

Pre-Departure: What to Expect when on a Q course

Congratulations on your decision to participate in a Quarter Course! Now that you are coming closer to departure, it is time to begin thinking about the experience you will want to have and preparing yourself for the trip. Below is a list of items that will help in your preparations.

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATIONS



Please follow all rules set forth by the hotel. This means that loud partying is not allowed. There are other patrons who most likely have to get up early in the morning. Remember, if you break something, you are responsible for paying for it.

When traveling pay attention to all security regulations, especially when flying or visiting major attractions. Plan for extra time when traveling and never carry anything on a plane that was given to you by someone else.

Customs and Immigration: Upon arrival to your destination, you will first go through immigration and customs. The immigration officer will ask you to present your passport and student or tourist visa (if applicable). The officer will then stamp an entry approval on the passport and give it back to you. Next, you will go to claim your personal luggage.

Important Documents: Make at least 3 copies of your passport. One copy should be left at home with your parents, place one in your luggage, and one copy should be kept with you at all times while overseas. You should also bring with you another type of identification such as a license or student identification. Make sure to make copies of each piece of identification and leave a copy at home with your parents.

Jet lag and culture shock: There is likelihood that many students will experience culture shock and jet lag. Be prepared to be grouchy, irritable, disoriented and full of regret during your first few days. This is normal. It is a combination of being out of your normal sleep routine and being surrounded by a culture with which you are not familiar. Take it easy, eat healthy and get enough sleep (during local sleeping times) and this should pass with time.

COMMUNICATION

EMAIL, PHONE CARD, CELL PHONE, SKYPE

Please make it a point to communicate with your parents or support system at home. Listed below are various ways in which you can keep in contact with home.

Cell phones can be purchased at your destination and you can pay-as-you-go. It is not recommended that you use your phone and provider from the US. The service charges will be too expensive. However, if you do not want to give up your service, you may contact your provider for international phone options and packages.

Sim Cards vs Prepaid Plans: Sim Cards are pay as you go cards that can be purchased when you arrive abroad and

put into your smart phone. This tends to be the most affordable option. Your American prepaid plan can get pricey while abroad, but may offer data, text and calling. Check with your provider to see if you this is something you are interested in. With either of these options, be sure the plan will work in more than just your host country if you plan on traveling elsewhere while you are abroad.

Skype / Apps: Popular way for students to contact their family and friends back home. Some popular ones are Skype, WhatsApp, Viber and Facebook Messenger. You can also use iMessage, Facetime Audio/Video with iPhones. Remember that internet access might not be as prevalent as you may be used to in the U.S. Use apps such as Map Wifi & Wifi Finder or Wifi Finder Free to find local wifi hotspots. You can save maps and other helpful information offline using the Google Trips app.

Internet accessibility: While in most destinations you will have internet and “wifi” access, the availability will not be as prevalent as you may be used to. There are cybercafés that you can use as well as “wifi” zones at participating restaurants. Most international restaurants will offer wifi for a small fee.

MONEY

Which is the

best to use?

It is recommended that you have a Debit or Credit card with widely recognized symbols on the back. Some samples of these are below.



Once you are overseas, in order to withdraw money, you just need to match up one of your card’s logos to the logos shown on the ATM. If your card does not have any logo on the back, it most likely will NOT work.

Note: You need to contact your bank to inform them that you will be abroad and the amount of time that you will be overseas. This will prevent your bank from deactivating your card.

Using a credit card for large purchases will get you the best exchange rate. Depending on your location, using it for small purchases may not be acceptable so we recommend that you use cash. **Discover Card** and **American Express** are not widely accepted abroad.

MoneyGrams/Western Union can be used to send money in the event of an emergency.

Traveler’s checks can be a hassle. It is recommended that you avoid them.

Paypal can be used to have money from home sent to you. It is quick and easy.

Places to exchange currency: Your local bank - must order in advance.

Airports - you will be charged a commission.

Any exchange booths throughout your host city.

‘In case’ money: It is recommended that you have some host country currency with you before your departure.

Generally, it is around the equivalent of \$150-\$200. This is in case you arrive at a different time than expected or are not being met at the airport; you can take a taxi to your accommodations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY OVERSEAS

Nothing is more important than your own health. Make sure that you have taken care of any necessary medical or dental procedures before you leave, including check-ups. Inform your director immediately about any health problem that concerns or may prevent you from participating in the program. Report all serious illnesses to the program director. *If you need help, please request it.*

Medical Insurance Cards: You will automatically be enrolled in the mandatory SUNY study abroad health coverage through United Health Care (UHC) which includes health insurance coverage AND emergency assistance coverage including evacuation and repatriation benefits. Information on the policy can be found at www.uhcsr.com

How to Access your Insurance Card:

You will be enrolled by the Office of International Education and Programs approximately 2-4 weeks prior to departure. Once you are enrolled, you will receive an email to the address you have provided on your study abroad application. This email will come from notifications@uhcsr.com. Please note this email may go directly to your spam folder, so please add this email to your contacts. Once you receive your email, please follow the steps below:

1. Visit <https://myaccount.uhcsr.com>. A link should be included in your email.
2. Click "Create Account".
3. Enter your information. Your student ID number is the ID number you provided on your study abroad application.

Within this account, you can access your card and print it. You will not be receiving a hard copy card so it is your responsibility to log in and retrieve a copy for your records. This insurance begins the date of your departure from the US, so it is recommended you take care of this before you leave so that this information is accessible during your travels. This insurance will end on the last day of your program. If you wish to extend coverage, please contact UHC directly.

Additional Features:

Learn about local health facilities and doctors before you go. Both the U.S. State Department and UHC websites provide guidance in finding medical facilities and doctors abroad. Note that you cannot access the UHC site until you have been enrolled in the insurance and activated an account. If you have questions prior to that please contact our office. Once you are enrolled in UHC and have set up an account on the UHC site, familiarize yourself with all the services and resources they provide before you go.

Keep in Mind:

Think carefully before canceling other health insurance you may have. SUNY study abroad health insurance coverage is not valid in the US. We recommend that you keep some sort of domestic health insurance in effect in case you need to return home unexpectedly from abroad for any reason.

Medications: If you are currently on any medication, please consider filling a prescription for the entire duration of your stay abroad. If you are abroad for a semester or longer, please have your doctor provide you with a letter explaining (for the customs agent) why you will be carrying a large quantity of medication on your person. Also, please be sure to travel with the medication in your carry-on (this include syringes).

Vaccinations and Immunizations: Depending on where you study, there may be recommended vaccinations and immunizations for that region. You may view the latest recommendations from the Center for Disease Control's



website at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

Intestinal and stomach problems: The best way to protect yourself is to bring along some over-the-counter medication and to be very careful about what you eat. If you have diarrhea accompanied by severe abdominal cramps, blood in your stool, or fever, contact the program director immediately and go to a doctor.

Sunburn and Heat: If you do not wear sunscreen you will get sunburned. You will be exposed to the sun; be prepared by wearing a hat, using sunblock, and wearing sunglasses. If you get sunburned, be sure to cover up any affected area when you go outside.

Make sure you drink lots of fluids. If you feel dizziness, exhaustion, cramps, and headaches you may be dehydrated. Excessive sweating, extreme headaches, and disorientation leading to possible convulsions and delirium are the symptoms of heat stroke, which can be fatal. If you have any of these symptoms GET TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY!

Alcohol use: The legal drinking age is lower in many study abroad destinations. Observe the local attitudes towards alcohol consumption. It is very common to drink as a form of socialization but not as common to drink in order to get drunk.

Drug use: NO. Do not buy, use, or possess illegal drugs while abroad. No one, neither SUNY Oswego, nor your Director, nor the U.S. government can help you if you are arrested for violating drug laws while abroad.



Pick pocketing / Petty theft: Unfortunately, pickpocketing and petty theft are common in the majority of destinations abroad. It is most likely to happen in touristic areas; please be aware that it can happen anywhere. Be extra vigilant not just of your personal possessions (such as your wallet, purse, credit cards, money, jewelry, identification) but more importantly of yourself. Please ensure your own safety and take all necessary precautions not to fall victim to this. Do not leave any of your items unattended; doing so is asking for trouble! Pickpockets love pubs, clubs, bars, beaches, touristic areas, the metro, and areas where large amounts of individuals are congregated. Be extra vigilant for yourself and your belongings.

Be aware of the distraction techniques used by pickpockets. Often thieves or accomplices will present themselves as genuine by approaching you to ask for directions or by accidentally bumping into you. When this happens your awareness is lowered and thieves will take advantage of this. The best way to protect yourself is to treat everyone who approaches you with caution and always hold on tightly to your purse, bag, or wallet. Above all else, never assume that you are too savvy to fall victim to a pickpocket!

(Information on petty theft adapted from CAPA London pre-departure information)

Transportation: Always take official taxis, buses, or trains. Do not hitchhike.

EMERGENCIES

For emergencies, you want to first contact your faculty leader or the authorities. They will be the first to assist you in getting the help you need.

What constitutes an emergency? Emergencies are defined as providing an immediate threat to the safety and well-being of the student. Some instances include:

- you are assaulted or hurt and need to go to the hospital
- you are arrested
- there is a regional disturbance

Instances that **DO NOT** constitute an emergency include:

- you get lost (and are not in harm's way)
- you lose your wallet/purse

WORST-CASE SCENARIO PREPARATION

While we don't like to talk about it, planning ahead for a bad situation will be less stressful if you have already organized a plan of action ahead of time.

'In case' money: It is recommended that you have some host country currency with you before your departure. Generally it is around the equivalent of \$150-\$200.

Disturbances occur: Contact your faculty leader for instruction.

You lose your wallet/purse: Have the number to your credit card company written down in another place so you can contact them immediately.

You lose your passport: Make copies of your passport; leave one with your parents and keep one. This will aid you in getting a replacement.

You need to go to the hospital: Find out who the cooperating physician with your insurance company is and have their information handy. Have emergency contact information in your purse or wallet for others to quickly contact the in-country Program Director and your family. Also, make a special "Emergency" number in your cell phone.

WHAT TO PACK

Clothing and Packing: Travel light! It is tempting to bring every article of clothing and every personal belonging that is important to you. Resist the temptation to do this. Flying is stressful and security is tighter than ever, so don't over pack!

Most airlines allow you to bring 2 checked bags weighing 50lbs or less each (please confirm the regulations with your airline company). When packing, keep in mind the temperatures that you will be experiencing while abroad.

Adaptor or Converter? Adaptors allow your electronics to be used by allowing the prongs on the plug to fit to the local electrical outlet. Adaptors DO NOT change the current feeding into your electronics. You will either need to purchase travel-grade electronics that allow you to switch from 110w to 220 or purchase a converter. Converters change the electrical output to allow your electronics to function properly. These sets usually come with various adaptors to be used around the world. The average cost of these are \$25 and can be found at any travel shop or superstore (Wal-mart, Target or Best Buy).



Example of Adaptor Set



Example of Converter

Nostalgia: Bring anything that 'you can't live without'. Items such as peanut butter or your favorite shampoo may not be so easy to find or economical abroad.

Below is a list of suggested items to bring overseas. This is not an exhaustive list nor is it mandatory that students bring these items. Also keep in mind the climate and type of program you are participating in. While some of these items can easily be purchased in some countries, they may not be as accessible in others. Please check with your program specialist for details.

Bath/Hygiene: anti-bacterial hand gel, contact lens solution, flip-flops for the shower and walking around, feminine hygiene items, toiletries (soap, shampoo, razors, deodorant), hair dryer

Clothing: washable clothes, bathing suit, socks, underwear, pajamas, sunglasses, rain gear (umbrella), comfortable walking shoes, sneakers, sandals, winter or summer gear.

- Casual, comfortable, light, loose fitting clothing and washable cotton clothes

- 2-3 nice outfits (may be needed if you go out to a conference, fancy nightclub, or restaurant) - **DO NOT** bring valuable jewelry or clothing that needs special care!



MISCELLANEOUS: Pocket dictionary, travel alarm clock, digital camera, locks for suitcases, money belt, portable phone charger, map of area

CONVENIENCE: travel iron, iPod with your favorite music, a journal for writing down your thoughts, a book or two of your interest, a second pair of eyeglasses, trip bucket list.

