Vanderbilt University
Global Education Office

Know Before You Go!

On the inside...

Luggage
Suitcases: most airlines limit you to two 50-lb bags or less! Check with your carrier!

Backpacks: if you plan to do long-term traveling, this may be easier to carry

Carry-on bag: probably the most important thing to consider. A 3-day backpack is great for traveling and weekend trips.

IMPORTANT: Check with your airline for its regulations and restrictions concerning weight, quantity, and dimensions of baggage. If you exceed your airline’s limit, you will have to pay extra fees or you may not be permitted to check the excess baggage.

Different airlines have different regulations so check for all of legs of your travel.

Guidebooks
Let’s Go offers great advice for travel for students on a budget: www.letsgo.com

Lonely Planet is a popular and reputable brand for student travelers, and it also offers great hostel recommendations. www.lonelyplanet.com

Electronics
Digital camera—Be prepared to take lots of pictures! Have extra batteries for your camera as they can be expensive abroad.

USB drives—Handy for storing photos or for transporting school files when Wi-Fi is not available.

Laptop—They are useful if you are a night owl (foreign libraries are not always open late) and you can easily Skype with family and friends!

Plug adapters
Different countries use different plugs. Buy these either before you leave or when you arrive to your host site.

Voltage Converters
Foreign countries may use higher electrical current. Your electronics may require voltage converters. Check your hardware to see what voltage they can take.

What to Bring & What NOT to Bring

What to Bring:
Layers – consider season, climate, average temperatures
Accessories to spruce up a sparse wardrobe
Deodorant, sunscreen, contact solution
Women’s hygiene products if you prefer a specific brand
Plug adapter that fits the needs of your country and anywhere you’ll visit, voltage converter, flash drive (USB)

What NOT to Bring:
Large quantities of shampoo and conditioner. Unless you can’t live without a certain brand, you can buy shampoo when you arrive.

Suitcases packed completely full: you need to save some room for the things you will buy abroad!

Hair dryers, flat irons, etc. Really—don’t bring them—you’ll fry them.
**Host Country Research & Passport Smarts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things to know about your country:</th>
<th>Passport</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Make a photocopy of your passport and visa page and carry it with you. Never carry your passport with you while abroad, unless you are traveling outside of your host country. It is best to keep the photocopies separate from the passport and visa in case one or the other is stolen. Keep it stored in a safe place in your room or with your onsite staff. This is by far the most valuable document you will possess while abroad. If your purse or bag is stolen, it is easier to cancel a credit card than it is to replace a passport!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Make sure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your intended date of departure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural issues and differences</td>
<td>Fill in the emergency information page of your passport!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Register with the U.S. embassy in your host country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward women, minorities, and LGBTQI communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read the Consular Information Sheets &amp; CDC info</td>
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<tr>
<td>Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws!</td>
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**Savvy Budgeting**

*Use ATMs!* Traveler’s cheques are often not accepted abroad, are difficult to use, and subject to poor exchange rates.

Withdraw enough money from the ATM to avoid frequent international withdrawal fees. However, make sure to leave most of your cash in your room to minimize the risk of losing money.

ATMs & credit cards offer the best exchange rate. Cash is used more widely abroad, so don’t rely heavily on credit/debit cards. For example, restaurants rarely offer separate checks when dining in a group, and cash will be important.

Check to see if your bank has affiliates abroad which can reduce or eliminate transaction fees.

Consider setting a weekly budget from mid-week to mid-week, this will allow you time to “recover” from a big travel weekend.

Know the cultural norms of your destinations on tipping and bargaining.

Set up online banking to keep an eye on accounts and facilitate transfers.

**Before you go:**

___ Notify banks & credit card companies, specifying where you will mostly be and for how long.

___ make photocopies of all cards (front and back) and know the numbers to call if lost/stolen

___ check to see if your bank has an affiliate abroad to save you money on network fees

___ know your network (Cirrus, Star, Plus, etc.)

___ make a realistic budget and stick to it!

Keep an eye on exchange rates for your host country’s currency and the currency of countries you may be traveling to.

XE Currency Converter has an easy to use currency calculator that uses up-to-date exchange rates. [http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/)

For more helpful tips on budgeting while abroad, check out these resources from GEO:

Guide to Budgeting While Abroad

Budgeting spreadsheet
Independent Traveling

You may have heard of Eurail passes, but they are not always the best option for students.

Most national train companies offer cheaper fares. Many also offer youth rail discounts which make travel within the country even less expensive.

Typically, Eurail passes are only economical if you travel for large blocks of time (2 weeks or more) and are crossing great expanses of territory.

If you do decide to purchase a Eurail pass, do it in the USA—it is almost impossible to find Eurail outlets in Europe since they are for non-European citizens!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Real Scoop on Low-Cost Airlines &amp; Hostels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Airlines</strong> (<a href="http://ryanair.com">Ryanair</a>, <a href="http://easyjet.com">EasyJet</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The low fares on these airlines are legitimate! Just beware of add-on fees, which can cost you. Many times, the fees and taxes may surpass the cost of the ticket itself!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hostels</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hostels are fun, cheap, and efficient. Make a reservation before you go—you can make a down payment to reserve your place and pay the rest when you arrive!</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you plan on traveling with a smaller group (4-8 people), sometimes you can book entire suites (safer and more convenient).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Things to bring with you: Locks for lockers and luggage zippers, flip flops, and a towel.</td>
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<th>Keeping in Touch</th>
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<td><strong>Computers &amp; Internet</strong></td>
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<td>Internet cafes are very common in major cities. Generally, a pass can be purchased for a certain quantity of hours that makes using the computer and internet relatively inexpensive.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bringing your own laptop</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>While a laptop is by no means required to study abroad, many students find that bringing one is a great convenience. There are several advantages to having a laptop while abroad. First, it is less costly than writing papers at internet cafes. If you are a late-night paper writer, your own computer is especially advisable. Second, it is a great way to upload and store your digital pictures without having to worry about storing them on an internet site or deleting them from your memory card. Almost everywhere you will be (homestay, residence hall) will likely have wi-fi.</td>
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- Do not leave your baggage unattended in public areas or on any form of public transportation.
- Keep a close eye on luggage while on trains and buses, especially on overnight trips. Try to keep your bag with you at all times (even in bed!)
- Locks for zippers can be a good deterrent (but remember that checked luggage cannot be locked).
Cell Phones & Internet Phones

Cell Phones

The best option is to buy a cheap phone in your host country to use for communication while abroad.

Some programs provide cell phones, or some host families will keep phones students have left.

Phones are generally available for purchase with pay-as-you-go plans; cell phone plans as we are accustomed to in the USA are not as common.

Usually, incoming calls on your cell phone are free to you. Family & friends can get cheap international calling plans to call you abroad.

Text messaging is cheaper than calling another cell phone—you’ll use this a lot with your friends in your host country.

Your cell phone will most likely work when you travel outside your host country, but you may face limited service and increased roaming charges.

Call your carrier to find out about “unlocking” and using your American phone abroad.

Data plans for iPhones and BlackBerries can be costly abroad! Beware!

Internet Phones

Skype: an online service that lets you connect and talk to another person online for free!

Set up your computer and those people you’ll Skype with before you leave. You may also want to purchase a headset.

Fixed Phone Lines & Native Language Issues

Fixed Phone Lines

Call centers (generally in the same building as internet cafés) often offer land lines which you can use to place international calls at low rates.

Pay phones work for incoming and outgoing calls and are much more prevalent in foreign countries.

Calling cards purchased abroad offer cheaper rates for calling internationally.

Long distance calls are cheaper over a fixed line, although host families may not be amenable to your using their phone. It doesn’t hurt to ask!

Communicating in the Native Language

It’s helpful and courteous to know a few words and phrases in the language of the country you are in. Consider learning the following:

Please

Thank you

Do you speak English?

I don’t speak ________ (language of the country you are in).

Remember to learn these also for countries to which you travel independently!

Most guidebooks include basic phrases in various languages.
Staying Healthy

Some tips

Make sure you eat regularly. Starvation is not a good way to save money! Stay hydrated with clean water sources.

Jet lag is real and you need to be ready for it.

Don’t stress the little things. Long lines, rude people, flight delays and the like can only ruin your experience if you let them!

Get dental and medical check-ups well in advance of your departure.

Bring a mini-first aid kit with aspirin, ibuprofen, allergy meds, Band-Aids, etc. Leave drugs in their original packaging.

Get flu vaccines before you go; wash hands often; don’t share food & drink.

Bring these from home (you’ll thank us later):

- Deodorant/antiperspirant, sun block, feminine hygiene products, contact lens solution & supplies, preferred allergy medication, travel-size toiletries for weekend trips.

Staying Safe

Most study abroad host cities and countries are quite safe. However, you always need to use common sense.

In Public

Be wary of how you hold your back-pak or purse. Keep it in front of you and make sure that zippers are zipped closed.

Be cautious of where you keep your wallet—a back pocket is exactly where thieves expect it to be.

Avoid wearing conspicuous clothing or jewelry. Do not become an easy target for thieves!

You may want to avoid political demonstrations and other situations that may become unruly or where anti-American sentiments may be expressed.

Out and About

Avoid placing your purse or bag on the back of your chair or at your feet while in public places.

Take extra caution while using internet cafes—since these places are frequented by foreigners, robbery is also common.

Public transportation is also a high-risk zones and a favorite of thieves.

Lock your room door, consider a lock for your laptop, and don’t leave items unattended.

Always trust your instincts and stay alert!

Embrace the buddy system & don’t walk alone at night

Spring for the taxi late at night—it’s worth it.

Being Responsible

Conduct that violates Vanderbilt’s Honor Code may result in immediate dismissal from the program. Students are required to abide by the laws of their host country with respect to the age at which alcoholic beverages may be consumed. All of the policies with respect to alcoholic beverages and illicit drugs included in the Student Handbook apply.
Coming back to Vandy

Re-Entry – Programming offered by GEO helps you reorient yourself to campus after you return from abroad. We’ll get in touch when you’re back on campus!

GEO also hosts a photo contest for study abroad students. Watch for the email.

The Study Abroad Alumni student organization is a great resource to connect study abroad alumni with cultural events and promote conversations on international experiences.

Maximizing Your Study Abroad Experience

Peer Advisor – This is a paid position with GEO involving study abroad outreach, weekly office hours, attending events, and more.

Student Ambassador – This is a volunteer position with GEO and all returnees are invited to join. You simply agree to share your email address with prospective students and tell them about your experience!
# Vandy Card & Dining

**Before You Go**
- Log on to your Commodore Card account and set Commodore Cash to $0 by the deadline listed on your checklist.
- Meal plans will be taken off of your account by the Card Office after GEO sends them a final list of study abroad participants.

**When You Come Back**
- Log on to your Commodore Card account to select your desired meal plan and Commodore Card options by the deadline listed on your checklist.
- Set all of your preferences by the deadline listed on your checklist!

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# Housing

**Students studying abroad fall semester/academic year**

**What you need to do:**
- Contact the housing office immediately and let them know you are going abroad in the fall
- Cancel your contract if you have not already done so
- Regularly check your @vanderbilt.edu email address
- Off-campus authorization for the next semester is contingent on vacancies for that term. If there are vacancies in the housing inventory the university will not allow students to live off campus when returning from abroad
- See your checklist for the dates and deadlines regarding housing assignments and notifications.
- Designate a proxy (this can be a responsible friend or the housing office—more information through Housing).

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**Do not hesitate to contact the Housing Office with any questions or concerns!**

http://www.vanderbilt.edu/ResEd
resed@vanderbilt.edu
Program Provider Contact Information

Your program provider is the best source of information for on-site matters. Questions about arrival, housing, program forms, and more should be addressed to your provider contact.

CIEE
www.ciee.org
300 Fore Street
Portland, ME 04101
Phone: 1-800-40-STUDY or 207-553-7600 Fax: 207-553-7699
E-mail: studyinfo@ciee.org

IES
www.iesabroad.org
33 N. LaSalle Street, 15th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602-2602
Phone: 1-800-995-2300 or 312-944-1750 Fax: 312-944-1448
Email: info@iesabroad.org

Institute for Study Abroad—Butler University
www.ifsa-b Butler.org
1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 305
Indianapolis, IN 46208-3345
Phone: 1-800-858-0229 or 317-940-9336
Fax 317-940-9704
E-mail: studyabroad@ifsa-b.utler.org

SIT
www.sit.edu/studyabroad
1 Kipling Road
PO Box 676
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676
Phone: 802-257-7751 or 800-257-7751
Email: studyabroad@sit.edu

CET
www.cetacademicprograms.com
CET Academic Programs
1920 N Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 1-800-40-STUDY or 202-530-7600 Fax: 202-342-0317
E-mail: cet@academic-travel.com

DIS
www.dis.sk
1313 Fifth St SE, Ste 113
Minneapolis MN 55414
Phone: 1-800-247-3477 or 612-627-0141 Fax: 612-627-0141
Email: dis@umn.edu

IES
www.iesabroad.org
33 N. LaSalle Street, 15th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602-2602
Phone: 1-800-995-2300 or 312-944-1750 Fax: 312-944-1448
Email: info@iesabroad.org

Financial Aid
615-322-3591
www.vanderbilt.edu/financialaid

Vanderbilt Resources

Student Health Center
615-322-2427
www.vanderbilt.edu/student_health
Call to schedule a 30 minute appointment at least four weeks before your departure date.

Student Accounts
615-322-6693
www.vanderbilt.edu/stuaccts/

International SOS
In case of emergencies, your first point of contact should always be your Resident Director, Program Leader or other onsite contact.

ISOS emergencies constitute situations in which you cannot reach your designated onsite contact (natural disasters, political instability, medical emergencies). If the situation is not a true emergency, Vanderbilt may bill your student account for services rendered by ISOS.

Students need to register with ISOS before departure. Information will be available in your GEO account.

GEO Information

Staff
Contact your GEO advisor with questions about billing, costs, course credit, and transcripts. Make an appointment or send an email to the advisor for your program:
vanderbi.lt/geostaff

Peer Advisors
These returned students have been through the study abroad process and want to answer your questions!
Contact them at vandypeeradvisors@gmail.com.
For more information and a list of current Peer Advisors, visit vanderbi.lt/geopeers.

Student Ambassadors
These are students who are available via email to answer any program-specific questions you may have.
vanderbi.lt/geopeers