



Arkansas Tech University Long-Term Study Abroad Handbook



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Before You Leave ATU

Final Documents with Study Abroad

The first step in preparing to go overseas is ensuring you are up to date with your paperwork in the Study Abroad (SA) Office. Confirm with the Study Abroad Office that all of your paperwork is complete.

Academic Credit

Study Abroad Advising Agreement: Before you leave campus, you must secure the signature of your department head and college dean on the Study Abroad Advising Agreement for each course. Return the agreement to the ATU Study Abroad office prior to exchange. This form will verify:

- Courses approved by your department head and dean for you to take while abroad, including the requirements those courses will fulfill and the credits you will receive back at ATU.

Once your Study Abroad Advising Agreement is complete, then the SA office will work with the Office of the Registrar to register you the SA placeholder courses.

After each semester abroad, students are **required** to ask the host university to directly send transcripts to the Study Abroad Office studyabroad@atu.edu. The placeholder courses are then replaced with the actual courses, credits, and grades that students completed abroad, adjusted to the ATU system. The process for credit and grade conversion will depend on the type of program in which the student participated.

As a general policy, any credits that were earned at the host university, converted to the U.S. credit system and result in a .5 credit hour, will be rounded up to the next full credit hour, e.g. 3.5 to 4 credit hours.

Pass/Fail: Students may have the option to take elective classes for a grade of pass/fail before they study abroad. If they earn a grade of "Pass" for pass/fail courses at the host university, it is not calculated in the GPA, but does count as earned hours; if they earn a grade of "Fail" for these courses, it will be calculated in the GPA as 0 points. Students will have to consult with their advisor and/or department head regarding which classes can be taken for the pass/fail option, and indicate these courses on the Study Abroad Advising Agreement before studying abroad. For more information, see <https://www.atu.edu/studyabroad/academics.php>

Placeholder Courses

Once all your study abroad documents are submitted and your file is complete, the study abroad office will automatically register you in placeholder courses for the exact number of hours that you will take abroad each semester:

SA XXXX.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

You will be paying tuition only at ATU. Consider meeting with a financial aid counselor in the [Office of Student Accounts](#) during the semester before your study abroad program to discuss the specifics of your financial aid and how exactly it will be applied to your program.



Office of Student Accounts

Brown Hall, Suite 241

105 West O Street

(479)968-0271

business.office@atu.edu



Office of Financial Aid

Brown Hall, Suite 206

105 West O Street

(479) 968-0399

fa.help@atu.edu

Applying for the ATU Study Abroad Scholarship

The Study Abroad Scholarship is awarded as a supplement for undergraduate students participating in travel abroad for academic credit at Arkansas Tech University. A student who is completing [College Distinction](#) requirements would be a qualified candidate, but not the only candidate eligible for assistance.

Once the scholarship is applied to the student's account either covering the costs associated with a course or refunding to the student for expenditures if course costs are already covered. Preference will be given to students with financial need. You can apply at:

<https://www.atu.edu/studyabroad/application.php>



Residence Life

If you live on campus at ATU or if you are planning to live on-campus when you return you should work with [Residence Life](#) to make the necessary arrangements or cancellations.



Department of Residence Life

Doc Bryan Student Services Center, Suite 153

1605 Coliseum Drive

(479) 968-0376

housing@atu.edu

- To cancel housing for the spring semester, contact the SA Office to write a confirmation of study abroad or study away that you may take to Resident Life. This must be done by November, 30th.
- If you are planning to study abroad in the fall semester and want to live on campus the following spring, make arrangements with Resident Life in the spring semester, before studying abroad.
- If you do not let Resident Life know you are studying abroad, you could lose you priority status or be charged housing fees for failing to cancel your contract.

If you live off-campus, you should coordinate with your housing provider to make any arrangements and cancellations. When working with these outside organizations there is little the Study Abroad Office can do to help you cancel a lease agreement before going abroad or locate a short term lease upon returning from overseas.

Overseas Housing

You will typically receive notification of your housing arrangements from your host institution's housing office or your program provider prior to your departure. The Study Abroad Office does not have access to this information. Any inquiries about overseas housing placement can be directed to your host institution or program coordinator.

Obtaining Important Documents

Passport

If you do not already have a passport, apply for one immediately.

Current passport processing times are significantly delayed. To apply for, renew, or replace a passport you must supply the following documents:

- A Certified Birth Certificate (not a copy)
- Application Form for a US Passport
- Two Passport Photographs
- Photo ID (e.g., driver's license)

In order to fill out the passport application form, you will need detailed information including your father's and mother's birthdates, their places of birth, their address, and the phone number of a person to be contacted in case of an emergency. You can find this form, and other information on the official passport website at <http://travel.state.gov/passport>.





VISAS and Residence Permits

Many countries require you to have a visa before entering the country. A visa is official permission to enter a country and stay for a determined period of time. You must have a valid passport to apply for a visa. The visa stamp for a given country will be placed in your actual passport.

state.gov offers links to embassies and consulates based in the U.S.



Affiliate program providers and other outside universities will provide visa information to you once you have been accepted. It is essential that you follow all visa instructions as outlined and apply in a timely manner.

IMPORTANT: Until you have received your visa, you are advised to refrain from making international travel plans in the months preceding your study abroad semester.

Medical Preparations

Physical Exam

While we do not require you to have a physical exam before going abroad, we do recommend you schedule a visit with your medical provider to discuss any concerns, physical or psychological. Medical situations can become serious under the stresses of life abroad, and an exam may be required for certain countries or visas.

Consider also having a dental check-up and connecting with other physicians you see on a regular basis, to take care of any general needs before travelling overseas. Some of these services may be provided through [ATU Health and Wellness](#).



[Health and Wellness Center](#)
Doc Bryan Student Services Center, Suite 119
1605 Coliseum Drive
(479) 968-0329
hwc@atu.edu

Immunizations

Work with your physician to learn which immunizations you should receive before leaving for any countries where you will study or visit.



[Cdc.gov](#) provides country-specific information on immunizations from the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

It is your responsibility to have all immunizations and travel with appropriate documentation. Immunizations should be recorded and certified in the yellow “International Certificate of Vaccination” pamphlet.

Prescription Medicines

If you take prescription medicine regularly or expect to take any while away, be sure to bring a sufficient supply with you for the entire time you will be abroad. Your insurance company may ask you for a letter that certified that you will be studying overseas. Our office can issue this letter if necessary.

Talk with your doctor about the overseas availability of any prescription medicine you take regularly. Even if your prescription is available, you should take an adequate supply with you for the period you are abroad, provided it is not perishable. Keep all prescription medications in their original bottles to facilitate clearance through customs. In many places, you will also need to carry a letter from your physician, stating why you need your prescription medication. Pack prescription medicines in your carry-on luggage in case your baggage is lost or delayed. Also, carry a copy of all current prescriptions, for medications, eyeglasses, etc. with you.

Know before you go...

Research your specific destination. Understand what customs regulations may be in place and what prescriptions may be available in country. The World Health Organization website and the Center for Disease Control website can be good resources.

Getting Ready to Leave the Country

Stay Informed

Between now and your departure—and in the time you are outside the US – it is important to stay informed on current developments in any countries where you will spend time. Add these sites to your regular reading list so you can remain in the know:

- CDC
- U.S. State Department Websites
- U.S. Consulates Overseas
- Local news sources in host country
- ATU news and Information

State Department Resources

The U.S. government provides information for overseas student travelers about emergencies, country information, visas, passports, living abroad and other topics at studentsabroad.state.gov. Also, we require you to enroll in the [U.S. State Department's STEP Program](https://step.state.gov).

Consular Information Sheets

Consular Information Sheets are available for every country in the world. They include information such as location of the US Embassy or Consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information and drug penalties. Search for Consular Info Sheets using the 'learn about your destination' feature on travel.state.gov.

Public Announcements

Public Announcements are a means to distribute information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. The current public announcements can be found at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/newsroom.html>.

Travel Advisories

The U.S. State Department provides safety and security information for every country of the world to help you assess for yourself the risks of travel. Each country information page contains travel advisories, alerts, and other important details specific to that country that could affect you. Pay close attention to the entry and exit requirements, local laws and customs, health conditions, and other details to decide whether traveling to that country is right for you. You will also find the address and phone number of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Take those with you in case of an emergency. The current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory List can be found at travel.state.gov.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention also provides valuable information for travelers on their website: [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel).

Emergency services available to U.S. citizens abroad

Overseas Citizens Services is responsible for the welfare and whereabouts of US citizens traveling and residing abroad. Overseas Citizens Services has a 24-hour a day hotline at (202) 647-5225 for American Citizens Services. Further information regarding the emergency services to US citizens abroad and related US State Department services can be found at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies.html>.

Document Safety

Travelling overseas for an extended period involves many critical and confidential documents, so it is important you stay safe when travelling with these. We recommend you first identify the critical documents you will be traveling with. Think about which documents you may need to identify yourself, to enter or exit countries, to acquire funds and to address medical situations or other emergencies. These critical documents may include:

- Passport
- Visa
- Airline tickets and itineraries
- US drivers licenses or IDs
- Credit and debit cards, copy both sides
- Insurance Cards
- Insurance policies
- Prescriptions or medications
- Blood Type
- Eyeglass or contact lens prescription
- Contact information for your doctors and dentist
- Overseas program itinerary
- Information on your overseas living arrangements



Creating Emergency Files

Once you have identified your critical documents, create two identical “emergency files.” Each file should include a photocopied sets of all sides of each critical document, as well as any other information that you may find important in the event of an emergency. Once you have created both files:

- Original documents – While in transit, all critical documents should be stowed in a safe place on your person, ideally in a pouch or a money belt. Keep documents as close to your body as possible, and only access them when they are needed. Never pack important documents in checked luggage. Once you arrive in-country, identify which documents you will need for day-to-day activities and store non-essential documents (including your passport) in a secure, private space.
- Emergency File 1 – this file should travel abroad with you. While in transit, keep the file secure in your carry-on luggage, as close to you as possible. Never pack important documents in checked luggage. Once you arrive in-country, you should find a secure, very private location for this file. Don’t share this location, and always keep this separate from your original documents. This file will give you access to information in case you lose a document or have an emergency.
- Emergency File #2 – Leave this file in the U.S. with a family member, friend or trusted appointee. This information will allow someone in the U.S. to support you in the event of an emergency or in the event any of your original documents are lost.

Time Change and Jetlag

Before you travel, be sure you are prepared for time changes and the possibility of jet lag. Travel across time-zones can alter your internal clock, but jet lag affects each person differently. You may have very little difficulty adjusting, or it may take a little while, but most travelers are completely adjusted within the first week. Follow these tips to prepare, and hopefully avoid, the effects of jetlag.

- Know the time difference between your home and your destination. Consider adjusting your schedule a few days prior to departure.
- Adjust your clock to local time before departing
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and other sleep-affecting substances the day you leave and in flight
- Stay hydrated, and drink plenty of water even if you don't feel thirsty
- Adjust your sleep times as soon as possible. This may require you to stay up even though you are incredibly tired
- When you arrive, get outside. Sunlight will help your body and internal clock adjust

Sometimes, it takes time

Don't plan many activities for your first day or two overseas. Allowing yourself plenty of time to rest early on will ensure you adjust to the time difference, and are ready to experience your host country without interruption.

Financial Preparation

Financial planning can be a key to a successful experience abroad. Spend time before you leave researching your host country's currency, exchange rates, and estimating your living costs for your time abroad. Decide how much you expect to spend on a weekly and monthly basis, and also during periods of travel. Cost-of-living estimates are usually available from most school websites and tourist offices.

In addition to basic program costs and tuition, you should develop a budget that includes the following expenses:

Pre-Departure

- Airfare
- Passport/photos
- Visa
- Medical and dental exams, immunizations
- Prescriptions
- Traveler insurance
- Luggage

Overseas living expenses

- Housing and meals
- Books and instructional fees
- Internet and printing fees
- Gifts and souvenirs
- Recreation
- Laundry
- Personal items

Personal Travel

- Transportation, airfare, train passes, public transportation.
- Lodging on arrival, if required
- Food
- Attractions and entrance fees



Foreign currency

You can typically purchase a small amount of foreign currency from your U.S. bank prior to departure. This is helpful when you first arrive in-country for transportation, food and other incidental expenses that may come up. This also helps you avoid high fees and conversion rates in airports or tourist areas.

Remember in general to avoid traveling with large sums of cash for your personal safety. Only take the amount you will need for the first few days overseas, and plan to withdraw more cash as needed from a bank or ATM once you are settled.

Credit and Debit Cards

If possible, carry a credit card with you as you travel overseas. Credit cards work differently in different countries, but are typically a more universal form of payment.

Confirm with the issuing company that your cards will work properly in the countries that you will be traveling to. Many students access their bank accounts from abroad using ATM or debit cards. Keep in mind that you will be charged a service fee when withdrawing money.

Also, be sure to alert your bank/ credit card company that you will be using your debit and credit cards overseas. Often you will need to provide the general locations and dates when you will be travelling. This will prevent them from freezing your account after what appear to be suspicious overseas transactions.

Make a copy of the contact number located on the back of your credit and debit card, in case your card gets lost or stolen.



Preparing to Travel

Travel is a big part of any global education experience. Whether you plan to travel independently outside your host country, go on excursions with your program or just travel within your host country, planning is key to success. Remember personal safety, consider visa restrictions, and plan your personal budget when thinking about travel. Here are some additional resources to consider as you plan for travel.

Transportation

Consider first how you will get where you are going. There may be numerous methods to get from one point to another while overseas.

If you are booking your own travel to your original program site, remember to confirm your program and visa dates with your provider. Before you book any international airfare, ensure you have been formally accepted to your overseas program, and you have been granted a visa from your host country's government.

Once you have made travel arrangements, know how to get to transportation hubs, your housing, and major sites. If you are flying, know how you will get from the airport to your destination.

Packing

First and foremost – pack lightly! Keep in mind that you will have to carry everything you bring, possibly through several airports and train stations on the way to your program site. A good rule of thumb is to bring only as much as you can carry (especially necessities for the first couple of weeks) and buy the rest when you get to your destination. Do not take anything that you would hate to lose: unnecessary credit cards, family heirlooms, or expensive jewelry.

Work with your Airline

Airlines restrict the amount of luggage passengers can carry. Checked luggage allowances and fees will vary from airline to airline, so contact your carrier and confirm their rules. In general, passengers are allowed two carry-on bags: one that can be stowed in an overhead compartment and a personal item (such as a purse or laptop bag). For checked items confirm with your airline.

Check airline size and weight restrictions, and weigh your suitcase before you get to the airport.

There's an app for that

Even if your smart phone will not be connected with your wireless carrier while you are overseas, often when traveling wireless internet access is easily available and these free apps can make travel a breeze:

- Google Maps
- International News
- iPronunciation
- Smart Traveler
- Mobile City Maps
- Tripit
- Viber
- WhatsApp
- Word Lens
- XE Currency Converter

Packing Tips

Appliances are engineered differently in other countries, and yours may not be compatible with outlets overseas. Make sure to purchase adapters for electronics.

Be mindful of the country you will visit, its climate and customs, e.g. some cultures may require women to keep legs and shoulders covered in public. Pack one change of clothing as well as essential toiletries in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is delayed.

All prescriptions, valuables, and important documents must be packed in your carry-on. Pack any sharp objects, as well as liquids or gels greater than 3 oz. in your checked luggage.

Sample Packing List:

Clothing

- Walking shoes
- Dress Shoes
- Undergarments/ socks
- Shorts/skirts/jeans
- Pants/slacks
- T-shirts
- Button downs/ blouses
- Sweaters/ Sweatshirts
- Rain Jacket
- Light jacket
- Bathing suit
- Sleep clothes
- Workout clothes
- Belt
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Hiking/ outdoor attire, if needed
- Winter coat
- Set of gloves, scarf

Miscellaneous

- Small travel sized toiletries
- Prescriptions/ medications
- Eyeglasses/contacts
- First-aid kit
- Toothbrush
- Watch
- Camera, digital storage cards
- Small weekend travel bag
- Adapter
- Umbrella

Documents

- Passport
- Visa
- Driver's License
- Copies of critical documents
- Insurance card, claim forms
- Cash, debit & credit cards
- Copies of prescriptions

While you are Abroad

Life as a Global Ambassador

While you are away, you will be serving as an ambassador for ATU and the United States. With great power comes great responsibility. While abroad, your actions will reflect on yourself, your family, ATU, and the United States as a whole. Approach your international experiences with an open mind and a willingness to learn.

Think about your status as an ambassador before you depart. What items can you bring with you to share your own culture with the people you meet along your journey? How can you engage friends, family and other ATU students with your overseas experience? Consider signing up for writing study abroad blogs with the Study Abroad Office.

Safety First

When you are overseas, your environment is new and different – you may not know where to go; you may have communication challenges; but you should never neglect your personal safety. Foreigners are looked upon as easy targets for these reasons. Even if your host site feels safe and you begin to feel comfortable in your surroundings, remain attentive.

- Be street smart – don't walk alone after dark, even if it's only a short walk and even if you are male.
- Try to blend in to your surroundings. Keep in mind that Americans are perceived to be more boisterous in public than other cultures. Avoid this stereotype and don't draw unwanted attention to yourself. Observe how the locals look and act, and adjust what you do accordingly.
- Don't carry valuables with you. Leave your passport and large sums of money at your residence. Leave expensive-looking jewelry at home, too.
- Be aware of our purse and wallet at all times. Don't put anything of value in the outside pockets of your jacket or pants. Use a passport holder or belt underneath your clothing to carry your passport, train tickets, etc.
- Be aware of your attire. Leave baseball caps, athletic shoes, and USA t-shirts at home. Wearing this type of clothing, or clothing with English sayings may draw attention to you and make you a target for pickpockets.
- Observe the people around you, especially when you are in large crowds. This is where pickpockets work their magic.
- Know whom to contact locally in case of an emergency. Keep emergency contact information and insurance cards with you at all times.
- Ask locals about places to avoid, such as dangerous areas of a city.

Precautions for Times of Unrest or Conflict

In times of political or social unrest in the host country or region, or when the U.S. becomes part of a political conflict anywhere in the world, additional precautions are advisable.

- Stay informed on the current situation by listening daily to the television or radio, if available. Ask friends, your host family and peers to share relevant information. In case of an emergency, remain in contact with on-site staff and watch for advisories that may be made to the public through media.
- When in large cities and other popular tourist destinations, try to avoid places that may be frequented by North Americans – bars, night clubs, and fast food restaurants associated with the U.S.
- Stay away from areas known to have large concentrations of residents aligned with interests unfriendly to the U.S. and its allies. Always consult with on-site officials before undertaking travel to neighboring cities or tourist destinations.
- Avoid demonstrations, particularly those directed toward the U.S. If you see a situation developing, resist the temptation to investigate what is happening.
- Don't agree to newspaper or other media interviews regarding political conflicts. It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible.



Safety Outside your Host Country

Before traveling outside your host country, know the safety conditions of locations you will travel through. Most large cities as well as remote areas abroad suffer from common crimes, so use the same precautions abroad that you would in any large metropolitan area in the U.S.

- Know where you are going. Do your homework before traveling – read guidebooks, look at maps, check with local staff, etc.
- Avoid unlit places and walking alone. Stick to well-traveled streets and walk in groups at night.
- Don't carry valuables, even in a backpack or locked luggage. If you must carry cameras, laptops, etc., don't leave them unattended.
- Do not flaunt wallets, purses, cellphones, or cameras. Wear a money belt concealed under your clothing.
- Put valuables in the hotel safe or ask your local contact about storing valuables while at the program site.

Connect with your Embassy

We strongly encourage you to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy before arrival in your host country. Registering can greatly help you if an emergency occurs in your host country or you lose your passport. Register through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at step.state.gov.



Health and Safety Abroad

To study at any university comes with risks, no matter where you study. Students need to act responsibly and maturely whether they study in their hometown, another state or across the globe.

The ATU Study Abroad Office holds the health and safety of its students as its highest priority. We have made every effort to make our programs as safe as possible, and provide our students and faculty with the information they need to make safe and informed decisions. Trips can be canceled at any time by the university due to recommendations by the U.S. State Department and/or CDC during infectious disease outbreaks or other concerns.

Here are a few tips to keep you as safe as possible while abroad:

- Live like a local. This not only enhances your cultural immersion, it also helps you stay safer. The more you “blend in” the less likely you are to be a target of a crime.
- Guard your possessions. It is always a good idea to keep your passport and credit cards in a passport wallet that you can wear under your garments. Do not leave your luggage unattended, especially in airports. Make multiple copies and/or digital scans of your passport and write down your credit cards and debit card numbers as well as the contact phone number on them. This will make it much easier for you to obtain a replacement if lost or stolen.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Be alert, especially in crowded areas, such as public transportation and popular sights. Pickpocketing is common in tourist areas, so keep your valuables, such as jewelry and phones, well out of reach and in a safe place. If you come across a demonstration or protest, steer clear. Often, seemingly peaceful demonstrations can turn violent with little warning.
- Know basic phrases in the host language. It is much easier to get around when you know a few key phrases in the native language, such as “Hello,” “Goodbye,” “Where is the bathroom?” and “I need a doctor.”
- Use the buddy system. There is always greater safety in numbers, especially when travelling abroad. Avoid exploring on your own and never travel with strangers. Always inform someone you know well of your travel plans for each day.

Health Insurance

Any student travelling abroad with an ATU-sponsored program is required to purchase CISI Insurance. Check with the Study Abroad Office for details.

Additional Resources for Safety:

[U.S. Department of State Study Abroad](#)

[U.S. Department of State Country Information Sheets](#)

[U.S. Department of State Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Find the help you need

If you do require medical attention while overseas, use your resources to find a trusted provider. Login to the Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) insurance website, culturalinsurance.com to find lists on English speaking doctors in countries around the world. You may also want to connect with on-site staff or the US Embassy to find the help you need.



Alcohol and Drugs

It may be legal for you to consume alcohol in your host country based on your age, but the customs regarding alcohol use may be very different from our own. In any case, alcohol abuse can create dire circumstances for your safety. Know laws and customs around alcohol consumption in your host country.

If you chose to drink, do so wisely. Always drink in moderation, be sensible and surround yourself with friends who you trust and who will watch out for you. Remember you are still in an unfamiliar setting and drinking too much may put you in a vulnerable position, as your judgement will be impaired.

You are ultimately responsible for your own behavior overseas. If a conduct report is made to the Study Abroad Office regarding an ATU student overseas, the report will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct.



[ATU Office of Student Conduct](#)

(479) 968-0239

Doc Bryan Student Services

1605 N Coliseum Drive

Violation of local laws or ATU policies could result in dismissal from your program, academic withdrawal from the university and disciplinary action when you return to campus.

Sexual Health

As in the U.S., you should take appropriate precautions to avoid exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases/infections. For more information, visit the CDC's [STD page](#) or the [World Health Organization's](#) page on sexually transmitted infections.

Is it Legal?

If it is legal for you to drink in your host country and you chose to do so follow these tips:

- Don't go out alone. Go with a group of friends and leave together
- Always be aware of your surroundings and always trust your instincts
- Do not leave your drink unattended
- Never leave your belongings unattended
- Know what you're drinking, count your drinks and know your limits
- Slow down, don't chug. Space your drinks and alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- Never accept anything from a stranger
- Make sure you eat; it will help with alcohol absorption
- Designated drivers should not be drinking for 24 hours
- Be aware of the cost of alcohol and know how much you are spending when out
- Remember you don't need alcohol to have fun



Dietary Needs

If you have special dietary needs, be sure to start thinking about how you will meet those needs overseas. Start to research the food culture tied to your needs, and consider where you might be eating the majority of your meals.

If you will be living with a host family, be sure to disclose your needs when you communicate with your provider. They will often ask you to fill out a housing form, so do so completely and do not be afraid to be honest about what you need. Stating your needs before you arrive may be easier than having to explain them in person. In most other housing situations, such as on-campus dormitories or off-campus apartments, you may have more control over when and what you eat and do.

Vegetarians or students on special diet need to be aware that their dietary needs might not be easily met in some countries. Be sure to discuss this with your medical provider. Students may also wish to consult travel guidebooks, which include information for vegetarians.

Overseas Housing

Your housing arrangements abroad may take the form of host families, shared apartments, student dormitory housing or hotels. You will typically receive notification of your housing arrangements from your host institution's accommodation office or your program provider prior to your departure. In any case, the relations between you and the people you are living with should be based on mutual respect. Make the most of your stay, and be considerate of others and accept different ways of doing things. Think about taking a small gift to your host family or roommates like something distinctive from your hometown, a calendar or picture book from the U.S. or ATU memorabilia.

Remember with any aspect of overseas study, and especially with your living situations – keep an open mind. If problems do come up that can't be settled between you and your host family or roommates, discuss them with the housing coordinator on-site or your program director.

Host Families

The key to a successful host family experience is communication. Inform your host family of any allergies or special needs at the beginning of your stay. At any time, if you feel uncomfortable with your host family, do not hesitate to contact the housing coordinator and ask to change families for your safety and security.



Communication While Abroad

Staying connected while abroad is easy with the help of technology. One of the first things you should do when you arrive is call a family member or friend to let them know you arrived.

If you plan to take your own computer overseas, review accommodation information for internet hookup and international specifications. Contact your host if you have questions about computer and telephone access.

There are many resources for communicating with friends, family, and other important people back in the U.S. while you're abroad, but try not to stay overly connected with contacts back at home, especially on social media. Remember to enjoy and appreciate your experience overseas.

Cell Phones

- In many cases, U.S. phones don't work on alternate wireless networks abroad. If you want a cellphone plan overseas, you will likely need to buy a phone in country.
- It is common for students to take their disconnected American smart phones overseas, and use them to connect to Wi-Fi. This way you can use apps and access the internet, but not make calls or send texts.
- Apps like WhatsApp are great to use to text and call internationally for free. Download it on your phone through the app store.

Online Applications

- Know what the internet connections will be like where you are traveling. You may have access through your host university or housing, and connections are available at public libraries and cafes.
- Most webmail applications can be accessed from any computer with internet.
- Skype and Google Voice are affordable means of internet based international calling. The services offers free voice or video chats from computer to computer, and may have computer to phone options to call any phone number from your computer.

Blogs and Social Media

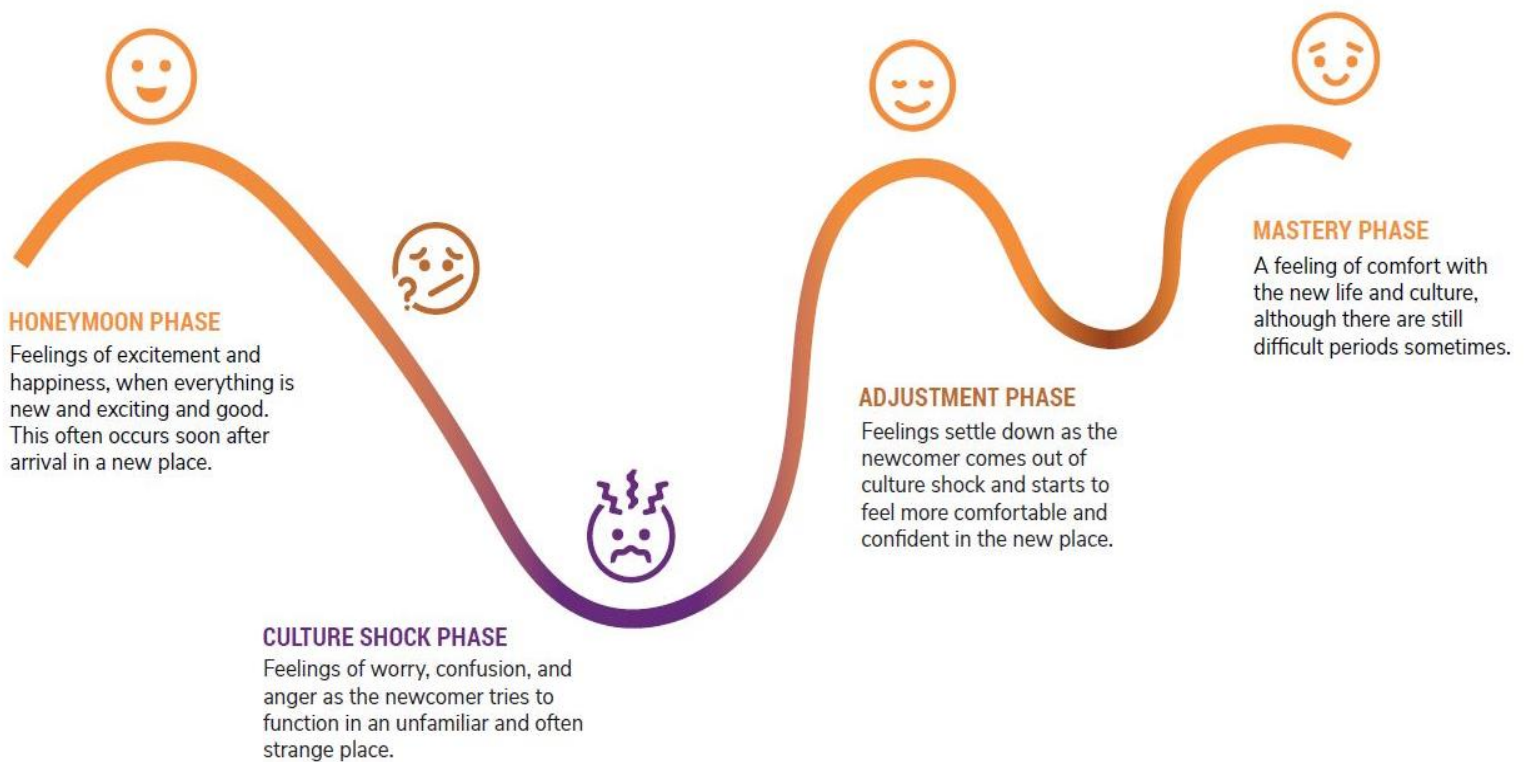
- Blogs can be a great way to inform friends and family of your adventures while abroad. Talk to the ATU Study Abroad Office if you would like to write blogs about your study abroad experience
- Use your personal social media accounts to share your experiences with your followers, your provider and the Study Abroad Office. Use the hashtag #ATUGlobal and tag your provider in posts about your time overseas.
- Post photo albums on free sites such as snapfish.com or flickr.com, among others.

Cross Cultural Adjustment

Living in a new culture can be exhilarating, rewarding and stimulating. It can also be frustrating. It is one thing to tour a country, but it is another to live and function according to different norms.

When students spend a significant amount of time living and studying abroad, they are often faced with many new ideas, customs and modes of interaction. While these things may cause you to feel culture shock, they are exactly why we live, travel and study abroad! Knowing how to prepare yourself before you leave and how to deal with your new environment can help.

Your time abroad may go something like this:



<https://coresourceexchange.org/support-poster/the-u-curve-of-cultural-adjustment/>

Strategies for Cultural Adjustment

Culture shock may be inevitable to some degree, but there are basic things you can do to get the most out of your time abroad.

Before you go

Talk to others who have lived or traveled overseas. Hearing firsthand accounts of time spent abroad is the best way to get a picture of what to expect. Everyone comes away with a different experience though, so talk to many different people to hear a variety of experiences and views.

Learn as much as you can about the culture. If you educate yourself about the country where you will be living, you will begin to understand and appreciate your new surroundings. Read through a guidebook to get yourself excited about exploring your new country; learn about history, natural resources, social customs, religions, art and political structures; find out about the culture's set of manners, expected behavior and unspoken rules; read about the country's present national issues; and learn about current affairs. This will help you get a sense of how people see the world from different perspectives.

Become more familiar with local language. Continue to study the language until you depart. Rent and watch foreign films to become accustomed to the rhythm and sounds of the language.

Know what is happening in the U.S. You will find people around the world know far more about the U.S. and its policies than you do. Expect to be asked about your opinions and to hear the opinions of others.

When you get there

Ask questions. This is the easiest way to find out more about your host culture. Don't be afraid to ask questions to your host family or roommates. Observe your surroundings, notice how the people around you dress, eat, greet each other and carry themselves. This will help you adapt more easily.

Expect frustration at times. People will do things differently in your new home, and you will not always think their way is as good as yours. You are bound to have communication problems if you are not using your native language or dialect. Try to stay away from ethnocentric attitudes (belief that one's own culture is superior to all others). Adopt a sense of cultural relativism and learn to accept your new culture for what it is.

Expect to miss home at times. Homesickness is natural, especially if you have never been away from home. Remember that your family and friends would not have encouraged you to go overseas if they did not want you to gain the most from this experience. Don't let thoughts of home occupy you to the point that you are not able to enjoy the exciting new culture that surrounds you. Think of all you will share with your family and friends when you return home.

Expect to hear criticism of the U.S. If you educate yourself on American politics and foreign policies, you will be more prepared to handle these discussions as they come up. Remember criticism of U.S. policies is not personal. Most foreign nationals are very interested in the U.S.

Do not expect local people to come and find you. When was the last time you approached a lonely-looking foreign student with an offer of friendship? Things are not necessarily any different where you are going. If you are not meeting people through your classes, make other efforts to meet them. Join clubs, participate in sports and attend other university functions.

Write a journal or keep a blog. One of the best ways to deal with cultural adjustments and to reflect on the differences between U.S. and the other cultures is to regularly write about your experiences. When you return home, you will have more than just memories, souvenirs, and photos; you will have a written record of your changing attitudes and process of learning about the culture.

Tolerate ambiguity. You may not understand what is going on around you sometimes, especially if you are in a non-English speaking country. That's okay. Staying open, patient, accepting, and relaxed can help you maneuver through new situations and help ensure that you have a positive experience abroad.

Talk to someone if you have a serious problem. The staff in your host institution international office or your on-site program provider are available to counsel you with problems. Share smaller problems with other international students since they are going through the same process and can provide a day-today support group.



Preparing to Return

Course Registration

Before pre-registration for the semester, after your study abroad program, contact your academic advisor by email to discuss your course selection and register for classes.

Getting Academic Credit Back to ATU

Before you leave your host institution, you must request that an original transcript will be sent to the ATU Study Abroad Office. We will work with other offices on campus to insure credit and grade transfer.

Housing

If you plan to live on campus when you return to ATU, then you should apply for housing online through your OneTech account by the designated deadline.

Evaluation

Help us evaluate our programs and services, as well as your host institution's programs and services by completing an on-line survey while the experience is still fresh on your mind. You will be contacted by the Study Abroad Office shortly after your return with a link to the online evaluation.



Diversity & Inclusion

Arkansas Tech Study Abroad works to ensure that our programs are accessible to and supportive of students of diverse and underrepresented backgrounds throughout each stage of the study abroad process. We seek to engage and support all students throughout their study abroad experience. As you research your study abroad options, consider how aspects of your identity might shape your experience.

Race & Ethnicity

As a student traveling abroad, you may be concerned about potential racial bias and prejudice without your usual support system. Or, you may be looking forward to being part of the majority population for the first time in your life. You may find that interacting with a community that has a different racial and ethnic makeup than your community at home can be a valuable learning experience.

There is no reason that your racial or ethnic background should prevent you from studying abroad; however, it is important to be aware of the environment you will be entering. You may find it most helpful to speak with other students of color who have studied or traveled in your host country and can provide advice. We also recommend talking to a representative of a specific program or university about the local demographic and cultural realities.

When you contemplate potential destinations, take into consideration all facets of a culture, including possible racism and discrimination. Research the political, cultural and historical context of the country where you will be studying. If you would like to speak with a student of your same racial or ethnic background, our office may be able to put you in touch with students who have studied abroad. Methods of overcoming discrimination abroad can be similar to the methods you use at home. Finding new support groups and adjusting to a new comfort zone is essential to having a fulfilling education abroad experience.

Things to Consider:

- What is the minority, majority, and plurality racial and ethnic composition of my host country?
- Where do people of my race/ethnicity fit into my host country's society? Am I likely to be a target of racism/classism, or am I going to be treated the same way in my host country as I am in the U.S.?
- What is the history of racial and ethnic relations and/or tensions in my host country? Is the situation currently hostile to members of a minority race, majority race, or particular ethnicity or religion?
- Are issues of racism/ethnic discrimination influenced by immigration in my host country? How do politicized immigration concerns fuel racial tensions? What is the character of immigrant communities?
- Are there laws in the host country governing race relations? Ethnic relations? What protections are offered to ethnic or racial minorities?

Further reading on this topic:

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/articles/students-of-color-abroad>

Women

No matter where you study, you may experience a shift in the ways gender identities, roles, and norms are perceived compared to what you are used to at home. It's possible that you may be treated differently or be expected to treat others differently based on these factors, and your behavior in some situations may be viewed differently abroad than in the U.S. Consider your actions and inform yourself as best as possible about behavioral expectations, dating, and relationships in your host culture. You may find that what is viewed as acceptable behavior in your host country is offensive to you or makes you uncomfortable. It's important to check societal expectations with your own personal values.

Whether you have traveled extensively or this is your first time abroad, it's important to consider your host country's cultural attitude towards gender roles and norms, especially related to women. Some countries have well-defined gender roles that are ingrained in local customs and/or laws, while others are more fluid with their perception of gender. It's important to be patient with what you might see as restrictive or too progressive. Finding ways to engage with these differences and to learn from them is an important part of cross-cultural understanding.

Things to Consider:

- Follow the example of women from your host country; dress according to local culture and interact with men according to local customs.
- Be aware of cultural differences, including body language, that may be misinterpreted in your host culture.
- Trust your instincts. If you do not feel safe or if someone's behavior is making you uncomfortable, remove yourself from the situation.
- Travel in groups of at least two, especially when you are unfamiliar with a city or town. Walk with purpose and avoid eye contact with strangers.
- Firmly say "no" to any invitation you do not want and turn away. Ignore persistent overtures.
- Stay in control. Don't drink alcohol; staying sober allows you to be alert and aware of your surroundings.

Further reading on this topic:

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/articles/women-going-abroad>

LGBTQ

You may already identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or you may still be exploring your identity; regardless LGBTQ+ students face some special considerations when choosing a study abroad program.

Laws, cultures, and popular attitudes vary from country to country in terms of how sexual orientation, same-sex sexual contact, and gender identities are defined and understood. Some countries are more inclusive and more supportive of LGBTQ+ rights than the U.S. In others, it may be inadvisable, illegal, or even dangerous for you to come out abroad. Knowing these laws and cultural expectations may help you to decide what countries you might like to visit if you will be out abroad or if you will pursue relationships while abroad.

Things to Consider:

- If you choose a location where you will need to hide your identity for legal or cultural reasons, how will this impact your overall study abroad experience?
- Do you want/need to be part of a supportive LGBTQ+ community? Are there LGBTQ+ organizations on your host campus or in the community?
- What are the laws and cultural norms surrounding relationships and dating? Even if you do not plan to have a sexual relationship while away, become informed about specific laws pertaining to sexual behavior and sexual/gender identity.
- What types of housing options are available? If you will live with a host family, do you want to specifically request a family that is known to be supportive of LGBTQ+ students? Some students have come out to their host families prior to arrival, while others prefer to get to know them first and then make that decision.
- If you regularly utilize any health or counseling services at home, will these be available and covered by insurance abroad?
- If your gender presentation is different from your legal sex, or if you are in the process of transition, what types of challenges might you face with travel, immigration, and documents?

Further reading on this topic:

<https://outrightinternational.org/>

Disability & Accessibility

A successful experience for ATU students with disabilities wishing to participate in study abroad programs around the world begins with thorough planning. Although programs and universities abroad are becoming more aware of the inclusion of students with disabilities, the extent to which accommodations can be provided depends on the nature of the accommodation, the general situation in that particular country regarding accessibility and available services, and the creativity and flexibility of the student and staff/faculty in planning for the experience abroad.

Understand, however, that attitudes and perceptions about accessibility and accommodation for students with emotional, mental, learning, or physical disabilities may vary at different program sites and locations.

To discuss what accommodations you might need, contact the ATU Study Abroad Office or ATU's Office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS).

Things to Consider:

- You should be aware that the level of accessibility, services, and accommodation to which you have access at your home campus may not be available at the program site and host universities.
- Other countries may provide access and accommodations in different ways.
- Learn about the cultural aspects regarding individuals with disabilities in the country(ies) where you will be studying and traveling, and think about how you will interact in a new cultural environment with your disability.

Further reading on this topic:

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/articles/students-disabilities-abroad>

Studying in Germany as a Disabled Student

<https://www.studying-in-germany.org/studying-in-germany-as-a-disabled-student/>

Studying in UK as a Student with Disabilities

<https://www.studying-in-uk.org/studying-in-uk-as-a-student-with-disabilities/>

Studying in Australia as a Disabled Student

<http://www.studying-in-australia.org/studying-in-australia-as-a-disabled-student/>

Religion

Religion is a salient aspect of many cultures around the world. Still, depending on where you go, you may find that religion plays a larger or smaller role in society compared with the U.S. The level of commitment to religious diversity and freedom can vary by country. Whether you identify as a member of the dominant religion, a member of another religion, an agnostic, an atheist, or any other religious or spiritual affiliation, it will be important to understand general attitudes of religious tolerance and other religious observances in your host country.

Spending time in a country where the major religion is different from your own can lead to a better understanding of your own notions of spirituality. Additionally, you may wish to connect with a religious community abroad to further your cultural immersion or find a source of support during your time abroad.

Things to Consider:

- Will you be part of a religious majority or a religious minority abroad?
- If you are planning to practice your religion abroad, are there any places of worship you can visit? If not, how will you plan to practice your religion?
- How tolerant is your host country about religion and spirituality? How are atheists or agnostics perceived? Will it be safe for you to wear religious symbols and/or clothing?
- Is there a separation of church and state in your host country? Are there laws about religion?

- If you have religious dietary restrictions, will they be accommodated in your host country? If you are living in a homestay, are you open to living in a household with a different religious background than yours?
- Are there any religious holidays that are celebrated as public events in your host country?
- Are there any places of worship that you will be able to visit as part of your study abroad program or on your own? What do you need to know before visiting (such as dress code, etc.)?

Further reading on this topic:

<https://www.diversityabroad.com/articles/religious-diversity-abroad>