- Be sure to leave a **forwarding address**. If you are expecting anything to be mailed from the University, give your new address to the **Registrar's Office**. This can be your address overseas, your permanent (parents') address, or the address of a trusted friend.
- Remember that your fraternity/sorority friends and/or roommates probably won't be sending most of your mail along to you while you're away. Give them and the **U.S. Postal Service** a forwarding address in the U.S. where your mail can be sent and where any bills that arrive will be dealt with appropriately.

If you will be gone for more than one semester

Make plans to pre-register for your semester of return

- Be sure to **maintain contact with your adviser** during the term(s) you're away. E-mail, phone, or "snail mail" will enable you to work out your courses with your adviser so that you're not closed out of classes you need when you come back.
- Use the RAN provided by your adviser to **pre-register via AccessPlus**.

If you are graduating

- **If you're a senior**, be aware that ISU requires that the final 32 credits be taken on campus; however, a waiver can be obtained if you're studying abroad. Be sure to talk to your academic adviser or your departmental office to complete the necessary procedure.

- **The Graduation Requirements Office** in 10A Alumni Hall can help you make the necessary arrangements for graduating either in person or in absentia and for forwarding of your diploma.

Make plans for your return

- **Pre-register** for classes (see the section above on pre-registration).
- **Make housing arrangements**, whether that's with your former roommates, with the Department of Residence, or by having someone watch the ads for apartments.
- Watch for **re-entry shock**. Just as you needed to prepare for the culture shock of being in a new place, you'll need to plan in advance for the shock of being home. You'll have spent time away from your "former world", and life has gone on there just as it has for you—but without you! See the "Culture" section of this handbook for more on re-entry shock.

If you will be traveling before or after your program

- **Transportation:** See the notes on Travel Arrangements in an earlier section of this handbook and the transportation information in the "Travel" section for basics on airfare and train passes.
- **Lodging: Youth Hostels** are an inexpensive way to bed down when traveling. Most hostels provide either dorm-like rooms or smaller shared rooms in close proximity to rail stations and/or airports. Designed for the traveler, accommodations vary from large shared areas with wall-to-wall beds to private or semi-private rooms in restored villas. Bath and toilet facilities are usually shared; availability of meals varies from on-site restaurants to kitchenettes to vending machines. Holders of a Youth Hostel Card (\$25 for 12 months, available from some travel agencies or from Hostelling International at <http://www.hihostels.com>) can make reservations in advance and receive a discount on the already-affordable rates. In some countries, **pensiones** or **bed and breakfast** establishments are an option and are sometimes even more reasonably-priced than hostels (and often include a simple meal in the price of the room).
- **Your destinations: Travel information** can be obtained in a variety of ways. Chain and private bookstores either stock or can order books, maps, travel guides, videotapes, etc., on any country you'd like. For less-expensive armchair traveling, check out the resources at the **public library**, or stop by the **Study Abroad Center library** and borrow videotapes and/or books on a variety of topics, including specific countries, how to pack, traveling alone, tour options, etc. Talk to your **travel agent**, too, about places to see, places to avoid, and average costs. Check the **World-Wide Web** for information (use the country name and "tourism" as keywords).