

Claremont McKenna College

STUDY ABROAD PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE



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Introduction

Congratulations on making the decision to study abroad! You are preparing for a life and career in a world of global markets and swiftly changing technology. By building international study into your college education, you will bolster your ability to thrive in this context. Study abroad is an adventure you will not regret and it will deepen and broaden you in ways you never imagined. How much you invest into this experience will determine the real value of your participation.

You are about to embark on what has been for most students an incredibly rewarding and life-changing experience. As we begin your preparation, we cannot predict how everything will be for you next semester, but we will try to equip you with some practical information to ease your transition to a new culture. Please feel free to share this guide with family, friends, and anyone else who will be supporting you during your time abroad.

CMC Emergency Contacts:

[Kristen Mallory](#), Director, Center for Global Education
(909) 621-8267
Skype: kristenjmallory

Campus Security
(909) 621-8170 (after Hours Emergencies)

Important CMC Contact Information:

[Dean of Students](#):
(909) 621-8114

[Financial Aid](#):
(909) 621-8356

[Registrar](#):
(909) 621-8101

[Student Accounts](#):
(909) 621-8232

[Off-Campus Study](#):
(909) 621-8267

Important non-CMC Contact Information:

[U.S. State Department](#)
(202) 647-5225

U.S. State Department Citizens Emergency Center:
During Business Hours: (888) 407-4747 or (317) 472-2327
After Hours: (202) 501-4444

Read your program Pre-Departure Materials in addition to this workbook.

Before You Go

Pre-Departure Checklist

- If you have questions about your financial aid award, please make an appointment with the Financial Aid Office before leaving campus.
- Obtain a passport and student visa. Many programs will send you visa information once you are accepted. Our office cannot obtain your visa for you.
- Arrange and purchase your airfare. We encourage you to ensure that your ticket allows you to change your return date for a low fee. If you are not signed up for a frequent flyer program, you may consider doing so.
- Check your luggage allowance (number of suitcases, weight & size) with your airline(s). Remember to put your

name and address inside and outside all luggage, backpacks, sleeping bags, etc. Check current [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\) regulations](#).

- Remember that some items should never be packed in your luggage: money, passport, credit/debit cards, medicines, important papers, etc. Take these items in your carry-on.
- Photocopy your important documents (passport, credit/debit cards, etc.). Keep one copy in your luggage and leave one at home with family members. A scanned copy or taking a photo that you email to yourself is an excellent way of keeping a copy!
- Do not assume that it is legal to bring your prescription drugs into any other country. Please research your prescription and country for legal advice. Obtain a doctor's prescription or note for any medicine you are bringing with you. Bring a supply of the prescription drugs you need for the entire program, in their original packaging.
- Consider bringing small gifts from home to your host family or to give to friends you meet. Something native to your hometown is especially nice, such as a picture book, college T-shirts, baseball caps, cookbooks, calendars, CDs. Hollywood and Disneyland souvenirs are also good options.

Consulate Information

CMC highly encourages every U.S. citizen to [register with the U.S. Consulate](#) in your host country.

If you are **not a U.S. citizen, please register with your home country consulate in your host country**. Search for your consulate website online. You should register with your consulate before you arrive in your host country.

Airfare

CGE will provide you with an airfare stipend towards the cost of a roundtrip student airline ticket from Los Angeles to the nearest international airport of your program site. It is your responsibility to purchase your airline ticket with this travel allowance. You have the option of buying into a group flight (if your program offers it) or using any airline, website or travel agent that you prefer. You are not required to depart from Los Angeles. You will receive the actual check for your airfare stipend from CMC before the end of semester, providing that all of your required forms have been submitted to CGE.

Before purchasing your airline ticket we caution you to be aware of any fees associated with changing your flights. Make certain you know what date your program expects you to arrive, and when your program and university final exam dates end. Do not book your ticket for an early departure.

Sources for purchase of discounted student airfare:

[Student Travel Agency](#)

[Student Universe](#)

[Travelocity](#)

[Kayak](#)

Your airline ticket for study abroad **must** be a **round trip ticket**. Should you purchase a one way ticket, you may be denied a visa and/or denied entry upon arrival in your host country.

Costs and Budgets

CMC Invoice

CMC students participating in study abroad or international exchange are charged CMC tuition and the CMC Study Abroad Program Fee (a fee equal to the cost of double room and 16-meal plan at CMC). The Associated Students Fee is not charged. Students continue to receive financial aid, grants, scholarships, etc., while studying abroad. Students are billed in the usual manner.

Sample Semester Bill for Study Abroad based on 2016-2017 CMC Fees:

CMC Tuition	\$25,350.00
Study Abroad Fee	\$7,870.00
Total	\$33,220.00

CMC tuition and the CMC Study Abroad Program Fee cover program tuition and non-refundable commit deposit, housing and meals on the program, airfare stipend, iNext card (including supplemental health coverage and evacuation insurance), and, when indicated by the program provider, a local transportation allowance. It is also used to support the

cost of providing Off-Campus Study at CMC, including pre-departure orientation and advising, support for students in-country, and guidance during the re-entry process. Additionally, it sustains the overall infrastructure of the college including information technology, financial services, public relations, on-line library resources, the Registrar, and the Dean of Students. These resources are available for all students before, during, and after their time abroad.

Student Out-of-Pocket

Student out-of-pocket personal expenses not included in tuition, study abroad fee, and additional stipends include, but are not limited to: program application fees, any refundable security/damage/housing deposits, passport/visa/residence permit fees, cost of obtaining passport/visa/residence permit, immunizations, books, non-academic course fees, optional field trips, cell phones, laundry, postage, entertainment, incidentals, souvenirs, and independent travel. [Estimated personal expenses by program per semester](#)

Budget Planning

The sample budget below will help in estimating expenses for study abroad. Not all categories will apply to every student. Be sure to read carefully all program information to determine what expenses beyond program fees might be required.

- Passport, Visa, and/or Residence Permit Fees
- Immunizations and Medications
- Housing Security and damage deposits
- Optional Field Trips
- Books and Supplies
- Communication with home including cell phone, internet, and Skype
- Personal Expenses
- Independent Travel
- Entertainment

FINANCIAL AID

Students on financial aid continue to receive their financial aid packages as if they were at CMC, including state and federal aid, private and merit scholarships, and grants-in-aid. Parent or guardian expected family contributions (EFCs) will remain the same as if the student were at CMC. Please remember, however, that personal expenses may be different while on study abroad, and these expenses are not included in financial aid. For additional information regarding your specific financial aid package, please contact the Office of Financial Aid.

Packing

Read your Program Provider's suggestions on packing before reading this section.

Remember, you will overpack. Everyone overpacks! Remember that you will be carrying your own bags. You can purchase many basic items abroad. Follow your program provider packing list.

Many international airlines allow two pieces of checked luggage, but it is your responsibility to check with your airline for specific details. Ask about weight limits in both your country of departure and country of arrival. Frequently you may also have a small carry-on if it can fit under your seat. Most students recommend taking a backpack which is useful for carrying books or for traveling once abroad.

On the plane

Have a small carry-on bag packed with essentials (toiletries, prescription medications, and a change of clothes) in case your checked luggage is lost. Keep your passport and acceptance letter from your university/program in your carry-on. You may have to show these papers when you arrive at customs and passport control. Check [current TSA regulations](#) for travelers.

Golden Rule of Packing: *Lay out everything you think you will need and eliminate half.*

- In addition to the outside tag, **put your name and address as well as a photocopy of your passport inside of each piece of luggage.** Make sure you receive a claim check for each item you check. Baggage handlers overseas often check if you have a claim ticket for EACH bag.
- **Never** leave your luggage or any bags unattended. **Never let a stranger watch your luggage** even if you are just going to the restroom or purchasing a meal. **Never agree to carry a bag, package, or piece of**

luggage for anyone.

- **Make two photocopies of your passport ID page, airline tickets(s) and both sides of your ATM/credit card(s).** Leave one copy at home and bring the second copy with you in case something is stolen abroad.

Dos

- Pack versatile, sturdy, easily interchangeable clothes. Bring clothing that you know is going to last through some heavy use. Dark colors are better than whites and comfortable walking shoes are a must.
- Pack some nice clothes for when you want to go to the theater, a concert, or a nice dinner. Pack comfortable clothing, and be sensitive to local customs. Wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts are not appropriate in many countries or when visiting places of worship. Students should dress conservatively when traveling.
- Pack clothing that is appropriate for that country's climate. Find out the traditional weather patterns in the country or region that you are going to be living. When they say "rainy season," believe them!
- Bring an extra pair of contacts or glasses. Contact solutions will be different abroad as well as expensive, so talk to your optometrist about alternative options.
- Take extra passport-size photos of yourself for visas and other official documents you will need to apply for while abroad.
- Pack a little of yourself! You will want to share with your host family and new friends what you and your home are like. You will be amazed at how interested your new friends and host family will be in where you come from. Some suggestions:
 - a book of your home state or region of America
 - photos of your home, family and CMC
 - things to decorate your room or flat
- Consider bringing:
 - A pair of plastic flip flops for use in shower while traveling
 - A small first aid kit
 - Ziploc bags
 - Duct tape—you'll be amazed at all the things you can use it for, from Band-Aids to luggage repair.
 - A few small gifts from your home or CMC (key chains, T-shirts, books, calendars, dishtowels, CDs) to give to your host family or friends.
 - Adapters (to convert voltage of US appliances): Be extra careful with computer equipment. (Check with a computer store to make sure the adapters and plugs you will use abroad are appropriate.)
- Pack a First Aid kit: Band-Aids, sunscreen, upset stomach medication, gauze, adhesive tape, insect repellent.

Don'ts

- Do not pack anything you cannot afford to lose.
- Don't pack anything that you can buy in your destination (i.e. large amounts of toiletries, school supplies, towels, etc.).
- Don't pack as many clothes as you can jam into your suitcases. Laundry is generally very expensive to do abroad, so hopefully you will do as those in your host country do and wear your clothing more than once. Bring clothes that will dry quickly at room temperature or draped over a warm heater.

Passport and Visas

In accordance with international consular practice, all passports must be valid for a **minimum** of six months after your return date to the U.S.

Passport

If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately. The regular processing of a passport will take several weeks to a few months and you must have a valid passport before you can apply for a visa (the stamp in your passport that allows you to enter your host country). U.S. passports may be obtained through selected central U.S. post offices, county courts, and U.S. Government Passport Agencies.

You can apply for your passport at the following location:
Claremont Post Office (in Claremont Village)
140 N. Harvard Avenue, (909) 625-7161

[State Department information](#) on obtaining a passport

Your passport is the most important document you have when outside the United States. Know where it is at all times. Keep it in a safe place. Make copies; keep one copy with you and give one to your family at home. Photocopy the front pages of your passport, your visa, and your entry stamp, and keep them separate from your baggage. Once in a foreign country, keep these copies in a safe place. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen.

Visas

A visa is an endorsement made in your passport that allows you to enter another country. Each country has different visa requirements. Your program provider should send you up-to-date information on obtaining a visa for your country.

Visa requirements tend to include applying and picking up your visa in person, at which point you may have to relinquish your passport. Apply for your visa early if you are traveling abroad for summer or winter break because you may need to surrender your passport. If you must send in your passport with your visa application, be sure to send it by certified return receipt mail, along with the appropriate pre-paid forms for return certified mail.

Student visa requirements may be different from tourist visa requirements, so check with the appropriate consulate or embassy to see what will be required for the country in which you will be studying. Visa procedures and customs requirements are different for students who hold non-U.S. passports. You must inquire directly at the consulate to learn which rules apply to you.

Because each consulate has varying requirements that change periodically, and because consulates prefer to work directly with visa applicants, CGE cannot obtain your visa for you. You must contact the consulate in the jurisdiction of your permanent residence in order to verify requirements, fees, and any specific guidelines for the application process. Your program provider can assist with specific visa inquiries.

Some countries require a residence permit, such as Denmark and Greece. This is not to be confused with housing for your program. Depending on your program, fees for a residence permit may be paid in advance or upon arrival. Your program provider should send you detailed information if you need a residence permit.

Learn about your Host Country

You are going to be living in your host country for many months, so it is helpful to know as much information as possible prior to departure. Read local newspapers and find out current events in your host country. Gather information about political, cultural, religious, legal, safety, health, and environmental conditions. Conducting your own research will be helpful when starting conversations with hosts in country.

Health

Before you leave, you should have a complete physical as well as dental checkup. Students whose medical problems are not easily recognized (such as diabetes, allergic reaction to antibiotics or bee stings, heart conditions, or epilepsy) should consider obtaining a MedicAlert medical ID tag. This tag is internationally recognized. Check with your doctor or hospital to learn how to obtain a MedicAlert medical ID tag.

Prescriptions

Be sure to have your doctor write out any standard prescriptions which you use with both brand and generic names. This includes your eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions, allergy medicine, birth control, and asthma medicine. You should take an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses with you. If your medical plan and your host country regulations allow you to do so, take enough prescription drugs with you to last the entire stay overseas. **Make sure it is legal to bring your medication into your host country.** Pack medications in their original packaging and have the prescription with you in case a customs officer requests it.

Advice on how to handle doctors or insurance companies that refuse to give more than 3 months' supply of a medication:

- Medications in different countries (even when the generic and/or brand name is the same) are not necessarily constituted in the same way, which can cause medical complications for those who switch.
- Doctors in some countries are unwilling to prescribe medications for certain conditions (especially psychiatric or behavioral conditions or eating disorders), so a student who does not bring a sufficient supply may not be able to obtain it locally.
- While customs officials may be unlikely to confiscate medications, in some cases they are legally obliged to do so if there is no accompanying documentation, and in other cases may have the discretionary power to do so.
- Even if a shipping company will send medication overseas, it can be held up (sometimes indefinitely) at customs, and if refrigeration or other environmental conditions need to be maintained for the integrity of the medication, students can run into serious problems.

Immunizations

Your routine immunizations should be up to date. In addition, certain countries require particular immunizations, such as yellow fever, cholera, or proof of freedom from tuberculosis or HIV for entry into the country. [The Centers for Disease Control](#) in Atlanta (404-332-4559) also has recommendations for travel immunizations and malaria prophylaxis for every area of the world. These recommendations might include vaccination against hepatitis A and B, typhoid, rabies, and an anti-malarial medication depending on your travel itinerary and living circumstances. Some vaccinations need to be given in a sequence well before departure. Plan accordingly.

You can get immunizations done at the CUC student health center. An alternate location for immunizations in the Claremont Village is [Hendricks Pharmacy](#).

[The World Health Organization](#) has information on health topics.:

Tuberculosis:

The incidence of tuberculosis is higher in many parts of the world outside the United States. We recommend a tuberculosis screening test before traveling and upon return to the USA.

Counseling

It is important to note that the range of counseling services available to students at CMC will not be available overseas. Many insurance policies, if they reimburse for counseling services at all, may not do so for services provided overseas. For your safety and well-being, it is vital that you inform your program provider of any physical, emotional or psychological difficulties or special needs you have.

iNext Insurance

In addition to students program insurance, all CMC students are issued an iNext – International Travel Insurance Card, offering a complete network of international travel insurance fulfilled through a partnership with Seven Corners/Nationwide, the world's leading travel insurance provider. Coverage and benefits are available for all CMC students traveling outside the United States. Insurance is valid for 365 days from the date of purchase.

CGE notifies iNext of your study abroad location, program dates, full name, and email. iNext will contact you directly through email. You are invited to upload a photo and submit a mailing address to iNext for receipt of your actual iNext card. You are insured whether you have the card on you or not; however, in case of emergency, faster service can be obtained with your iNext card in your wallet.

Every CMC student's iNext card includes *Basic Plan* coverage as follows (Effective as of 9/01/2016):

- Accident Medical Expense - \$25,000
- Sickness/Hospital Benefit - \$15,000
- Accident/Sickness Deductible - \$0
- Dental - \$750
- Emergency Medical Evacuation - \$300,000
- Repatriation of Remains - \$25,000
- Accidental Death & Dismemberment - \$5,000
- Baggage Delay - \$100
- 24 Hour Travel Medical Assistance Services - Included

Students participating on study abroad programs that do not include international health insurance will receive the iNext Platinum Plan as follows (Effective as of 9/01/2016):

- Accident Medical Expense - \$100,000
- Sickness/Hospital Benefit - \$100,000
- Mental Health - \$100,000
- Accident/Sickness Deductible - \$0
- Dental - \$750
- Emergency Medical Evacuation - \$1,000,000
- Repatriation of Remains - \$50,000
- Accidental Death & Dismemberment - Air Only \$100,000/Other \$20,000
- Baggage Delay - \$200
- Travel Delay - \$200
- Lost Baggage and Personal Effects - \$2,500
- 24 Hour Travel Medical Assistance Services - Included

For additional information and a comprehensive description of [iNext plans](#), please visit their website.

Insurance Providers

Each student, in collaboration with family and/or friends, is required to assess the level of insurance provided by his or her personal health insurance coupled with the emergency international health insurance provided by CMC and/or the student's program provider, to determine whether this level of insurance is adequate. Any increase of the iNext International Travel Insurance beyond the provided level or purchase of supplemental insurance through another provider is at your own discretion and expense. CMC requires medical and accident insurance for all students, whether provided by the program provider, through iNext, or through an insurance carrier of the student's choice.

These providers specialize in Study Abroad coverage. This list does not signify CMC endorsement.

[Associated Insurance Plans International, Inc.](#)
[Cultural Insurance Services International \(CISI\)](#)
[FrontierMEDEX](#)
[Gateway Insurance Plans](#)
[HealthCare Global 2000 \(Wallach & Company, Inc.\)](#)
[HTH Worldwide Insurance Services](#)
[International SOS](#)
[iStudentInsurance](#)
[International Student Organization](#)
[LewerMark Student Programs](#)
[On Call International](#)
[Rust International Associates](#)

Academics

Higher Education Abroad

You may be taking all or some of your courses at a foreign university, and you will find the teaching methodology very different than in the U.S. The concept of a broad-based liberal arts program is unknown in many countries; it is not unusual for university students outside North America to study only one subject. Students often are expected to take much more responsibility for shaping their academic program, and instructors provide relatively little guidance (for example, students may be expected to read widely from a long list of resources, with no specific daily assignments). Expectations about the style and form of essays may be different, and grades often depend on one exam, written or oral, given at the end of the semester or year.

Learning about another country's educational system is one of the reasons for studying abroad, but these differences can take some time to assimilate, and thus may interfere with unprepared students' ability to benefit fully from the experience.

Credit Transfer

Academic credit is granted only after you return from abroad, provided that:

- you received letter grades of C or above (Credit/No Credit or Pass/Fail is not an option)
- your academic course load has been approved by the Registrar and Off-Campus Study (CGE)
- GE and Major courses are approved by the Department Chair(s)
- you follow all relevant CMC academic policies

Placeholder course

During your semester abroad, the Registrar will enroll you in a 4 credit "placeholder" course called "Off-Campus Study". This course is a placeholder for registration and transcript purposes, and does not reflect what you will actually earn for credits while abroad. When your original transcript is received from your program provider, the Registrar will add your actual credit earned and list coursework taken along with the grades you received.

Internships

Students enrolling in an internship abroad for academic credit may receive one-half (0.5) CMC credit provided that the internship includes an academic course approved by CGE and the CMC Registrar, the student enrolls in the internship for a letter grade, and receives a C or better in the course. Internships that fail to meet these criteria are not eligible for credit. Receiving compensation for the internship does not preclude the granting of credits.

Independent Study

Independent studies will only be approved if there is a valid academic reason for the student to take an independent study. Independent study must be approved before leaving for study abroad. Students can do no more than one independent study each semester. Independent study must follow CMC guidelines (see CMC catalog).

Courses completed toward major

Most departments accept up to two major elective credits for study abroad courses *with pre-approval* from the chair of the department. Economics and Government majors are only allowed one major elective credit per semester. Core courses must be completed on campus.

GE Requirements

Some academic departments will allow students to complete a GE requirement abroad. Please check with CGE and the chair of the department for specific departmental requirements. Remember that students may not complete more than four general education requirements off campus, including any combination of summer school, advanced placement and study abroad.

Grades

Students' grades from abroad will not be computed in the CMC GPA, but they will be reflected on students' transcripts, including C-, D, D- and F. Many graduate programs will recalculate the cumulative GPA to include the study abroad grades.

End-of-Year Exams

Students must take all exams, including end-of-year or session exams at the university prior to returning home. A student will not receive credit for a course in which he/she chooses not to take an examination that he/she is required to take.

Frequently end-of-year or semester exams may be the primary or only basis upon which grades are determined. Many students find this end-of-year exam system very difficult because it requires an extensive amount of time studying in the library and it is so heavily weighted. Don't hesitate to ask your tutors or other advisors for advice about how to prepare for them (sometimes you may be able to review exams from previous years, which will help give you an idea of the approach taken and the kinds of questions asked). The vast majority of students do well on the exams, but returning students advise that you take them seriously and keep up with your work throughout the year.

Exam Re-Sits

Based on CMC's own Incomplete Grade policy, CMC will not permit an off-campus study participant to re-sit final exams except when documented circumstances beyond the student's control have prevented completion of the regularly scheduled final exam offered at the host institution. Students who wish to request permission to re-sit for an exam must petition the Off-Campus Study Committee (CGEC) in advance of the regularly scheduled final. The student's petition must include the following:

- A written request, including a full explanation of the student's circumstances
- Appropriate documentation of those circumstances necessitating the re-sit
- A letter approving the re-sit from the host institution's sponsoring department and/or program director

In rare circumstances, such as an emergency hospitalization, the CGEC may consider a petition filed after the regularly scheduled final exam. If a student's request is approved, CMC will not proctor the re-sit. The student must make arrangements to complete the re-sit at the host institution and will be responsible for any associated costs (airfare, fees, and accommodations). Upon receipt of a revised transcript from the host institution or program provider, CMC will record the revised grade on the student's CMC transcript.

Last Minute Doubts

It is not uncommon for students to have last minute doubts about whether studying abroad is the right thing at this time. In fact, we often worry when students aren't at least a bit nervous about their study abroad plans. There may be concern about missing family and friends while so far away, worries about credit transferring, and nervousness about travel in general. This is quite normal and we encourage you to contact our office before changing your plans at the last minute. Every semester there are a few students who have some anxiety and consider withdrawing, but most eventually do go and are very glad they did so. Voicing your doubts and concerns will help us to better support you as you prepare to go abroad as well as while you are abroad. We are often able to connect students to resources they did not know existed to help them make the most of the experience and have a happy, safe, productive, and enriching semester.

While Abroad

After you Arrive

- Send the Off-Campus Study Office your *abroad mailing address*, your *cell number* and, if you wish, your *Skype username* once you know your on-site address. This information may be circulated to other offices on campus in case of an emergency.
- Send the Off-Campus Study Office your complete list of courses for verification of credit. If you have ANY questions concerning the appropriate coursework or number of credits, contact our office. CMC study abroad academic guidelines are frequently stricter than your host institution or program provider.
- Pre-registration information will be sent to you via e-mail from the Registrar. Check with your program provider concerning e-mail and internet access on site. If you don't think you will have easy access to the internet during pre-registration, notify the [Registrar's Office](#).

Adjusting

One of first things you will encounter when you go abroad is something you can't really see, but which, if you don't understand what it is and how it works, can seriously affect how you adjust to and enjoy your time overseas. That "thing" is CULTURE. The kind of culture we will address here is not at all the kind of thing one refers to when talking about being a "cultured person" or possessing a taste for modern art, champagne, and opera. Nor is culture the exclusive province of an educated elite.

Culture is a neutral term, neither good nor bad, and refers to the broadest conception about the learned knowledge that humans use to fulfill their needs and wants. It refers to the collective historical patterns, values, societal arrangements, manners, ideas, and ways of living that people have used to order their society. It is comprised of all those things we learn as part of growing up including language, religion, beliefs about economic and social relations, political organization and legitimacy, and the thousands of "Dos and Don'ts" society deems important that we know to become a functioning member of that group.

Making a major transition in your life requires some period of time for adjustment to the new circumstances. Even moving to a new city, changing schools or jobs—anything that alters your accustomed patterns of thought and behavior—can cause some "transition shock," which can be mild or severe depending on the circumstances.

You have probably heard of "culture shock." The term "culture shock" was coined to describe a specific type of reaction that can occur when people travel abroad or confront ways of life substantially different from their own. Culture shock is caused by the stress of entering and adjusting to an unfamiliar culture. It has been called an "occupational hazard" of travelers and is a well-documented side effect of encountering cultural difference. To some extent, the degree of culture shock experienced varies depending on how different the country is in contrast to your own. Of course, personal factors and your goals for traveling abroad will influence how quickly and appropriately you can "fit in" and, therefore, the level of culture shock you will feel.

- Culture "Surprise": Usually occurs early in your stay in the new culture when you begin to be aware of superficial, novel, and startling differences. Often characterizes the "honeymoon" phase of adjustment.
- Culture "Stress": A mild response to "stimulus overload." Culture stress is often seen in travelers abroad. One becomes tired and withdrawn. Annoyance builds as daily reality becomes more difficult.
- Culture "Irritation": Often manifests itself in terms of "item irritation" and is usually traceable to a few observable behaviors that are common in the culture, and to which an individual reacts particularly strongly (a personal "hot button"). These may include spitting, hygiene, verbal harassment, public displays (affection, drunkenness, etc.), or other overt behaviors to which an individual has a strong negative response.
- Culture "Fatigue": A fairly short-term response to "stimulus overload." This occurs when you begin to respond to the behavior of the "new" culture and are stressed by trying to deal with lots of new cultural information all at once. Stress and irritation intensify as you attempt to study or work in a foreign environment. There is a cumulatively greater impact due to the "need to operate" in unfamiliar and difficult contexts. Symptoms intensify. Ability to function declines. It can occur soon after arrival or within a few weeks. It can hit you quickly and is often accompanied by "Language Fatigue." Language fatigue occurs when, trying to use a second language constantly, you become physically and psychologically drained by speaking, listening, and finding meaning in what was, until now, a little-used "new" language.

- Culture "Shock": Culture shock comes from the natural contradiction between our accustomed patterns of behavior and the psychological conflict of attempting to maintain them in the new cultural environment. While the time of onset is variable, it usually occurs within a few months of entering a new culture and is a normal, healthy psychological reaction. While culture shock is common, relief is available. There are ways to minimize its effects—the first of which is to accept that it is a real phenomenon—and to learn to recognize its sometimes vague, if persistent, signs in yourself as well as others.

If negative attitudes towards minor annoyances do not change, a low level of persistent frustration is likely to build up. This can quickly lead to volatile anger when accumulated stress inappropriately and unexpectedly erupts and you vent your feelings, but you are unable to trace the outburst to a single source. People around you might comment, "What was that all about?" or "Where did that come from?"

Just remember that unlike temporary annoyance when you are in the presence of a particular cultural practice (e.g., mistreatment of animals or public displays of affection), culture shock is neither caused by a single act nor easily traceable to a particular event. It is cumulative, attributable to many small things that happen over time, and it has the potential to be more deeply felt and take longer to alleviate.

Many students never experience culture shock to any appreciable extent and perform their overseas tasks and manage their relationships just fine. For those who do experience a degree of discomfort in the process of living abroad, it can be an opportunity to grow and learn.

Moving beyond culture shock and continuing to live and learn overseas puts you on the path to becoming interculturally fluent. Becoming more deeply engaged with the local culture increases your level of intercultural adaptation and your ability to reach your goals. It also makes cultural learning more enjoyable, if not always easier.

This learning process is complex and almost inevitably results in reports from returning students that, "I learned more about myself and my culture than about the culture I was living in." The learning process can be a bit painful, take longer than expected, and can lead to the onset of symptoms associated with culture shock. The good news is that this indicates that learning is occurring and that you are getting better and better at understanding the culture.

Being aware of this cycle of cultural adjustment will allow you to better understand your reactions during your time abroad. In addition, this cycle of cultural adjustment can be linked with levels of Cultural Awareness.

Students frequently turn to their family and friends at home when they are at the lowest points in their cultural adjustment process. In most cases, after airing some concerns and complaints, the student hangs up the phone feeling relieved, with a renewed eagerness. Unfortunately, family and friends do not get to see that since they are so far away. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of the people in supporting roles who are not on-site with you. It is a good idea to follow up after an emotional phone call or letter to let folks at home know when you're feeling better as well as to share your joys and successes along the way.

Immersion

Become immersed in your host city and country. Spend quality time in local restaurants, shops and hangouts. Get to know local students and try to make friends from your host country. This will require stepping out of your comfort zone. If you immediately rush to other cities or destinations, you will not meet new people or get to fully embrace the local culture.

Get involved – join clubs on campus, attend local shows and events, participate in intramural sports. (Reminder: you can receive PE credit if the intramural sport is on your transcript). This will help you feel part of the culture and enhance your study abroad experience.

Local Host Guidelines

Living with a local host can be a rewarding experience if you are open to getting to know them and understanding their customs. Remember, a local host is opening their home to you so be respectful of their rules.

- Bring a "housewarming" gift. CMC souvenirs, Disneyland memorabilia, photos from home, etc. are good host gifts. It can also be a great ice-breaker.
- Clarify and follow the rules governing the home i.e. use of the kitchen/refrigerator, internet, telephone, curfew, etc.
- Do not invite anyone over without your host family's permission.
- Let your host family know in advance if you are going to miss a meal. Mealtimes are often set, so it is courteous to advise when you will not be present.

- If you are planning on a weekend getaway, leave an itinerary with you host family. Include details of where you will stay, contact numbers, and when you will return.

There are many benefits of living with a local host. You will have the opportunity for daily interaction with local residents and experience first-hand customs that are unique to your host country. Your host can give you the insider's guide to the best local hotspots, including restaurants, shops, and various events. You will have daily foreign language practice with native speakers. There will be no need to worry about meals, and you will be able to sample home-cooked cuisine. As you spend time with your host family, you will be building life-long relationships that may extend beyond your study abroad semester or year.

You will experience challenges as well. This may be the first time your host has had a guest from another country. There will be cultural differences that can lead to frustration and sometimes anxiety. Be open-minded, and remember that your host family will be interested to learn about your culture just like you are interested to learn about theirs.

There are several ways to help you blend into your host's culture or family. One way is to ask why they wanted to open their home to a study abroad student. It is a great way to understand their expectations and allows you to share your reasons for choosing a homestay. Another way is to offer to help around the house. You will get a chance to bond with the family and spend time learning their daily routine. Take every opportunity to learn from your host and do not be afraid to ask questions. Becoming friends with your host will help you feel comfortable in their home.

Food and Water

When you visit a new country, you will want to try all of the local cuisine. However, the local food can be drastically different than what you are used to. Allow for an adjustment period while you get used to the dishes of the region. During this time you will need to stay hydrated with water, not alcohol or caffeine.

It is important to also check the water supply of your host country. In some countries it may be safer to drink and cook with bottled water. More information can be found on the [Center for Disease Control's website](#).

Alcohol and Illegal Drugs

If you chose to drink alcohol while abroad, be careful and drink responsibly. Some countries have higher levels of alcohol in their beverages. In addition, cultural practices regarding alcohol may vary widely. For example, in some countries, it is not common for women to drink alcohol. In many European countries, social drinking is common and people begin having a glass of wine or beer with dinner as teenagers. However, drinking to excess is not common, and loud, drunk Americans will stand out.

While abroad, avoid all temptation to buy, sell, carry, or use any type of drug. Most countries have VERY strict drug laws. Long trials, prison sentences, and even the death penalty can result from drug possession.

Remember that you are subject to your host country's laws. If you are arrested, neither CMC, your family, nor the American Consular Officer can get you released from jail.

As a reminder, some prescription medications that are legal in the U.S. are illegal abroad. Research your host country's laws as well as the laws of countries that you may visit on break.

Read the [State Departments memo on drugs abroad](#).

Library Service

There are valuable [library resources available](#) to you while you are abroad. Below are just a few examples of how to conduct research while off campus.

- Contact a librarian using "ASK US" at the above web address for any research question. Responses are made within 24 business hours.
- Material available electronically: reference materials, encyclopedias, dictionaries, biographical information, newspapers, data, statistics and more.

Interlibrary Loan is available while abroad for requesting articles or chapters not owned at the Library. They will be sent electronically as email attachments.

Communicating with Home while Abroad

It is important to stay in contact with friends, family, and CGE while abroad. Depending on your host country, there are various ways of staying connected with the U.S.

Mail
Depending on where you are and the quality of the postal service, mail can take weeks (even, at times, months) just to arrive in the country; getting it to your local address adds additional days. In certain countries, there are also complicated customs regulations which determine what you can send and/or receive. You might also be required to pay a tariff to obtain a letter or package.

Mail at CMC
While students are away, all first-class mail will be automatically forwarded to students' permanent addresses. All students who wish to receive their mail abroad must submit a request in writing to the Story House mailroom.

Email
CGE and other CMC offices email important notifications, including pre-registration information, to students abroad. Contact your program provider for details on how to obtain internet and computer access in your host city.

Cybercafés
Many cities now have cybercafés where, for a nominal fee, you can use a computer and internet. This is a great option for students who are away from their host city for the weekend and want to stay connected. Beware of what information is transmitted through the cybercafé computers, and always make sure to log off and take any USB devices before leaving.

Skype
You can converse over the internet for free, provided you have a built-in microphone or have purchased one prior to departure. CGE is available for appointments via Skype.

Viber
This is an application for your Smartphone (iOS, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry, iPhone). You can make calls and send texts and pictures to other Viber users for free from any country. This will work with WiFi or a 3G connection. However, you must download and activate Viber before you go abroad.

Money Matters Abroad

Suggestions on how to handle money abroad
Have a budget and know what you can spend. Keep a daily expense account for the first couple of weeks to be able to plan a budget for your entire stay. Be prepared: You will spend more money on arrival than at any other point. You don't know where to find the best bargains yet and the exchange rate will take some getting used to.

Credit cards
Leave a photocopy of the front and back of your credit card with your parents in case of loss or theft. Having a credit card in your name will be extremely useful, but know what your credit limit is on the card before you leave. Set up an account at your home bank for an international debit card (ATM). This is the best, easiest, and safest way of accessing money in most foreign countries and for your family to be able to send you additional funds. You may want to shop around for a bank that does not charge high fees for overseas withdrawals. Check with your bank if there are conversion fees.

Make sure that you contact your debit and credit card customer service number and inform them of the dates that you will be abroad. If banks are not aware that you will be abroad and what countries you will be in, they will often put a hold on your account and prevent you from making transactions when they see overseas purchases, in order to prevent fraud.

Do not bring a Discover Card. Most countries do not have the facilities to accept Discover. Many countries do not accept American Express. Visa is most widely accepted abroad. MasterCard is also accepted in many places.

Either have about \$200 in local currency with you on arrival or plan on exchanging it or withdrawing the funds by ATM at your host country airport. Some U.S. banks may have international currency. This money should get you through the first few days. You may not be able to gain access to your bank account or to an ATM machine for several days.

Personal checks
Do not bring personal checks from the U.S. as they are virtually useless and impossible to cash.

How to obtain money from the U.S.

Always check with your program or someone who has lived in your new host country (a returnee or an international student) to find out the best way of banking for an extended period of time.

The easiest way to obtain money abroad is to have someone in the U.S. deposit funds into your home bank account. You can then withdraw the funds with your ATM card. For a fee, other options include:

- Wire transfer: Many banks and stores (Wal-Mart, 7-11) can wire money to foreign banks.
- Bank draft: Many American banks have reciprocal agreements with banks abroad.
- American Express: You do not need an American Express card to take advantage of this service.
- Credit Cards and ATM/Debit Cards: You will get a better exchange rate on your purchases if you pay with a credit card, though many credit cards will charge a fee for international transactions.
- Do not rely exclusively on your credit card or international debit card (ATM) - These cards can be demagnetized, destroyed, lost, or stolen.

We recommend the following for personal security:

- Beware of pickpockets. A sweet-looking child or even a woman with a baby can be a pickpocket. Beware of groups of children or adults who create distractions so they can pick your pocket.
- Be careful when using an ATM machine. Try to use only those ATM machines that are well-lit and in a seemingly safe location. Withdraw only as much cash as is needed in the near future. Try to use ATM machines that are equipped with a "swipe" feature in order to avoid your card being eaten by the machine. Withdraw cash during the daytime rather than at night.
- Keep cash in a secure location. If carrying large amounts of cash, use an undergarment money belt.
- Make sure credit cards are returned after each transaction. Know where your credit card is at all times.
- Make a note of the credit card number, issuing bank, and contact numbers in case of theft or loss.
- Be discreet when paying a bill. Do not "flash" large amounts of cash.
- Leave copies of the front and back of all credit/ATM cards with a reliable and trusted person at home who will be reachable during the trip should these items be stolen or lost.

Tipping

Tipping customs vary from country to country. For example, in Austria only small tips are expected and you round up to the next dollar amount i.e. if a restaurant meal cost \$9.13, you would leave \$10.00. Research the tipping custom in your host country. In some countries tipping is expected when services are performed.

Remaining Abroad for an Additional Semester

If you are contemplating remaining abroad for the full academic year, you need CMC's permission to do so. After you have obtained CMC's permission, you need to contact your program's staff to inform them of your intention to stay (some programs have a deadline or may charge a fee).

To get CMC's permission, you need to write to CGE no later than November 1 (for a spring extension) or April 1 (for fall), explaining your reasons for remaining abroad, outlining how you plan to graduate on time, and requesting permission to stay from your department chair(s).

Safety

The safety of our students is of utmost importance to us. Prior to departure all students receive a pre-departure session on health and safety abroad. In addition, we monitor [the U.S. Department of State](#) and [U.S. Embassy](#) websites closely and we receive frequent updates from program providers who are in constant contact with their resident directors abroad. Students with U.S. citizenship are always advised to register with the U.S. Embassy in the host country to assist in ongoing safety. Non-U.S. citizens are advised to register with their home country embassy in the country of study.

Despite all precautions, total safety cannot be guaranteed while abroad any more than it can be guaranteed while on campus or within the U.S. In spite of this, our office continues to do whatever it can to maximize the safety of those participating in our programs. Your safety also depends on your behavior while abroad. We encourage you to talk with our office and your family regarding your concerns and your plans for avoiding risks while abroad. If your physical or mental health may be placed in jeopardy by being away from current support systems, you may want to have a thoughtful discussion with CGE staff and your family about creating some pre-departure plans and options for the upcoming semester.

Safety Tips

If you become the victim of a crime, immediately contact your program staff, the local police, your home nation's diplomatic or consular office, and CGE.

If you have a medical emergency, contact your program staff, seek immediate care, and then contact your insurance company.

Personal Safety:

- Keep a low profile in demeanor and dress. College T-shirts, sweatshirts, baseball caps, and athletic shoes may identify you as an American. Do not wear jewelry or insignia. Once you have some time to adjust to your new location, you will have a better sense of how you should dress and act in your new surroundings.
- Be discreet and polite, heeding signs and regulations in public areas.
- Be especially careful in helping to maintain security at your residence and other program buildings.
- Always have some cash on you, preferably in smaller bills. Do not display a large amount of cash when you pay for things.
- Speak the local language whenever possible.
- Watch your intake of alcohol—excessive drinking is both unsafe and inappropriate in another culture and in an unfamiliar area.
- Speak softly; people from the U.S. tend to speak loudly compared with many cultures.
- Travel by reliable public transportation. Do not hitchhike and do not travel alone. Leave word with the program director of your travel plans detailing your companions, itinerary (with contact points and phone numbers), mode of travel, and dates of departure and return.
- Avoid traveling alone, especially at night.
- Take special care around tourist sites and possible terrorist targets, such as police stations, churches, synagogues, and airports. Avoid identifiable American hangouts, such as U.S. populated night clubs or bars, and other places where Americans typically gather.
- Don't get involved in controversial discussions/situations in public places, street gatherings or demonstrations, and public events characterized by crowd excitement.
- Speak to program alumni and on-site directors about safe areas as well as areas to avoid.
- Keep clear of military and diplomatic installations and war memorials.

An additional website with information on safety is the [Overseas Security Advisory Council \(OSAC\)](#).

Conduct while Abroad

You are expected to follow CMC, host institution, and program provider rules and policies while away. You are subject to the disciplinary process of your host institution and program while off campus. Failure to comply with rules and policies may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program and expulsion from CMC.

Travel

No matter where you are traveling abroad, research your destination. Here are some suggestions of online resources:

- [Fodor's Travel](#)
- [Frommer's Travel Guides](#)
- [Let's Go](#)
- [Lonely Planet](#)
- [Moon Travel Guides](#)
- [Rough Guides](#)
- [STA Travel](#)

Visitors from Home

Some of you may be fortunate enough to have visitors from home while abroad. In most cases, the best time for a visit is at the end of the program when you will be an expert guide with improved language skills and familiarity with your surroundings. Students on university programs have a schedule that is similar to a semester at CMC with some flexibility, but some experiences abroad involve very full schedules as well as significant time travelling as part of the academic

program. It may be disruptive and stressful to entertain visitors during the highly structured semester. Check with your program provider for appropriate times for a visit. Please understand that family and friends cannot join in most program activities or classes, and host families and roommates should not be expected to accommodate guests.

Volunteering Abroad

There are many resources for students interested in volunteering, working or interning abroad including:

- [Ethical Volunteering](#)
- [Volunteer International](#)
- [Idealist](#)
- [Search engine for University of Michigan](#)

VOTING

You can still vote while you are abroad. [Youth Vote Overseas](#) is a great resource to assist with registration and obtaining an absentee ballot request

Additional resources for students abroad during elections include [Federal Voting Assistance](#) and [Vote from Abroad](#).

CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

Living abroad is a whole-person experience. Before you depart, you will want to consider and reflect on how your identity might affect, or be affected by, your experience abroad.

Women

Acceptable treatment of women in the U.S. may be vastly different from the treatment of women in your host country. For instance, what might be considered friendly in the U.S. may be considered flirting or a sexual invitation in some countries. Speak to your program provider about gender issues and viewpoints of your host country. Upon arrival, ask local women and your program provider about appropriate dress and behavior for women.

[Journey Woman](#) is an online magazine resource.

Race, ethnicity, and minorities

If you are a different race or ethnicity from your host country, there may be certain advantages or disadvantages. You may be perceived differently in a positive or negative way from those around you. On the other hand, some stereotypes in the U.S. may be nonexistent in your host country. Be mindful that different cultures view race and ethnicity differently, and some comments are made simply out of ignorance, not malice.

[Project for learning abroad, training and outreach \(PLATO\)](#) is an integrated, multi-dimensional program to address these needs.

Religion

You may be entering a region where the majority of the population practices a religion with which you are unfamiliar. Learn about the dominant religious beliefs and practices of your host country. This will help you to be respectful of others.

Sexual Orientation

Every country has different views and laws, and understanding of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender individuals. It is important to research the general views and laws of your host country and city. Resources for students include [LGA](#), the [Queer Resource Center](#) of the Claremont Colleges, and [study abroad for GLBT students](#) at Michigan State University.

Disability

The laws governing disability support may differ in your host country from those in the U.S. If you have received any disability-related accommodations through the DOS Office, you need to inform the CGE Office and your program provider to discuss your accommodation needs and options while abroad. Due to Medical/Privacy Laws, CMC cannot automatically transfer your information to another entity without your consent. In many countries there are no requirements for providing assistance for the disabled, and the perceptions of disabled students in other countries can pose physical and emotional challenges. [Mobility International](#) is an organization dedicated to helping students with disabilities study abroad.

Returning Home

Re-Adjusting

What could be easier than going home? After all, you grew up in that culture, speak the language, understand how the system works, are familiar with how to cope with daily living, and have a ready-made support group. When you were homesick you dreamed how great it would be to be back in a comfortable and familiar place surrounded by family and friends. However, the reality is that returning home after a significant overseas experience is not without its stresses. There are many reasons why this is so, but the major contributing factors seem to be:

- It Is Largely Unexpected - Few people prepare for the return because they expect it to be easy and are surprised when it is not.
- The Reality of Home Differs from Reality - When you are abroad, images of home life can become idealized or romanticized. It is easy to forget or minimize the problems or issues that once were sources of stress in your everyday life. Re-encountering them can be disconcerting.
- Everything Has Changed - However major or subtle, things are different. You, the people around you, and your culture have changed. Sometimes this is obvious and immediately observable; sometimes it is "hidden" and only comes out under certain circumstances—circumstances that are usually unpredictable and therefore unsettling.
- People May React to Returnees in Ways They Consider Inappropriate - People generally expect you to be the same person you were when you left and usually attempt to treat you that way. They often have little patience for a returnee who seems to be significantly "different" or who exhibits behaviors or attitudes that, to them, seem odd or uncharacteristic of that person.
- Reverse Culture Shock Is Neither Recognized nor Understood at Home - Few people in the home culture are likely to be familiar with the concept of reverse culture shock. Therefore, people often respond to a returnee having difficulty readjusting by bluntly suggesting they "get over it" as though it were a conscious act on their part or that they could control their emotions if they wanted to. Unlike undergoing culture shock while abroad where program directors and fellow students are likely to be at least sympathetic, upon reentry the pressure to conform quickly and substantially can be intense and tolerance can be in short supply.

Thus, although there are always lots of reasons for looking forward to going home, reentry into your home culture can seem both as challenging and as frustrating as living overseas. Contrary to the expectation that going "home" is a simple matter of resuming your earlier routines and reestablishing prior relationships, reentry has its own set of special social and psychological adjustments.

What can you do to prepare to return home? Being aware of the reentry process and following some advice from those who have already returned can facilitate your reentry. The following list is compiled from many sources, but all of the tips come from returnees who have offered these ideas in the hope of making your initial reentry easier for you and for those at home. They are offered to you as things to consider as you prepare to return from study abroad. First, say goodbye. It is important to have some closure with your program staff, faculty, friends, and host family before you leave. Then:

- Mentally prepare for the adjustment process - The more you consider your alternatives, think about what is to come, and know about why returning home is both similar to and different from going abroad, the easier the transition will be. Anticipating is useful. As one psychologist put it, "Worrying helps." However, obsessing does not, so be prepared—not paranoid!
- Allow yourself time - Reentry is a process that will take time, just as adjusting to a new foreign culture required a period of acculturation. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Give yourself permission to ease into the transition.
- Understand that the familiar will seem different - You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps even unsettling. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological responses to being home. Everyone does.

- There will be some "cultural catching up" to do - Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment, and current event topics may be unfamiliar to you. New academic programs or regulations, slang expressions, popular culture references, recent events, and even major social changes may have emerged since you left. You may have some learning to do about your own culture. The longer you have been gone, the more you may have to discover, and the more noticeable it will be to others that you are not culturally fully up-to-speed. Approach this challenge in the same way you approached culture learning overseas: with a sense of humor and an open mind.
- *Reserve judgments* - Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering the culture of a new foreign country, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first, and your most valuable and valid analysis of events is likely to take place *after* allowing some time for thorough reflection. Most returnees report gaining major insights into themselves and their home countries during reentry, but only after allowing a sufficient period of time for reflection and self-analysis.
- Respond thoughtfully and slowly - Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom in the returnee can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions and situations; prepare to greet those that are less predictable with a calm, thoughtful approach. If you find yourself being overly defensive or aggressive in responding to those around you, it is probably time to take a deep breath and relax. It is tempting when asked for the twentieth time, "How was London?" to sarcastically reply, "Very British!" but the momentary satisfaction will do little to open a real communication channel. As always, thinking before answering is a good strategy.
- Cultivate sensitivity - Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is a sure way to reestablish rapport. Much annoyance with returnees results from the perception that returnees are so anxious to tell their stories and share their experiences that they are not interested in what happened to those who stayed at home. This is ironic because one of the most common frustrations reported by returnees is that those at home only ask superficial questions (e.g., So how was it?) and want short answers. Returnees see this as a lack of opportunity to express their feelings fully. In such circumstances, being as good a listener as a talker is a key ingredient in mutual sharing and you may need to practice those skills upon return.
- Beware of comparisons - Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after residence abroad. However, a person must be careful not to be seen as too critical of home or too lavish in praise of things foreign. A balance of good and bad features is probably more accurate and certainly less threatening to others. The tendency to become an "instant expert" is to be avoided at all costs.
- Remain flexible - Keeping as many options open as possible is an essential aspect of a successful return home. Attempting to re-socialize totally into old patterns and networks can be difficult, but remaining aloof is isolating and counterproductive. What you want to achieve is a balance between resuming and maintaining earlier patterns and enhancing your social and intellectual life with new friends and interests.
- Seek support networks - There are lots of people back home who have gone through their own reentry process and both understand and empathize with a returnee's concerns. Returnees may find it useful to seek out people with international living experience such as academic faculty, exchange students, Peace Corps volunteers, international development staff, diplomatic or military personnel, church mission officials, and those doing business internationally. The Office of Off-Campus Study is also a place where returnees can find support and empathy as they go through the reentry process.

Realistically, what can I expect when I get back?

1. Boredom - After all the newness and stimulation of your time abroad, a return to family, friends, and old routines (however nice and comforting) can seem very dull. It is natural to miss the excitement and challenges that characterize study in a foreign country, but it is up to you to find ways to overcome such negative reactions. Remember a bored person is also boring. Try new things, travel domestically, and continue cultural and linguistic studies.
2. No one wants to hear - One thing you can count on upon your return: no one will be as interested in hearing about your adventures and triumphs as many times as you will want to share them. This is not a rejection of you or your achievements, but simply the fact that once they have heard the highlights, any further interest on your

audience's part may be unlikely. Be realistic in your expectations of how fascinating your journey is going to be for everyone else. Be brief.

There may actually be some people who will be interested in your stories and hundreds of pictures or slides. Think about who they might be and make a list. Consider emailing them before you return and asking if they really do want an evening on "My experience in [fill in the blank]" and promise to make a date when you get home. Give them a chance to change their minds but respond now with a message that says you are really looking forward to your date. Come tell CGE. We want to hear all about your study abroad experience.

3. You can't explain - Even when given a chance to explain all the sights you saw and feelings you had while studying abroad, it is likely to be at least a bit frustrating trying to relay them coherently. It is very difficult to convey this kind of experience to people who do not have similar frames of reference or travel backgrounds, no matter how sympathetic they are as listeners. You can tell people about your experience, but you may fail to make them understand exactly how or why you felt a particular way. It's okay.

4. Reverse "homesickness"- Just as you probably missed home for a time after arriving overseas, it is just as natural to experience some reverse homesickness for the people, places, and things that you grew accustomed to as a student abroad. To an extent, writing letters, telephoning, emailing, and generally keeping in contact can reduce them, but feelings of loss are an integral part of international sojourns and must be anticipated and accepted as a natural result of study abroad.

Be sure you have collected the email addresses, the home addresses, and the addresses of the parents of all your new friends. If you want to keep in touch, you need to be prepared. We all know that young people may move around so it is important to be able to contact their parents when they fail to send a new address.

5. Relationships have changed - It is inevitable that when you return you will notice that some relationships with friends and family will have changed. Just as you have altered some of your ideas and attitudes while abroad, the people at home are likely to have experienced some changes that are very important to them. These changes may be positive or negative, but expecting that *no* change will have occurred is unrealistic. The best preparation is flexibility, openness, minimal preconceptions, and tempered optimism.

6. People see the "wrong" changes - Sometimes people may concentrate on small alterations in your behavior or ideas and seem threatened or upset by them. Others may ascribe any "bad" traits to the influence of your time abroad. These incidents may be motivated by jealousy, fear, or feelings of superiority or inferiority. To avoid or minimize discomfort, it is necessary to monitor yourself and be aware of the reactions of those around you, especially in the first few weeks following your return. This phase normally passes quickly if you do nothing to confirm their stereotypes.

7. People misunderstand - A few people will misinterpret your words or actions in such a way that communication becomes difficult. For example, what you may have come to think of as witty humor (particularly sarcasm, banter, etc.) and a way to show affection or establish a conversation may be considered aggression or "showing off." Conversely, a silence that was seen as simply polite overseas might be interpreted at home, incorrectly, as signaling agreement or opposition. New clothing styles or mannerisms may be viewed as provocative, inappropriate, or as an affectation. Continually using references to foreign places or sprinkling foreign language expressions or words into an English conversation is often considered boasting. Be aware of how you may look to others and how your behavior is likely to be interpreted.

8. Feeling of alienation/seeing with "critical eyes" - Sometimes the reality of being back "home" is not as natural or enjoyable as the place you had constructed as your mental image. When actual daily life is less enjoyable or more demanding than you remembered, it is natural to feel some alienation. Many returnees develop "critical eyes," a tendency to see faults in the society you never noticed before (e.g., Americans are so wasteful, materialistic, fat, in a hurry, etc.). Some returnees become quite critical of everyone and everything for a time. This is no different than when you criticized the host culture while abroad. In both cases, being critical is closely related to discomfort during readjustment and mild "culture shock." Mental comparisons are fine, but keep them to yourself until you regain both your cultural balance and a balanced perspective.

9. Inability to apply new knowledge and skills - Many returnees are frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, linguistic, and practical coping skills that appear to be unnecessary or irrelevant at home. To avoid ongoing annoyance: adjust to reality as necessary, change what is possible, be creative, be patient, and above all, use all the cross-cultural adjustment skills you acquired abroad to assist your own reentry.

10. Loss/compartmentalization of experience ("shoeboxing") - Being home, combined with the pressures of job, school, family, and friends, often conspires to make returnees worried that they might somehow "lose" the experience. Many fear that it will become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box and only occasionally taken out and looked at. You do not have to let that happen: maintain your contacts abroad; seek out and talk to people who have had experiences similar to yours; practice your cross-cultural skills; continue language learning. Remember and honor both your hard work and the fun you had while abroad. To the extent possible, integrate your overseas experience into your ongoing life and activities.

Academic Credit

Academic credit is granted after you return from abroad, provided that:

- you received letter grades of C or above (Credit/No Credit or Pass/Fail is not an option)
- your academic course load had been approved by the Registrar and Off-Campus Study (CGE)
- GE and Major courses were approved by the Department Chair(s)
- you followed all relevant CMC academic policies

Transcript

During your semester or year abroad, the Registrar enrolled you in a 4 credit "placeholder" course called "Off-Campus Study". When your original transcript is received from your program provider, the Registrar will add your actual credit earned and list coursework taken along with the grades you received. Processing your transcript will take time, depending on when CMC receives your transcript.

If CMC does not receive your original transcript, it is possible that your program provider is withholding your transcript for outstanding fees such as dorm damage. You may need to order your transcript from your program provider. Contact your program provider directly.

Internships

If you enrolled in an internship abroad for academic credit you may receive up to one-half (0.5) CMC credit if there was an academic course that meets CMC requirements for internship credit. This course must have been pre-approved by the Registrar and taken for a letter grade. If the internship was part of your 15 U.S. semester credit minimum, you will receive 3.5 CMC credits. If the internship was in addition to the 15 U.S. semester credit minimum, you will receive 4.0 CMC credits. Internships that fail to meet these criteria are not eligible for credit. Receiving compensation for the internship does not preclude the granting of credits.

Grades

Your grades from abroad will not be computed in the CMC cumulative GPA, but they will be reflected on your transcripts, including C-, D, D- and F. Many graduate programs will recalculate the cumulative GPA to include the study abroad grades.

Probation or suspension

As with on-campus academics, students abroad are required to remain in good academic standing. Should official abroad grades not meet CMC's requirements for good academic standing, students may be placed on CMC academic probation or suspension. Please see the CMC Academic Catalog for addition information.

Fellowships

Most study abroad alumni want to go back. One way to do this is to apply for one or more of several fellowships available to graduating seniors. Internationally-focused graduate fellowships include Fulbright, Luce, and many others.

Some notes to increase your chance of winning a fellowship:

- The Assistant Director for Fellowships and faculty fellowship advisors will have specific information on each fellowship. Find out as much about these fellowships as you can before you go on your program and then be on the lookout for good ideas.
- When applying for a fellowship, your ability to demonstrate relationships with and support from host-country institutions and individuals will strengthen your application.
- The most important thing you can do is develop contacts while you are abroad. Cultivate relationships with host-country nationals and organizations in the field you wish to pursue. Discuss your ideas with them. Ask for advice.
- Refer back to journal entries and quote them when appropriate in your fellowship application essay. This

demonstrates long term interest and, perhaps, passion—important ingredients of successful fellowship applications.

- Get specific and accurate contact information for people and their institutions (phone numbers, fax number, email addresses, official titles, etc.). Ask them before you leave if they would be willing to support and/or recommend you for a fellowship.
- Keep in touch with your contacts. Send a thank you message as soon as you return home.
- When appropriate, and if communications permit, allow host-country contacts to help you with your proposal. If they feel involved in the planning stage, they may offer stronger support.
- While you are still abroad, visit local institutions that sponsor specific fellowship recipients. Fulbright representatives are often very willing to discuss your ideas and fellowship possibilities with you. Six months later when a bunch of applications come across their desk, yours may be the only one with a face associated with it. That may make all the difference.

One of the keys to successfully obtain a scholarship or fellowship is preparation!

- Do not wait until your senior year to start researching programs. Several have deadlines early in the junior year, including the Truman.
- Attend any informational workshops each semester.
- Consult the advisors for these programs for helpful suggestions regarding your application.
- Use the Internet to research other programs that may suit your interests and aspirations.
- For further information, contact the Assistant Director for Fellowships.
- Visit the [CMC Fellowships website](#) for additional resources.

The following programs are just a sampling of the many, many opportunities that are out there. Do not limit yourself to just these programs.

Selected List of Scholarships and Fellowships:

[Fulbright U.S. Student Program](#)

[Critical Language Scholarship](#)

[Udall Scholarship](#)

[Humanity in Action Fellowship](#)

[Global Health Corps](#)

[The Luce Foundation Scholars Program](#)

[James Madison Fellowship](#)

[Carnegie Endowment Junior Fellows Program](#)

[Harry S. Truman Scholarship](#)

[Goldwater Scholarship](#)

[National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship](#)

[Napier Initiative](#)

[Davis Projects for Peace](#)

[California Capital Fellows Program](#)

[Coro Fellows Program](#)

Moments in Minutes Contest

Share your abroad experience with the CMC community at a live event each semester. Contest participants present a two-minute narrative with photos displayed in a timed presentation.

- Audience Favorite-\$200
- Second Prize-\$150
- Third Prize-\$100

Photo Contest

CGE hosts a photo contest every semester. We will email you about the photo contest upon your return. We need photos that capture moments from your study abroad destination – we want to see you in action!

- First Prize—\$75
- Second Prize—\$50
- Third Prize—\$25

Peer Ambassadors

Peer Ambassadors are CMC CGE returnees who serve as liaisons between CGE and the student community through outreach, mentoring, and special projects. The ambassadors are passionate and articulate about their off-campus study experience and are willing to share their knowledge with fellow students. There are several part-time work-study positions available to CGE alumni in the fall and spring.

Study Abroad Evaluation Form

Please take the time to complete the study abroad evaluation. It helps CGE to review each program option and assist with prospective study abroad students who may be interested in your program.

Conclusion

We hope that your study abroad experience is everything that you dream of. Please come see us and tell us all about your experiences as we help you through the readjustment process. We would love to hear all about your once-in-a-lifetime experience.

[Further Reading and Internet Resources](#)

Content Credits

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- College of the Holy Cross, Office of Study Abroad (content for Host Family Guidelines section)
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