

Before You Go

1. Before You Leave Campus: Smith Pre-Departure Checklist

- ☐ Make arrangements with the Smith Postal Service to have your **mail forwarded** to your U.S. address (not your address abroad).
- ☐ Choose a **proxy** for the housing lottery. Get her e-mail, telephone, and campus box, and make plans for how and when to communicate.
- ☐ Pack a Smith **course catalogue**, the registration and housing samples from your pre-departure session, and rules for transferring credit, and **take them abroad with you**.
- ☐ **Send the Overseas Information Card or an email with your address information back to the Office of International Study as soon as you know your mailing address!** (*even if you're already abroad by this time*). Unless you send your address abroad, Smith offices that look up your address on Banner will find your US address and NOT your overseas address.
- ☐ Request a few official copies of your **Transcript** to take along with you in the event that you need them to apply for a fellowship, internship, job, or summer program.
- ☐ Get Faculty **Letters of Recommendation** to take with you (for the same reason) as well as summer or leave of absence **addresses** for future reference.
- ☐ Make an appointment to speak with your **adviser** before you leave about:
 - major certification
 - honors theses (in case you want to write one that involves your study abroad)
- ☐ Think about **positions** that you would like to be considered for (**HR, HCA, Preludes, etc.**) and keep in contact with the appropriate offices for application and interview information.
- ☐ Gather information on **fellowships** and **internship funding** if you will miss the meetings that are held for juniors.
- ☐ Complete the **Power of Attorney Form** and return it to Student Financial Services. **Students receiving financial aid risk losing their aid awards unless they designate someone with power of attorney to sign forms while they are abroad.** All students should consider giving power of attorney to someone for banking matters.

Other Things To Consider Before You Go:

- ☐ Make sure that you have a valid **passport**.
- ☐ Make sure checks issued to you can be deposited in your account in your absence.
- ☐ Make arrangements to obtain any necessary **visas** (which may take months).
- ☐ Pack a Smith **Course Catalog, and Smith Calendar** for reference.
- ☐ Find out if your bank allows for overseas transactions and whether they charge service fees.
- ☐ Buy a **Travel Guide!** *The Lonely Planet* and *Let's Go* both publish guides for most countries that include maps, restaurants and hostels, and travel information.

- ❑ Educate yourself about the country where you'll study. Know the basic history and keep up with current events before your departure.
- ❑ Do you need Travelers' Checks? Consider having some in case of emergency even if you plan to use ATMs abroad.

Medical:

- ❑ **Doctor's Appointments:** GYN, Dentist, Eye Doctor.
- ❑ Get your **prescriptions** filled.
- ❑ Make sure that you get any necessary **inoculations** at least 1 month before departure!
- ❑ Find out *exactly* what your **insurance** will cover while you are overseas and how the billing for emergency services works (will you need to pay and be reimbursed, etc.?)

2. Country Research

PRE-DEPARTURE SESSION- POP QUIZ

1. Who is the Prime Minister of the country in which you will be studying? Who is the President (substitute Secretary of State for a position that doesn't exist in that country)?
2. When, if ever, is it polite to bargain?
3. What is the currency? What do you call the smaller coins, and what amount does each one represent? What is the conversion to the dollar?
4. Can you use your free drop abroad?
5. What do students in this country have to do to get into college? Can they choose which college they attend? What subjects do college-bound students take in high school?
6. How are faculty members addressed?
7. What determines when elections are held (are there elections)? What are the main political parties, and how much power does each have in the government?
8. Are tampons sold in supermarkets?
9. If you are asked to write an "essay", what is expected in terms of form, length, and style? How much should you quote from sources? How are citations used?
10. Will you get Smith credit if you elect to take a course S/U?
11. Are there things women traditionally do not or should not do (go to a bar, smoke in public, jog on city streets, go topless)?
12. If you go to see a doctor, do you need to pay or can you give your insurance card? How much does a doctor's visit cost?
13. What will your email access (and address) be, if any?
14. What does it mean to be "prepared for class"? How much reading should you do when no assignment is given?
15. Name a major national event that took place (in your destination country) in the last six months.
16. What do local people eat for breakfast?

3. Packing

‘What to Pack’ Means ‘What You Should Plan to Wear’...

Goals Include: Blending in; Showing Respect ; Having What You Need

a) Students to Students on Packing

I think Americans are generally more accustomed to casual dress and more revealing clothing (at least in my experience and observance). It is important to keep in mind that in going out and touring (especially in churches) there is a more strongly enforced dress code. Respectful clothing and covering up can be important and even required. Bringing lots of basic clothing in basic colors helped me to save space in my luggage and integrate new clothes into my wardrobe. I don't think it's necessary to bring a lot of clothing if you bring stuff that can be mixed and matched.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

If you don't use something in the first few days- you'll be tempted to leave it- so consider - what clothing is functional and versatile and easily washed? Sometimes it is better to have too little and pick something up as you need it.

Sara, 2004-05: Copenhagen, Denmark

My advice would be, don't try to blend in because eventually people will figure out that you are a foreigner. I regretted not being more myself, so I would suggest that you try to remain who you are unless you are uncomfortable with people knowing that you are a foreigner. Be respectful of cultural differences in dress.

Jennifer, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

b) Packing List from the U. Minnesota Learning Abroad Center

What to pack? The following are general lists of things to pack if you are going to be traveling in relatively warm climates. Help in deciding what sort of luggage to bring can be found in [Carry It All and How.](#)¹

Always pack with a checklist!

Necessities

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • <u>Passport</u> | • <u>Student ID</u> |
| • <u>Visa</u> | • Credit card |
| • Airplane tickets | • ATM card |
| • Money | • Traveler's checks |

¹ from the website of the University of Minnesota Learning Abroad Center (<http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/travel/packing/index.html>). This resource is directed to all college student travelers, not just study abroad students, so a few items (tent) may be inappropriate or unnecessary for most students going abroad to study. Underlined items are linked on the website to other web pages with information, so if you want more information, log on to the site above

Highly Recommended

- Medical check-up, possible immunization and immunization card.
- [Rail/bus passes](#).
- [International IDs](#). IDs for students, teachers, and persons under 25 offer discount airfare, emergency medical insurance, and other discounts and are available at the Center for International Studies, on the corner of Main St and New South Street, opposite the Academy of Music.
- [Guides/Books/Maps](#) that help you find accommodations, background information on the country and people, sites to visit, places to eat, etc.
- Money. ATM cards, credit cards, travelers' checks, and cash are the main methods of payment abroad. Contact your respective organizations for international facilities and inter-bank rates. Some travelers also like to put a little extra money on a credit card before going, then, if you're gone a little while, you can minimize the interest that accrues.
- [Travel Pouch/Money Belt](#). Pouches used to carry and conceal passports, traveler's checks, railpasses, etc. are available at most luggage stores.
- [Extra Photographs](#). Extra passport photos are convenient to have when obtaining visas, bus passes, ID cards, etc. while abroad.

Things to Consider

- [Railpasses](#). Railpasses can be an exceptional cost-saving measure if you are traveling in Europe. Railpasses are available for single or multiple countries throughout Europe and allow a frequent and flexible travel schedule. Railpasses are also available at a youth discount.
- Phone cards. Phone cards can be purchased abroad at fairly competitive rates, or you can buy a pre-paid phone card can be an expense you can take care of before you go, and limit the amount at risk of being stolen. Make sure you will be able to use it outside the US.
- [Sleep Sack](#). A sleep sack is two sheets sewn together to make a sort of lightweight sleeping bag you can use in a hostel bed. Many Youth Hostels in Europe require you have one of your own, or rent one from them. Even if your hostel or hotel does not require it, you may find that you prefer to bring your own sheets. If you're handy you can make your own.

Clothes & Accessories (for summer or warm climate)

- 2 pairs of pants (light cotton blends dry fast, jeans slower)
- 5 tops/shirts (two shirts, three t-shirts)
- 1 blouse/nice shirt
- 1 raincoat or poncho (something light-weight)
- 1 sun hat, preferably one that will cover your ears.
- 1 sweater, light wool or fleece
- 5 pairs of socks and underwear, bras
- 1 pair of sandals/tennis shoes
- 1 pair of comfortable walking shoes
- 1 swimsuit
- 1 pair of pajama-like shorts (long enough to be decent, light enough to sleep in comfortably)
- 1 belt
- 1 bandanna (napkin/scarf/handkerchief/distress signal)

Useful Items

- Water bottle that doesn't leak
- Small piece of light nylon rope for clothesline/shoelace
- Camera, film, other photography equipment
- Batteries (solar battery charger for longer trips)
- Address book
- Travel guides, phrase books, map
- Wristwatch
- Passport pouch/ money belt
- Cloth napkin (keep your lap clean and you can use it to wrap up your food, and talk about style)
- Sleeping bag or sleep sack
- Cold water detergent
- Compass—can be handy even in the most urban areas
- Some reading material
- Journal
- Sturdy ballpoint pens
- Shoulder bag or day pack for short trips
- Matches
- Earplugs
- Ziplock bags for maps, books, journals, and anything else you want to keep dry or separated from your dirty laundry
- Small alarm clock
- Voltage converter AND plug adapter if you are bringing any appliances
- Knife, fork and spoon that fit together
- Gift items to give away—anything with your hometown or other large American city printed on it (key rings, etc.)
- Small gifts or toys for children. Balloon animals are a good way to break the ice with children, and children are a good way to break the ice with adults.
- Frisbee, ball, some small toy
- Photos of your home and family
- Spot remover
- Universal drain plug (flat rubber circle) will help you wash your laundry in public sinks.

Toiletries & Health Related Items

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Soap in plastic container
- Comb/brush
- Towel/washcloth
- Nail clippers
- Tweezers
- Shaving materials
- Feminine hygiene products
- Band-Aids
- Aspirin
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Birth control pills if necessary
- Condoms
- Other medicines-in original containers, with copy of prescription
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen (sunblocks adhere to the skin to create a barrier, insect repellents work by evaporation, so sunblock goes on first)

Odds & Ends

- Pocket knife (with corkscrew, oh yes, with corkscrew)
- Small flashlight (extra batteries)
- Sewing kit, safety pins
- Sunglasses
- Change purse
- Empty film containers (for shampoo, etc.)
- Moist towlettes

For Developing Areas of the World

- Equipment repair kit—clear nail polish for tent rips, Gore-Tex patches, mattress repair kit, basic tool kit, clever folding pliers
- Some US cash
- Padlock—in Asia many cheap and mid-range hotels have doors locked by a latch and padlock. Having your own will give you more peace of mind. In Europe you will be able to keep possessions in lockers that are available at many hostels, but a standard US padlock may not fit the locker. Try to find something smaller.
- Toilet paper
- Tent
- Sleeping bag
- Camp mattress
- Stove
- Immersion heater will plug directly into the wall to heat your morning coffee and boil your water. Make sure to consider what voltage you'll be facing before buying, and get a converter and adapter if necessary.
- Gluestick for sealing envelopes and attaching stamps

c) What You Shouldn't Bring

- from the U.S. TSA (Transportation Security Administration)

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d) Students to Students on Luggage

Test walking around with your bag for a while because who knows how long you'll have to carry it- from train to hostel etc.
Sara, 2004-05: Copenhagen, Denmark

When going abroad, I found that a lot of people wanted to buy me things to take on my trip. I had already over packed, and these additional things made my trip to visit a friend in London before-hand rather hellish. Know your airline's baggage limitations, and stick to them - they're there for your convenience, as well as for theirs.

Kelsey, 2005-06: Budapest, Hungary

Getting There

1) Getting from the Airport to Your Destination

Your program may have arranged transportation, especially if there is a group flight. If you don't have that option (or have decided not to use it) make sure you've researched in advance, either by talking to the program or to the airport, options for taxis, trains, buses, etc. to your destination. Better to know in advance than to be stranded when you first arrive.

Ilana, 2004-05: Dublin, Ireland

2) First Impressions

Students to Students on How To Behave in a New Country

Try your best to avoid being the annoying American. Avoid t-shirts with American slogans in non English speaking countries. Try not to be loud and obnoxious with other Americans in restaurants and the metro. Finally, make an attempt to learn basic phrases before you leave! I speak no Hungarian, but asked to learn 'thank you' 'please' 'I'm sorry' and 'excuse me' from the woman who picked me up at the airport. It made a world of difference my first few days.

Kelsey, 2005-06: Budapest, Hungary

It's impossible to disguise yourself as a native--your accent will always give you away, as will a million little mannerisms you'd never think twice about. However, it's very good to observe people from the country you are visiting to pick up on what they seem to think of as good manners, appropriate dress, etc. You can't hide, but you can gain respect by showing familiarity with the culture and history of the area, by being careful to respect local etiquette, and especially by showing your willingness to try to speak the language and to try new things (activities, food, etc).

Jessie, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

Exploring Cultural Differences: Observations by Bill Hoffa

Numerous studies have been done to identify specific characteristics that distinguish one culture from another. This anthropological approach to cultural differences and similarities of course can and should be studied. Most overseas visitors and those who receive them, however, often unfortunately are captured by misleading and often dangerous stereotyping. Most Germans, Japanese, Italians, etc., have stereotyped perceptions of 'the American,' just as most Americans have stereotyped images of 'Germans,' 'Japanese,' 'Italians,' etc. In short, misperceptions may exist on all sides. Frequently, the stereotype of the American is far from complimentary: the boorish tourist who expects everyone to speak English, the arrogant patriot who thinks every country in the world should pattern itself after the United States, the drunken reveler who sees the anonymity of traveling abroad as an opportunity to drop all civilized inhibitions--all have contributed to the development of this unfortunate stereotype.

It is up to you to behave in a manner that will convince your hosts that this is indeed an unjustified stereotype that cannot be applied arbitrarily, at least to yourself.

It may seem a bit contradictory to suggest that because of the unique social and cultural milieu in the United States, most Americans tend to be less reserved, less inhibited, and less restrained in their efforts to communicate friendliness and sociability. But in some areas abroad this outgoing manner, especially on the part of young women, can be grossly misinterpreted: a friendly smile and a warm "hello" on the streets of Rome could easily be interpreted by an Italian

Lothario as something more than mere friendliness. This is to say that until you develop a feel for the social customs characteristics of the area where you are living and studying, it is wise to be more formal and restrained in your social contacts. By the same token, do not expect the local populace to welcome you immediately, with open arms; their formality and restraint are not necessarily an expression of unfriendliness but may simply be characteristic of their social manner with strangers.

Unfortunately, attempts to categorize cultural characteristics often end up in cultural stereotypes that are unfair and misleading. In adjusting to your study abroad environment, you will therefore have to deal not only with real cultural differences, and also with perceived cultural differences. Keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as adept at stereotyping the American as we are at stereotyping them--and the results are not always complimentary. The following are a few examples of the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others frequently associate with the "typical" American:

outgoing and friendly	extravagant and wasteful	ignorant of other countries
informal	sure they have all the answers	wealthy
loud, rude, boastful,	lacking in class consciousness-	generous
immature	disrespectful of authority	promiscuous
hard working	racially prejudiced	always in a hurry

While a stereotype might possess some grain of truth, it is obvious when we consider individual differences that not every American fits the above description. The same is true about your hosts vis-à-vis your own preconceptions, for example, about the Germans, the English, the Japanese, the Italians, the Spaniards, the Russians, etc.

3) Students to Students on Travel Books

I HIGHLY recommend the "Let's Go" series. I traveled extensively during the year, and they never let me down. If you only purchase one travel book, make it one of these!! They're really fun, accurate, and geared towards college students who are on a budget but really interested in different things about new cities and countries. Plus, their food recommendations are fabulous.

Karen, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

Consider whether you to invest in a few city guides, country, guides, or region guides, or one big continent guide(such as a book that contains travel information for all of Europe). The city guides are easy to carry and very detailed, but it might be more cost efficient to get one big guide. "Let's Go" and "Lonely Planet", as well as "Rough Guides", are all good series to check out.

Ilana, 2004-05: Dublin, Ireland

4) Students to Students on Travel Arrangements, Tickets, etc.

I have a AAA membership and was able to "order in" some euros in advance. 200 to be safe is a good amount to get you through the first couple weeks after you arrive, of course depending on if you eat out expensively when you first arrive, etc. I paid a slightly higher exchange rate to order in euros from AAA but my small local bank would have charged me a fee and I could do it for free through AAA. If you have an account at a larger bank, they may have euros on hand, not charge you a fee, and give you an ok exchange rate and that could be a good way to get euros before coming.

Mara, 2005-06: Florence, Italy

I bought most of my train and plane tickets in advance, which limits spontaneity, but decreases the chances of becoming stranded. For Europe, try Ryanair.com and Easyjet.com for the lowest fares. Often the lowest of these fares may be only available for selected dates, but if you have a flexible schedule, and are willing to fly at odd hours, you can get some good deals.

Ilana, 2004-05: Dublin, Ireland

Hostelworld.com, RyanAir and subway systems are a student's best friend. Here's something different: GoogleEarth! I used it to map out my walk from the train station to my hostel for my trip to Rome. When I walked out of the station in October I knew exactly where I was going!!

Elizabeth, 2004-05: Edinburgh, Scotland

I looked through Rick Steve's website and some of his books before I left and while I was planning travel breaks- - he had a really great link to the banhoff rail website. Banhoff, currency translator/ world clock, easyjet, ryanair, hostelworld, hihostels.com.

Sara, 2004-05: Copenhagen, Denmark

5) Students to Students on Precautions for Travelers

Make copies of your passport, license, emergency contacts, school address and number- and keep it in a separate place from the originals.

Sara, 2004-05: Copenhagen, Denmark

I kept several Xerox copies of my passport and my visa in different places (one with my host family, one at my host university, and one stored away in my luggage).

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy,

For long trips, carry as little as possible and try not to carry anything that it is irreplaceable. Try to keep it to one back pack and one smaller/tote bag so that you can keep track of everything. You don't want to have your stuff out of reach when you put it down. It's good for carrying food/ maps- everything you will need immediately- don't bring a purse!!! Bury passports- when you're not using them- and large bills/ cards- in your pack/ money belt- and not in an easily accessible backpack pocket. It's going to be hard for someone to run off with a huge back pack- but you can easily be pick- pocketed. I met a family on a train in Rome who said that their father/ grandfather- had been traveling many years earlier and someone cut his pockets- hoping that his wallet would fall out. Luckily, he was carrying a book instead- but he didn't feel a thing.

Sara, 2005-06: Copenhagen, Denmark

It can be a good idea to have a cell phone when you travel, and if you don't get one automatically through your host institution, you can sometimes rent them for a very good price (I think around 10 dollars a month, plus however much money you want to put on the phone) from internet cafes like Internet Train. **Aria**, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

[STUDENT TRAVEL PHOTO HERE]

6) Internet Resources for World Travelers

Security, Aviation, & Travel Links:

-Security Toolbox: <http://toolbox.airsecurity.com>

ATMs Worldwide:

-MasterCard: <http://www.mastercard.com/>

-Visa: <http://www.visa.com>

Transportation:

-Airlines: www.discountfares.com

<http://travel.excite.com>

www.travelocity.com

www.statravel.com

-Transportation from airports worldwide to downtown: www.concierge.com

-Eurail Pass: www.eurail.com

Countries, Cities and Related Links:

-International Weather: www.weather.com

-World Maps: www.mapquest.com (USA, Canada, & Mexico); www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/

-International Telephone Directories: www.infobel.com/World

-Embassies & Consulates: www.embassy.org;

www.embassyworld.com/

-Visa/Passport Expediter Service: www.traveldocs.com

Currency Rates & Converters:

-Cheat Sheet for Travelers: www.oanda.com/converter/travel

-Exchange Rates: www.oanda.com/convert/fxdaily

Dates & Times:

-Time Zones: www.timeanddate.com/worldclock;

www.worldtimeserver.com; www.timeconverter.com

-Holidays & Festivals: www.earthcalender.com

General Resources for Travelers:

-Fodors: www.fodors.com

-Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com

-Virtual Tourist: www.virtualltourist.com

-Let's Go: www.letsgo.com

-Internet Guide to Hostels: www.hostels.com

-Cybercafe Search Engine: <http://cybercaptive.com>

-Advice for Women Travelers: www.journeywoman.com; www.HERmail.net

-Literature on Living/Traveling Overseas: www.escapeartist.com

Government Resources:

-Bureau of Consular Affairs: www.travel.state.gov

-Travel Advisories: www.travel.state.gov/travel/warnings.html

Health Matters:

-Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov

-Travel Health Info.: <http://healthlink.mcw.edu/travel-medicine>

-Travel Health Online: www.tripprep.com

Language Resources:

-Major European Languages Assistance: www.fodors.com/language

World News:

-World News: www.wn.com; www.cnn.com

-Business: www.ceoexpress.com

-Newspapers Worldwide: <http://newslink.org>

Student Life Abroad

TRAVEL AND SAFETY *WHILE* ABROAD

1) Students to Students on Money for Travel

It is a good idea not to have *too* much cash on you as you can get robbed, but when travelling you might need cash for air tax, etc as paying with a credit card increases the price.

Gitanjali, Costa Rica 2004-5

As for breaks, it really depends on where you are, and I know it is easier said than done, but make sure you have a little bit more on hand than you think you need, especially if you travel to remote areas where no one accepts credit cards. Use debit and credit cards as much as you can to limit the amount of extra cash you have on you, just in case you get robbed or lose wallet. you can always cancel cards, but can't get your cash back.

Amanda, 2006: Salvador, Brazil

When you travel on breaks, have some form of plastic available-- an ATM or credit card. Cash is great, but you never know what factors will be working against you: I.E. a really bad conversion rate, or a train you need to take on which only first class seats are still available!

Frances, 2007: Mexico

The best advice I can give is to just make sure to pay for all the necessities you can in advance (for example, book plane, train, and hostels online with a debit/credit card before you go so you don't need to bring extra cash to pay for these). Then you just need to have money for local buses/subway to get to your hostel. From there, you can get out extra cash from an ATM if you need to, for things like food and admission fees. How much money you need depends on where you go-- for example, in Florence I had to pay to get into all the museums and churches, but in Athens my student id got me into all the major tourist sites for free. Just do as much research about your destination as you can before you leave so you have an idea of what things you will have to spend money on.

Jill, 2006: Edinburgh, Scotland

Most economical fares

There are a lot of special weekend and travel fares with trains, etc, that aren't advertised very well. It would be a good idea to ask citizens of the host country for advice on these things, and never be afraid to ask if there is a special discount or promotion. Also, there are a lot of low cost airlines such as Ryan Air and Easyjet where you can find cheap tickets between locations abroad. I used StudentUniverse.com for my initial flight and found a very good price

Aria, Florence, Italy, 2004-5

2) Anticipating the Worst: Arranging a trip to maximize safety²

Your Itinerary. As much as possible, plan to stay in larger hotels that have more elaborate security. Safety experts recommend booking a room from the second to seventh floors above ground level to deter easy entrance from outside, but low enough for fire equipment to reach.

Because take-off and landing are the most dangerous times of a flight, book non-stop flights when possible. When there is a choice of airport

or airline, ask your travel agent about comparative safety records.

Legal Documents. Have your affairs at home in order. If you leave a current will, insurance documents, and power of attorney with your family or a friend, you can feel secure about traveling and will be prepared for any emergency that may arise while you are away. If you have

² A Safe Trip Abroad, Department of State Publication #10942, Bureau of Consular Affairs, March 2002

minor children, consider making guardianship arrangements for them.

Credit. Make a note of the credit limit on each credit card that you bring. Make certain not to charge over that amount on your trip. In some countries, Americans have been arrested for innocently exceeding their credit limit. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. 800 numbers do not work from abroad, but your company should have a number that you can call while you are overseas.

Insurance. Find out if your personal property insurance covers you for loss or theft abroad.

Precautions to Take While Traveling³

Safety on the Street

Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home. Be especially cautious in or avoid areas where you are likely to be victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, market places, festivals and marginal areas of cities.

Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly-lit streets. Try not to travel alone at night.

Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.

Avoid scam artists. Beware of strangers who approach you, offering bargains or to be your guide.

Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will:

- jostle you,
- ask you for directions or the time,
- point to something spilled on your clothing,
- or distract you by creating a disturbance.

A child or even a woman carrying a baby can be a pickpocket. Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.

More importantly, check on whether your health insurance covers you abroad. Medicare and Medicaid do not provide payment for medical care outside the U.S. Even if your health insurance will reimburse you for medical care that you pay for abroad, normal health insurance does not pay for medical evacuation from a remote area or from a country where medical facilities are inadequate. Consider purchasing one of the short-term health and emergency assistance policies designed for travelers. Also, make sure that the plan you purchase includes medical evacuation in the event of an accident or serious illness.

Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.

Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority.

Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.

Learn a few phrases in the local language so you can signal your need for help, the police, or a doctor. Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

If you are confronted, don't fight back. Give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced, but you cannot.

Photography. In many countries you can be harassed or detained for photographing such things as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transportation facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Safety in Your Hotel

Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby.

Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.

³ A Safe Trip Abroad, Department of State Publication #10942, Bureau of Consular Affairs, March 2002

Let someone know when you expect to return if you are out late at night.

If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.

Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire. Be sure you know where the nearest fire exit and alternate exits are located. Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit. This could be a life saver if you have to crawl through a smoke-filled corridor.

Safety on Public Transportation

If a country has a pattern of tourists being targeted by criminals on public transport, that information is mentioned in the Consular Information Sheets under the "Crime Information" section.

Taxis. Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings. Beware of unmarked cabs.

Trains. Well organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourists routes is a serious problem. It is more common at night and especially on overnight trains.

If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away. This can happen in the corridor of the train or on the platform or station.

Do not accept food or drink from strangers. Criminals have been known to drug food or drink offered to passengers. Criminals may also spray sleeping gas in train compartments.

Where possible, lock your compartment. If it cannot be locked securely, take turns sleeping in shifts with your traveling companions. If that is not possible, stay awake. If you must sleep unprotected, tie down your luggage, strap your valuables to you and sleep on top of them as much as possible.

Do not be afraid to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way. Extra police are often assigned to ride trains on routes where crime is a serious problem.

Buses. The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes. For example, tourists have been drugged and robbed while sleeping on buses or in bus stations. In some countries whole bus loads of passengers have been held up and robbed by gangs of bandits.

Safety When [If] You Drive

When you rent a car, don't go for the exotic; choose a type commonly available locally. Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed. Make certain it is in good repair. If available, choose a car with universal door locks and power windows, features that give the driver better control of access to the car. An air conditioner, when available, is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars.

Keep car doors locked at all times. Wear seat belts.

As much as possible, avoid driving at night.

Don't leave valuables in the car. If you must carry things with you, keep them out of sight locked in the trunk.

Don't park your car on the street overnight. If the hotel or municipality does not have a parking garage or other secure area, select a well-lit area.

Never pick up hitchhikers.

Don't get out of the car if there are suspicious looking individuals nearby. Drive away.

Patterns of Crime Against Motorists

In many places frequented by tourists, including areas of southern Europe, victimization of motorists has been refined to an art. Where it is a problem, U.S. embassies are aware of it and consular officers try to work with local authorities to warn the public about the dangers. In some locations, these efforts at public awareness have paid off, reducing the frequency of incidents. You may also wish to ask your rental car agency for advice on avoiding robbery while visiting tourist destinations.

Carjackers and thieves operate at gas stations, parking lots, in city traffic and along the highway. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention when you are in or near your car.

Criminals use ingenious ploys. They may pose as good Samaritans, offering help for tires that they

claim are flat or that they have made flat. Or they may flag down a motorist, ask for assistance, and then steal the rescuer's luggage or car. Usually they work in groups, one person carrying on the pretense while the others rob you.

Other criminals get your attention with abuse, either trying to drive you off the road, or causing an "accident" by rear-ending you or creating a "fender bender."

In some urban areas, thieves don't waste time on ploys, they simply smash car windows at traffic lights, grab your valuables or your car and get away. In cities around the world, "defensive driving" has come to mean more than avoiding auto accidents; it means keeping an eye out for potentially criminal pedestrians, cyclists and scooter riders.

Student to Students on Bicycles

Copenhagen has a very large percentage of its commuters travelling by bike- so understanding biking rules is pretty important. As a pedestrian- bikers will assume that you know when they have the right of way- which they think is always. And if you decide to get your own bike- it's like learning to drive all over again. During rush hour- there can be bikers on all sides of you- so you have to ride in a predictable manner- at a steady speed- which can take some getting used to.

Some of the rules include: It is illegal to ride without a light and reflectors at night. Bikes have separate traffic light signals. You have to signal with you hands when you're turning. Not everyone obeys it- but walk your bike at cross walks. Keep to the right, pass on the left- ring your bell to signal if need be. Baskets in the back are easy to steal from. Lock your bike- they go missing all the time.

Sara, 2004-05: Copenhagen, Denmark

3) Student to Students on Property Theft and How to Avoid It

If you are in a city where theft is common, only go to the ATM during the day. Take out several hundred US dollars at a time so you don't have to go to the ATM often.

Frances, 2005-06: Puebla, Mexico

-Don't carry valuables with you around the city (i.e. iPod, camera, lots of money, social security card, passport, etc.) Of course, I did sometimes, but it's risky.

-Cell phones disappear at the speed of light. Mine was stolen in a pool hall one Saturday night... that's all they took. They are easy to sell on the black market and on high demand. Watch yours!

-Don't carry bags that are at all easy to get into. Mine was a shoulder bag and the opening was tight against my chest. Someone would basically have to fondle me to get inside. That is the best way.

-There are LOTS of street kids. Most of them are not dangerous, but they will all ask for money. Don't act scared, they can read you easily. They will follow you for blocks, don't freak out. If you have change, just give them a little. It won't kill you or them. Don't ignore them.

-LOCK your doors. There are robbers.

-Just be alert... It's not dangerous if you are smart.

Ariana, 2004-05: Cape Town, South Africa

In San Jose, the capitol of Costa Rica, it is notorious for foreigners, i.e. Americans to get robbed. Old ladies in the markets would warn me to hold on to my bag tightly while walking down a seemingly uncrowded street to the bus, etc. having backpacks is risky as people can easily unzip it and fish out valuables. it is always better to "blend in", i.e. get a locally made bag and clothes and try not to draw too much attention to yourself (although staying in groups is really a lot safer).

Gitanjali, 2004-05: Costa Rica

I found Geneva to be incredibly safe. There were no parts of the city that I was afraid to go to, and I was comfortable walking around at night as well. The only advice I can give is to be careful crossing tram tracks and bus lanes, as well as to watch for trams and buses while riding a bicycle. My bike was locked outside all year and it was never stolen or damaged.

Katherine, 2004-05: Geneva, Switzerland

...on Purses, Bags, and Wallets

In New Zealand people are generally really friendly and helpful, but never underestimate drunk people; they may still take your stuff if you leave it on a chair in a bar while you get up and boogie. I was grateful that I still had my wallet in my back pocket and not in my jacket and even though somebody took my stuff, when I realized it was gone pretty much everyone in the bar helped look for it, which was pretty nice and reassuring about the character of the people here. So just always keep an eye on your stuff or leave it with people who are willing to look after it.

Aliza, 2004-05, New Zealand

....On Laptop Computers and Digital Cameras

While in Venice I met a American student who had his laptop stolen while at the airport. He set it down behind him for just a minute while he was at the ticket counter, turned around, and it was gone. I heard about this happening again to someone else a few weeks later. It wasn't only while traveling that lap tops were taken- 2 students had they're stolen from classrooms/ unlocked lockers. Be sure to have a desk lock for laptops. At least with my program- There were a lot of computers at the school so I didn't take mine out of my dorm. I traveled with a digital camera and plenty of memory card space- and so avoided having to take mine. Every major city has internet cafes and they are inexpensive. It's also a good idea to sign up for free online photo sharing- so you can show friends and family your pictures immediately (shutterfly.com, clubphoto.com).

I LOVE my digital camera... so did my fellow interns [on my study abroad program]! I constantly took pictures and then transferred them to my hard drive. Sharing was easy; a few of us had jump drives and would pass them around until everyone had the pictures they wanted! Beware: Save your pictures to CD once a month JUST IN CASE something happens. I know at least one girl who saved them to her iPod because she decided to leave her desktop at home in the States! It worked.

Elizabeth, 2004-05: Edinburgh, Scotland

Sara, 2004-05: Copenhagen, Denmark

4) Students to Students on Personal Safety

Learn the transportation system of your city fast, particularly what time things close, to avoid expensive and inconvenient taxi rides, or worse, being entirely stranded alone late at night, which happened to my roommate.

Kelsey, 2005-06: Budapest, Hungary

The one time I did have what one might call a "close call" was at about 6pm on a Saturday evening. Cape Town is a pretty desolate city at that time on a Saturday. It's lively earlier in the day and later in the night... so don't worry. But dinner time is pretty quiet in Cape Town, as are Sundays. Anyway, I was at the train station with a local guy (white, Afrikaans) and we were going to take a taxi. We got stopped on a stairwell by 3 teenagers. They asked for change, which is pretty normal in Cape Town. We said no, and one of them whipped out a switch-blade knife. Luckily, everything was ok. The guy I was with had encountered situations like this and knew how to handle it, so we were fine. But if it had just been me, or someone else from the trip, we might not have been. So basically, don't walk around African cities when they are deserted and you are only with one or two other people, or alone. It's just not smart.

Ariana, Cape Town, South Africa, class of 2006

Students to Students on Night clubs

This might sound simple, but using common sense is really key when you're living abroad. Know yourself - if you know that you get aggressive when you drink too much, don't have more than one or two drinks when you're out. A girl on my program in Dublin got drunk and picked a fight with a pack of thirteen year-old girls who beat the crap out of her, and she had bruises that lasted for weeks. Do NOT mess with young Irish girls - they're quick-tempered and very scrappy. Keep a low profile, don't be "that loud American" (who wants to be that person?), and always avoid bringing up politics, religion, and other super-controversial subjects. We are very opinionated, us Smithies, but you don't want to make yourself conspicuous when you're in a new place. Have fun but remember it's better - and sometimes safer - to seem a little shy than totally obnoxious and irritatingly outspoken.

Colleen, 2004-05: Dublin, Ireland

It is hard to find a safe place to store valuables if you go to clubs or bars. If you use a purse, keep it on you at all times. Even when you're dancing with somebody - I recommend a small bag that doesn't get in the way if I wear it over my shoulder all the time. Don't carry anything valuable that you won't need (i.e. a bank card) with you when you go out. Even if you think you might end up spending a lot of money, instead of bringing a bank card and having to go to the ATM in the middle of the night, you can always take a taxi

home when you run out of money and have the driver wait while you go inside to get change to pay for the ride. Just make sure that you always do have extra money at home. When I go out I usually only bring my identification, my cell phone, and some cash, which all fits in my two front pockets without falling out. If you don't have pockets, another good place to store cash is your shoe.

Frances, 2005-06: Puebla, Mexico

FOOD

Students to Students on Food, Cooking, and Eating on a Budget

1) Food Shopping and Cooking

Don't bring cookbooks, as they're bulky, but do bring 10 or 15 of your favorite recipes, or recipes recommended by family and friends. Also - bring American measuring cups and spoons for following American recipes.

Kelsey, 2005-06: Budapest, Hungary

The Smith Stipend is not a very high amount so money-wise, one has to be careful. I have friends who look for fairly cheap restaurants to eat for lunch and dinner everyday, however, what works best is to cook your own food when you are home at least half the time and the rest you can spend in decent/nice places. Therefore budgeting is very important. You should always over estimate your expenses so at the end of the week when you don't think you have too much money left, you actually have more than you expected. This concept has allowed me to budget myself during the week and reward myself on the weekend.

Alizeh, 2005-06, Prague, Czech Republic

Dunedin in New Zealand has some great food options. There's a local farmer's market every Saturday by the railroad station and a couple of organic shops as well as organic and vegan friendly restaurants and bars in town. There's also a lot of student-oriented lunch places that cover a broad spectrum of Asian and Middle-eastern food and for not too much money.

Also a good way to manage your budget is to share some groceries with your flatmates, but don't let their wants keep you from eating how you want to just to save some money.

Aliza, class of 2006: Dunedin, New Zealand

Cooking is much cheaper than eating out. In Britain they sell food in single-serving sizes - so that if you are only cooking for yourself, you can buy one chicken breast instead of a pack of 4 that will spoil! If you have minimal cooking experience like me, some easy but fairly cheap and healthy meals that I lived off of were stir-frys (both with meat and without). Vegetarian food was not hard to come by, as tofu and supplements were available almost everywhere.

Diane, 2004-05, London England

Most of first semester was spent learning the ropes, getting used to the kitchen (which had very low quality supplies) and obtaining recipes. It was hard to get used to the equipment, since we only have 3 sauce pans and one skillet (not only is it not non-stick, I'm pretty sure it's extra sticky). My flatmates who are regular students brought some stuff: a toaster, sandwich cooker and microwave.

My biggest recommendation is to have a bunch of simple recipes that you know you like. A big point is to be open-minded. This does not mean vegetarians have to eat meat, but be prepared for things to be less available. Tofu is not so easy to find, but packaged foods are very clearly marked with a big V for vegetarian.

Before you leave, try to find a small cookbook geared toward simple, cheap meals. The one I love (I borrowed it from a friend and copied down most recipes) was the Healthy College Cookbook. It has some good vegetarian meals as well as good chicken recipes.

Kat, 2005-06: Edinburgh, Scotland

One difficult thing about food is mainly caused by my own attempts at a diet and eating healthier. While they do have a lot of healthy options (I think the U.K. might be even more weight-obsessed than the U.S., if that's possible), they don't generally break things down into serving sizes and give nutritional information for a typical serving. Instead, everything is mostly in grams and without a scale it's hard to gauge how much you're actually eaten. Also, peculiarly, on every package they have nutritional information for 100g of the food. However, most of the serving sizes are much much less than a 100g. It's a little confusing and difficult to navigate, but that's basically my only complaint on the food-front.

Carly, 2005-06: Edinburgh, Scotland

In Switzerland, the bottom rung grocery is called Migros and the next up is called Coop. As you go up in price, you get better quality and more variety (and you are more likely to find things from home that you can't find at the cheapest stores), but go to the cheapest stores for your staples--over months, this will save you a lot of money. Also check out ethnic grocery stores for cheap tofu, sauces, spices, etc. As far as health on a budget goes, in Geneva, meat is expensive, but tofu, eggs and beans are cheaper sources of protein. Rice, pasta and potatoes make excellent bases for most meals. Frozen veggies are cheaper and don't rot. I'd suggest buying a few things that can be used in a lot of meals, even if they are a bit expensive--go for a few versatile ingredients. For example, salsa is great for snacking, baked potatoes, etc, and is worth the price. But if you want to eat cheaply, you have to rotate through just a few of these types of ingredients. If you are near a border, try grocery shopping on the other side--for example, meats, cheese and produce are much cheaper in France, just a short tram ride away from Geneva, than they are in Switzerland.

Jessie, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

The food in Israel is *metsuyan* (excellent)!!! Shooks sell fresh and cheap fruits, vegetables, breads and sweets and are open on all days except Shabbat. Since Tel Aviv University doesn't have a food program, Smith will give you a food stipend. With the dollar to shekel conversion, this stipend should last you for a good amount of time. One last thing- don't be afraid to try the new fruits and veggies that Israeli's grow. You could be in for a real treat!

Jacqueline Broder, 2004-05: Tel Aviv- Israel

2) Eating with Locals (Homestays) and Eating Local Food

If you live with a host family that makes your meals for you, it can be rough adjusting to new food and new meal times. The trick is to just be direct and honest about what you want to eat. The host mom or whoever in the family makes your meals is probably already worried that you won't like the food and anxious to make things you like. So just be specific about foods you like-- for example "I like to eat Raisin

Bran cereal or some other bran cereal with raisins for breakfast, and I my favorite vegetable is potatoes, and I like to make myself peanut butter and honey sandwiches for a snack." The family will probably go out and buy you cereal, milk, potatoes, sandwich bread, peanut butter, and honey. You will have the foods you like to eat and the family will feel relieved that there is something in the house they know you like.

Frances, 2005-06: Puebla, Mexico

Food is hard [for me in India], and eating healthy is hard too. The biggest difference I found is that I eat a lot more vegetarian here than I did in the US, I am not a vegetarian, but what most people eat here is dal and rice everyday so getting your stomach used to that is impossible. I would have to say that I have diarrhea at least once a week. I try to supplement these things with vegetables and other types of grains to have a more balanced diet that is more similar to what I am used to but it is still very difficult. But buying fruit and vegetables in Delhi is extremely cheap so that is really good, and probably very different from what other students experience in Europe. 20 cents for a Broccoli, anyone?

Suzanne Schwartz, class of 2007, Delhi, India

If you are eating with a host family, it requires being very brave on occasion, so if you are a picky eater, plan to change before you go. Host families in France tended to feed us more than we asked for, assess our enjoyment of the food based on volume consumed and not take no for an answer. If you are really full, you have to be very clear about it, and it is best to compliment the cooking in the same sentence. Meal times can be very hard to adjust to, and if you need to eat frequently, it's best to keep some of your own snacks since dinner can be very late. Diets can be very high in fat, so it does take the metabolism some time to adjust.

Jessie, class of 2007: Geneva, Switzerland (homestay in France)

My situation was complicated by the fact that my host mother was a poor cook and never even tasted (nor ate) anything she made for us. Mostly we ate yogurt, fruit, beans, eggs, bread and meat. It was a difficult situation, but she was a dancer who was very concerned with her own weight and so impressed her own concerns about her body and image upon her exchange students--commenting on our eating habits and food choices and sometimes over or underfeeding us. I constantly thought about food in a negative way. I ended up buying a great deal of personal food. "Reembolsos" [re-imbursements -- a feature of some programs in Spain] made that absolutely possible and allowed me to try things I might not have.

Many Spanish families have students to gain some extra income. They get paid a great deal and some families put this into their students while others do not. There was not much food readily available in the house for us beyond lunch and sometimes a yogurt for breakfast (which was by Spanish standards very unconventional) and I heard of other households in which there was a similar situation. I found myself craving certain things and went out to find these things on my own. I left Spain however, feeling healthy. Our host mother liked to keep us out of the kitchen, though we often "snuck" in to heat tea, etc. when no one was home.

Anna, class of 2006: Cordoba, Spain

The only advice I have about food is, aside from bootlegged liquor, try everything. I ate from street vendors, I ate horse stomach, and I drank fermented mare's milk, and I only got sick a couple times. Frankly, I would rather risk getting sick than missing something amazing.

Huelo, 2005-06: Irkutsk, Russia

Food is part of one's culture, so it is polite to at least try food, otherwise the student may seem ungrateful or rude. For instance, Samoan people love to eat, and while the portions that we were served seemed incredible, it meant a lot that we tried our best to eat as much as possible.

Bonnie, 2004-05: Vietnam and Samoa

3) Vegetarians, Vegans and Dietary Restrictions Abroad

I am a vegetarian and I had few problems surviving in Costa Rica. My host mother was warned of my dietary needs and so I ate a lot of rice, beans, and cooked vegetables. I didn't get a lot of dairy, i.e. calcium in my diet because dairy is not really a staple in Costa Rica. You might want to bring calcium supplements and or buy some dairy on your own while there.

Gitanjali, 2004-05: Costa Rica

Food can sometimes be a hassle while abroad. Being Muslim, I had to be very careful to avoid pork. In a lot of places they don't specify what type of meat they serve or sometimes if you are vegetarian they forget to mention that they put meat in your meal. Learning the language and specifying always helps.

Alizeh, 2005-06: Prague, Czech Republic

For students who are vegan/vegetarian eating may be a challenge because the definition of "vegetarian" and "vegan" is often different in other countries--particularly in some developing countries where food is a more precious commodity. I know that several students in my study abroad groups who asked for vegetarian food did not always get vegetarian food. In both Viet Nam and Samoa, the local people often did not understand why we would ask for such a thing.

Bonnie, 2004-05: Vietnam and Samoa

I'm a vegetarian, a concept that is rather new to Italians. During the year, my signora (bless her) kept trying to feed me meat, convinced that I just hadn't tried a good enough piece and that it was a matter of taste. I ended up eating chicken pretty frequently, plus the occasional octopus... If you're going to study abroad, especially when you are living with a family, you have to realize something-- you are going abroad in order to live differently than you do at home, and it isn't always convenient. I'm back to my meat-free ways now, but I realized that going on a vegetarian rampage within my family setting totally wasn't worth it. I really didn't want to insult my host family and perpetuate a stereotype about uber-picky Americans just to avoid eating meat a few times a week. This especially applies to vegans-- veganism is a bizarre concept to almost all non-Americans. Things like tofu and soy products can be hard to come by, even in a larger grocery store. Weigh your pros and cons-- do you want the experience of living in a new culture and trying new cuisines, or do you want your Rice Dream? It's harsh, but true.

Karen, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

For people doing a homestay, it is VERY VERY important that you specify what you can and cannot eat. Fortunately my host mom was pretty much vegetarian (except for fish), so she understood the nutritional requirements involved and made sure that I had well balanced meals. But I can imagine that a non-vegetarian family might think that meat can simply be replaced with eggs and cheese, so that is something else that vegetarians should make sure they explain to host families. Also, my host mom was always very open to recommendations on things to prepare. I have noticed that a lot of the host-families, at least in Aix, really just wanted to please you, so you shouldn't be afraid to offer a recipe or to help prepare something.

In supermarkets in Geneva, most basic things, like tofu can be found. And there is even a little symbol that's a green V in a yellow circle that means something is vegetarian. It's not on all veggie things, but it really helps in trying to figure out if things are.

For vegans, it's a little more difficult. Almost all of the fake meat has egg and milk in it. However, soy milk and soy yogurt are very common, as well as vegan margarines. So far, the biggest obstacle to vegans in the Geneva program is really just the temptation of baked goods and fine cheeses on every corner.

Jamie, class of 2007: Geneva, Switzerland

I have been a vegetarian my entire life, with the exception of some fish at some points. I am currently vegan and had vegan friends while abroad in Spain. I told the program that I would eat fish and limited poultry because I wanted to live with a host family and I thought that it would open more opportunities for me especially within the context of the culture (a meat eating one!).

At first I had an extremely difficult time getting used to the food (and actually for most of the time I was abroad). The eating schedule is very strange (no breakfast [or very little], late and big lunch, small dinner very late) and every meal (or nearly) involved meat, eggs and oil--things I never have eaten and especially not in large quantities in the U.S.

Lastly--Kabob is great, so go to a kabob shop and eat falafel to your hearts delight!!!

Anna, 2004-05: Cordoba, Spain

HEALTH

1) Students to Students on Health and Food Safety

When traveling and adjusting to new countries in Central America, the flora in your stomach may do a total readjustment. For this reason, I would advise trying to buy yoghurt from the grocery store. Try to never eat anything out in the open markets because it might not be fresh and microbes are different in Costa Rica and speaking from personal experience, you might end up in the hospital for a stomach infection.

Gitanjali, 2004-05: Costa Rica

Be careful not to get dehydrated. It is easy to do and you won't always feel thirsty when your body needs water, especially if you are busy getting adjusted to a new country and a new lifestyle. Be especially careful if you start consuming more alcohol abroad than you used to at home. Drink a full glass of water after you get back from the bar and before you go to bed, just to be on the safe side.

Frances, class of 2007, Puebla, Mexico

It is important to remember food safety, for instance eating from street vendors is not encouraged in Viet Nam because the food may be sitting out all day in the sun. The best rules to go by are to eat hot, steaming food soon after it is cooked.

Also, pay attention to foods that are not native to the country. I can speak from personal experience because I got food poisoning after eating salmon in Samoa. Although we were eating in a resort restaurant, the salmon must not have been handled properly--not to mention it is a cold water fish. I ended up in the hospital with an IV after being sicker than I had ever been in my life.

Bonnie, 2004-05: Vietnam and Samoa

2) Student to Students on Local Health Care and Insurance

I got a stomach infection (bacterial) within my first month in Costa Rica. I believe it was a combination of an extreme flora adjustment as well as a "fresh" smoothie I had purchased in the market place on a class trip. I only know of one other girl, who also drank a smoothie that day, who got as ill as I did, but she seemed to take care of it on her own. My case was rather severe and so my host mother (who is a nurse) rushed me to the hospital, which was a Catholic-run clinic in Guadalupe, a city about half an hour from the capitol city of San Jose. The language program I was studying with at the time, Costa Rican Language Acadamey (CRLA) paid for my expenses. It was extremely cheap. For intravenous fluid re-hydration plus antibiotics and blood testing it all came to about the equivalent of \$100. The doctor had studied some in the U.S. and was completely fluent in English and so I was able to ask him several questions about the procedure, medication, etc.

One problem within the Costa Rican medical system is that there are often staff shortages. The great part is that the medical system is government subsidized, which makes it much more affordable, and the quality of care I received was exceptional, completely sterile, etc. However, I believe that because I had a U.S. passport and was a visiting student, they rushed me to the front of the line. In any case, immediate hospitalization helped me rapidly recover and I took an additional day off of school to lie in bed. Together with a steady diet of soda crackers and Pedialyte/Gatorade I was fine in about a week and I also took three different kind of medications for about two weeks (an antibiotic to kill the stomach bacteria and a flora reconstitution agent, as well as an anti-nausea agent to help me eat). In total, I was very satisfied with the medical care I received while studying abroad in Costa Rica.

Gitanjali, 2004-05: Costa Rica

....dealing with insurance and payment

I would advise anyone going abroad to always carry insurance cards with them, and to double check ahead of time with their insurance policy to make sure it has international coverage. They should also carry around relevant papers proving their purpose of study in the country, an international student i.d. and passport photocopy. I happened to be lucky and have my program take financial responsibility for my illness, but they always need to verify your identity at hospitals and often when you are in the throes of illness you will not think to go collect your insurance cards.

Gitanjali, 2004-05: Costa Rica

3) Medicine Planet on Emergency Contraception and Sexually Transmitted Disease

Emergency Contraception

Travel can create a greater risk of the unexpected sexual encounter or failure of usual contraception methods so any fertile woman traveler should prepare herself in case of an unexpected pregnancy. Emergency contraception is a method used after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy. There are currently two types of emergency contraceptive pill (ECP): the combined pill, containing both estrogen and a progestin, and a progestin-only pill. Either should be taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex in the form of two doses, each dose 12 hours apart. Emergency contraception is most effective the earlier it is taken. However, the ECP will not stop a pregnancy from an earlier act of intercourse.

After you have used ECP, bleeding similar to that of a menstrual period should start within 21 days. If not, you may be pregnant, so get a pregnancy test. Nausea and vomiting can occur, more commonly with the combination pills than the progestin-only pills and usually last only a few hours. Medication can be taken 30 minutes before taking the ECP to prevent vomiting. If you vomit within 1-3 hours after taking ECP, some doctors recommend that you take an extra dose.

Before You Go:

Before you go, learn about what options are available, why you may be at risk for an unplanned pregnancy, how to plan for the unplanned and who to contact in case of an emergency. The availability of emergency contraception varies greatly, so it is best to pack what you might need before you go.

Important Information:

Emergency contraception is less likely to work after 72 hours. ECP works well, but it's not foolproof, with about a 75 percent reduction in pregnancy risk. ECP is thought to be safe in most circumstances, as the amount of hormone in an ECP treatment is small, compared to the total dosage that women take in combined oral contraceptives for routine contraception.

Sexually Transmitted Disease: Chlamydia

The romance, newness and complete removal from the ordinary context of life can lead to social carelessness among travelers, resulting in high-risk exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. When traveling, many women abandon the routine safe-sex precautions of every-day life back home. Chlamydia is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases and does more damage to the female reproductive system than any other single STD in the world. The intense inflammation caused by the chlamydia organism frequently leads to scarring and blockage of the fallopian tubes; infertility, ectopic pregnancy and even death in women can result. Chlamydia can be transmitted during vaginal, oral, or anal sexual contact, yet few women develop any early symptoms. It is easy to become infected by chlamydia and remain completely unaware of the fact. It is important to learn about this infection and prevent it, or at least detect it early so that you can avoid the potentially serious effects of late diagnosis and delay in treatment.

Before You Go:

Get tested for chlamydia and all other STD's. Stock up on ample supplies of male or female condoms, or at least be sure that they will be available at your destination.

Important Information:

- As much as 30 percent of infertility in women may be related to preventable complications of past STD's.
- Abstinence or the use of male or female condoms prevents transmission of chlamydia.
- In women a more profuse watery vaginal discharge is often the only sign of early chlamydia infection; in men, burning with urination is the most common sign.
- Antibiotic treatment can prevent further damage to fertility in women if chlamydia infection is diagnosed and treated early.
- Routine screening should be done for all women that are sexually active, especially those with more than one sexual partner.

ACADEMICS

Getting the Most from an Academic Experience Unlike Smith's

You will probably have a much more balanced life abroad than at Smith. There are not a lot of assignments due, so you can budget your time easier. I find that I have a lot more time to hang out with friends and go out than I do at Smith.

Sometimes the courses listed on the website have different requirements than when you get to the first class so it's good to have some backup choices. Also, classes can fill up, which is frustrating, so make sure you have a good plan. Ask other students about what they are taking. Especially if you're there for a year, I would ask others what is good to take for second semester. Also, that gives you a chance to stay with some familiar faces that you already know. This was especially true for me since I had mostly chemical engineering classes last semester, and I decided to take another engineering biology course so I could be with some of them again.

Sometimes you will have course conflicts, especially if you are taking courses in different disciplines. Even when it's hard just stick with it and know that as long as you are trying that you are probably doing a lot better than you think.

Lauren, 2005-06: Toronto, Canada

1) Students to Students on US College Programs

EUROPE

I would say that it's important to remember that a lot of learning happens outside of the classroom, especially in foreign speaking countries. I study in Spain, and spending time with Spanish friends, whether while hanging out or doing homework together, has been one of the best resources for improving my Spanish

Erin Loughney

The courses offered in the program I am on in Prague are very specific to the region and I feel that most students should take these courses. Growing up in Pakistan, I usually studied about Pakistani history and was limited to that region. At Smith I learnt a lot about economics in USA and about African American culture which I previously had no idea about. This year I have learnt so much about Central Europe and am so happy and fulfilled with the education I am receiving. I have taken economics courses about transition economies and taken literature courses and politics courses and have learnt and am continuing to learn sooo much. I believe that taking courses specific to the region is very important and gives you a more diverse perspective.

I am glad that I came to Prague because it has encouraged me to come out of my little bubble/ safety zone which Smith provides and has allowed me to be more adventurous in choosing courses and making friends who are from different academic fields and learning from them.

Alizeh, 2004-05: New Zealand

The hardest thing about being abroad is that I miss real classes. I'm doing the Associated Colleges in China program, and all we take is Chinese, all day, every day. I miss my major (logic) like a member of my family. Just taking Chinese is not very intellectually stimulating. It's just memorization, really; that's how you learn a language. I'm absolutely dying for a proper class with difficult reading and interesting discussions.

Emily, 2004-05: Beijing, China

Try in every way possible to integrate yourself with foreign students and to be respectful of the host country's culture, even when you are with just American students. I think it is also a good idea to try and find an activity in which you are forced to get away from friends and other students on your program, such as volunteer work.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

2) Students to Students on Host Country Universities

Keep in open mind (host country systems are most likely very different from Smith). Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

UNITED KINGDOM/IRELAND

ENGLAND

Studying in London has taught me that the academic systems around the globe are completely different from ours in the States. Since education is mostly government subsidized over here, professors expect you to buy very few books, which sounds great in theory, but in reality is actually a very difficult change to make from the Smith system. Don't be prepared to go to the campus center and buy all of the books you'll need for the entire semester in one day, because there's no way that's going to happen. You will be expected to get copies of the reading for your classes, no matter what their size, and regardless of if there are only a few copies of the books in the university's library, so be resourceful. My school, University College London, is part of a larger consortium system of sorts, the University of London, so many of the libraries in the city belonging to other universities in the consortium are available to students in the system with your college ID. Find as many libraries as you can, and become familiar with them.

Finding your reading and research materials aren't the only things that are going to take longer and be pretty frustrating at first: most European schools are not very

internet savvy, and your registration and enrollment processes will very likely have to be done in person rather than through a system online. It takes a long time, and you have to be prepared with multiple backup choices for classes in case some or all of the ones you want are full or conflict. My advice is to get twice as many courses as you think you will actually need approved by Smith before you leave to minimize this problem. But if you do get here and need another course approved on the day you register (like I did), the Study Abroad Office is really good about getting back to you as quickly as possible, so email them first with any questions.

There's really no way to know what your academic experience is going to be like unless you talk to someone who went to your school, so take advantage of the pre-departure orientation session for that. But just be prepared for a very different environment, academic and otherwise, and do your best to adapt as quickly as you can. If you get over the frustration quickly, it'll mean more time for exploring your city and beyond.

Emily, 2005-06, London, England

IRELAND

The student in an Irish university has to take much more initiative in planning both classes and coursework. Unlike at Smith, there are a wider variety of bureaucratic experiences ranging from smooth and organized to extremely frustrating. I had heard that final exams counted for a greater percentage of a student's grade in Ireland than they did in America, but I did not realize exactly how large this percentage would be, and that I would still be required to write essays during the course of the year even if they did not count as much as they would have back home. The concept of more self-directed study also took a lot of time to get used to.

Ilana, 2004-05, Dublin, Ireland

SCOTLAND

(GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART) Studying at an art school is an extremely different environment to work/learn in compared to Smith, never mind an art school in a different country. Be prepared to motivate yourself entirely. You can't rely on classes for structure, because your week is a big period of studio time that you decide how to use. Concept was always valued more than technical ability, and you are expected to explain the reasoning behind your work at any given moment, which at first is uncomfortable, but as an artist is the most valuable lesson. Tutors are incredibly friendly. They're not always critical, but they get the wheels spinning. Meet with them as often as you like. If you're struggling in any aspect of your abroad experience, they're good people to talk to. Library hours are short- you have until 7:00 p.m., not until midnight to do what you need to do, and this is the place for internet access. I used the library far more in Glasgow than I do here at Smith- it was my academic outlet. Take advantage of the films and books for inspiration for your work. There is an excellent selection of fine art magazines that you should definitely indulge in as well. Outside of the art school there are gallery openings every day/night, and there are amazing artists speaking about their work as well. Tramway, a gallery located in the East end of Glasgow (take a cab with friends, or you can take the underground) features fantastic exhibitions, and I was lucky enough to see Barbara Kruger speak there about her work- it

was a highlight of my whole experience there. This city is overflowing with art culture--- drink it up.

Natalie, 2004-05: Glasgow, Scotland

-In the UK, tutorials are a great opportunity to work through examples and get help from professors. None of this work is ever actually handed in, but attending these will be really helpful in preparing for the final exam.

-Make sure not to save everything until the last minute. Get a month by month calendar and set deadlines for researching, drafts and revisions throughout the time before your papers are due.

-Get library books out early even if you don't start researching right away. Classes are large and with only a few paper topics to choose from, the books you need may not be available when you decide to start writing. -Also, ASK lots of questions, especially at Edinburgh. I found out after a week of class that there was a lab component to the class that no one had ever told me about. It was worth 50% of my grade, so I'm glad I found out early on. Especially if you are taking upper-level classes, professors will assume that you know things that you may

Kathryn, 2004-05: Edinburgh, Scotland

You really have to learn to work independently. Universities in England expect you to do the work on your own without a professor working examples in class or setting due dates to turn in work. There's just one big exam at the end of the year and that assesses whether you absorbed the material from the year. Keep up with the reading. It's hard to know when you fall behind because there are no periodic tests to help you check whether you're keeping up with the material -The registration system is not as easy as it is at Smith. A lot more time and research goes into setting up a schedule for the year. Make sure you get the classes approved for your major before taking it, or you might just have to take it over when you get back to Smith.

Frances, 2004-05: London, England

AFRICA

[At the university in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania,] My professors didn't show up at all for the first three weeks of class. After that, they came irregularly. I had only two professors out of six who came to classes on a regular basis. Most of my teachers also were not fond of exchange students and would make this clear during class time or on graded assignments. The teaching style was completely different and it was common for professors to degrade students in front of their peers.

One of the greatest challenges was the lack of resources. The library contained books dated from before 1970 and most could not be checked out. It was practically impossible to do research. My academic experience was not at all what I expected. Although I tried extremely hard, I don't feel that I learned much in the classroom. I definitely learned more from travel and through cultural experiences.

Nicole, 2005-06: Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

INDIA

Lady Shri Ram College is a lot less work than Smith; the classes feel a lot more like high school and a lot less like college, but if you want to be more academically challenged, then do an independent study, take on an internship or both, which is what I am doing. It has given me a lot more work to do. I am working with a government-run elementary school for poorer children in Delhi and teaching them art and English and I am writing a large paper on the education system in Delhi and a case study of the school.

Suzanne, 2005-06: Delhi, India

CANADA

[In Canada,] Professors have been a lot less willing to give help than those at Smith. Not to say that all of them are like that, but universities with graduate students are definitely less focused on undergrads. Also, sometimes TA's are difficult to track down and don't really know much. It is very frustrating so a lot of time you have to just teach the material to yourself, which is hard to get used to at first. It is usually better to make friends in class to study with, but don't be surprised if some people work alone and don't like working in study groups...I found most in Toronto liked studying alone, even when we set up group study times. I did not expect it to be quite so independent as far as the learning and I'm still adjusting to it. You definitely need to manage your time well, especially if you have other activities because if not you will get left behind and do horribly in your classes.

[There are] A lot of independent work and fewer assignments to turn in for grades. More emphasis on midterms, final exams, and weekly quizzes. It has been more about memorizing and learning methods to succeed (like getting past quizzes and exams) than actually knowing how to apply the material (important distinction for engineers, a lot different than the Smith program). Also, the grading is done on a huge bell curve, so while I thought I was doing horrible, I ended up doing well in the end, so it isn't worth getting stressed. I went from a 55 on a midterm to a final grade of A- in a class, so that goes to show you shouldn't give up even though it seems like the professors are trying to beat you down with ridiculously hard exams.

Lauren, 2005-06: Toronto, Canada

3) Students to Students on University Social Life

In engineering at U of T they have organized intramural sports so I'd recommend doing them to meet people in your class, especially if you're at a large school. Sometimes they have casual games and those are good to go to; I met a lot of friends by playing basketball and this led to me working in a group with them and getting to know them a lot better. Also, see if your program has events. There was a dinner dance hosted by the chemical engineering department which was a lot of fun and a good way to hang out with people in my class who I didn't really know well.

Meet and make friends with classmates, don't worry about knowing professors as much unless you are really interested in their work. Most are too busy to spend a lot of time talking with you about a class or things like that. Keep up with work, like reading and problem sets, and also look at past exams. Other students give good advice as to how the system works so use it to your advantage.

Lauren, 2005-06: Toronto, Canada

Irish students are very friendly, but not necessarily easy to become friends with. They can be alternately very reserved or very outgoing, particularly towards Americans. Many of the third and fourth years already have developed their set of friends and are not as eager to make new ones as an international student might be. Not living with Irish students also makes the process harder. Joining clubs and societies is one way to work around this, especially if you're not living with Irish students. Many practices and meetings are followed by trips to the pub, which is a center of Irish social life.

Ilana, Class of 2006: Dublin, Ireland

SOCIAL LIFE

1) Students to Students on "What advice would you give for finding/making host country friends abroad?"

Get to know people other than students! I love cooking but carrying armloads full of groceries got tiring until I noticed little old ladies whizzing by me with what the people of France call 'chariots,' small rolling carts often in outrageous plaids that are only slightly less dorky than rolling backpacks but no less useful. When I stopped these women on the street to ask where they procured their chariots, I always ended up walking away with advice about the best way to bake potatoes, where to get deals on dry cleaning, or who the best meat vendors are at the Gloucester Green Market (if you attend Oxford & like cheap food and trinkets, run, don't walk, there: Wednesdays 8 am-3:30 pm by the Gloucester Green bus station). I love old people! Also, attend community events in addition to university ones. Town & gown relations in Oxford have traditionally been tense but when I go to salsaOxford classes, I end up learning and dancing with people from all sections of the community.

Korri, class of 2007: North Oxford, England

Get involved in the local community. Talk to [almost] everyone! Be friendly, and open, and you'll easily make friends.

Rebecca, class of 2007: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

It really helps to live with college age students from the country you'll be living in. Often you can find a room in a house. If you're going through a program, try to get a single because chances are if you have an American roommate, you two will hang out and bond over the experience of living abroad. There weren't really cultural differences that came up in making Irish friends.

Try not to become too close with the people in your group, or you will be stuck with them. I'm sure they're great, but did you really fly thousands of miles to make friends with Americans? You can do that for much cheaper at home. If you become good friends with one or two natives, you'll meet their friends and become friends with their friends, and soon you'll have a large social network. I was almost exclusively friend with locals, and they always commented on how the American's seemed to band together.

Emily, class of 2006: Galway, Ireland

Most importantly, network, network, network. If there are twenty girls in a program and each makes three friends, then you can have sixty friends and not just the three you found yourself!

Eleanor, Amherst class of 2006: Geneva, Switzerland

Explore! In the US, I would never have gone to seedy bars where people "dance" to techno. While in Geneva, I have been several times to squats, and student bars and I found them quite fulfilling. It's great getting to meet the counter culture of a city. While it is great to explore, finding your own niche is important as well. It is best to have a gentle balance of exploring new places while maintaining your own groove.

Gayla, Geneva, Switzerland 2005-06

Remember that the students studying where you are may not be able to do the same sorts of things you do on the weekends- I am always inviting my friends at the university to go out and a lot of the time they would like to but don't have the money for bars (which are relatively expensive). So try to find things that are free (concerts, going to the park or the beach) instead of going out at night. Also, be content with hanging out with people at the school as your primary social interaction with them- since everyone lives far apart from each other, visiting at home doesn't work here.

Molly, class of 2007: Puebla, Mexico

As for finding in-country friends, cast the widest net possible. The most superfluous, irrelevant, or superficial events and contacts may lead you to people and places that will become important to you. Take advantage of everything, every invitation, every potential friend. (Unless they seem questionable--basic common sense comes into play here.) I found the person who still is my best friend--and my love--by going to a party. Had I not gone, I may not have connected with the individual who profoundly shaped not only my year abroad, but also my life. Also, become active in something--a dance group, a volunteer opportunity, a club, etc. because organizations are made of people and people are what you're looking for. Finally, beyond pursuing any possible source and actively looking for organizations, be persistent. Sometimes apparent leads end up no where, or sometimes, for an interaction to be fruitful, you must try a few times to connect with that person.

Caitlin, class of 2006: La Paz, Bolivia

* Get a job. Even if you don't need the money and you only work a few hours a week, getting a job is the best way to meet down-to-earth, fun people from the place where you're studying. Talk to people at work, ask people to go out to a bar afterward, be outgoing and ask people questions about themselves.

* Don't be afraid to go away from your program group and meet local people or (gasp!) spend time by yourself. Be open to new experiences and new people, and trust your instinct about people.

Giannotta

For students in Scotland (specifically St Andrews) who are part of a study abroad group:

It can be very easy to make friends with host country students. Everyone I met was really very nice and friendly, and everyone loved meeting new people. No one will dislike you because you're an American--maybe some of your British friends will tease you about your accent every now and then, but that's about it. If you are abroad in the Fall semester, most universities have a Fresher's Week, which is the week before classes start when all the students just hang out and get to know one another--this is a great opportunity to make friends with other students and get to know the city you're living in.

That being said, there were a lot of Americans who pretty much spent the entire year in their own groups and never really made friends with any host country students. This was not because the other students were unfriendly, but because a lot of Americans never made any effort whatsoever to make non-American friends. It was really a shame to see it happening, since the whole point of going abroad is to meet people from other countries. A lot of them would go to hall events and then sit in the corner with their American friends and never mingle with anyone else.

I know it might be hard to get away from the American students, especially if you are on a program such as Butler and got to know many of the Americans in your pre-program orientation. All I can tell you is that it is up to you to make the effort to get to know others once you get to your university, and it is better to do it sooner rather than later. Introduce yourself to your neighbors, invite them to go out with you, eat with different groups at mealtimes if you are on the meal plan, participate in hall events, join clubs or sports teams--there are more than enough opportunities to get involved and meet lots of people, you just have to be willing to try. If you are, then you won't have any problem at all making lots of host country friends.

Remember that many host country students might be new to the university too, and also will not know anyone--people always like to have lots of friends, they will probably be very grateful if you make the first move. A lot of American students might feel intimidated by the host country students, but keep in mind that a large group of Americans will also be greatly intimidating to the host country students, and they might be more afraid than you are to introduce themselves.

Jill, St. Andrews, Scotland

I have found that the best way to making local friends has been to become involved with societies at the university. Not only does this help you meet local people, but it allows you to meet people that share the same interest as you, which is even better! Also societies have a lot of events, such as end of the year masked balls, so it gives you fun things to look forward to and go to as well!

Barbara,

class of 2007: Edinburgh, Scotland

The social life in Tel Aviv is AMAZING! One can choose from hundreds of fantastic restaurants, bars and clubs. Israelis truly know how to party and give "dance bars" and clubs a new meaning. Israeli guys are a bit forward and a simple smile can be taken for more than just a nice gesture. Still, the nightlife in Tel Aviv is insane--most clubs and bars don't close until sunrise and if you're still not ready to go to bed, you can take a walk to the beach and watch the early morning risers start their workout :)

In the dorms you will most likely be living with other American students but will also meet tons of Europeans in your classes. That doesn't mean you aren't able to meet Israeli students either. Some Israelis live in the dorms and thousands can be seen walking on campus daily. Try being outgoing and approaching them, even in English (after all, Israeli students at Tel Aviv need to be somewhat fluent in English to go there). Most likely it will be easy to make Israeli friends if you're willing to put in the effort.

Jacquiline, class of 2007: Tel Aviv, Israel

Even when you speak the same language, trying to make friends with host country students presents a variety of unexpected challenges. In Ireland, many students come to university knowing at least one or two people from their secondary school. When they do meet new people, it will often be from their departments, which depending on the size can be small and tight knit, or large and full of smaller cliques. International students studying for a year or a term may not have the same amount of time to develop these friendships. Friendships are also formed through societies (what we could call clubs) and clubs (what we would call sports teams). Sport in particular offers a lot of opportunities for social events, primarily going to the pub, after games or practices. Social events in general are often structured around the pub or alcohol. Many societies offer similar opportunities.

It takes a lot of trial and error and a lot of attempts to go to various meetings and events before even acquaintances form. Irish students are very friendly initially, but it can take a while to become friends with. They don't mean to be offensive, but in general do not form friendships as quickly as Americans might. It was a shock for me to have to work at getting to know people who initially seemed very friendly and open, but were more reserved at a second meeting. Joining a particularly small society is helpful. My flatmate joined the socialists, of which there are not very many in Ireland, and ended up being one of the people in my program who made the closest and long-lasting Irish friends.

Often you will know someone likes you if they tease you. The Irish call it slagging, and it can be hard to determine the difference between that and genuine insults at first. Also, they will ask much more about you than they will be willing to offer about themselves. I routinely got asked who I was planning to vote for in the then-upcoming presidential election, because politics are often discussed in favor of issues that Americans might consider more personal. Politics, entertainment and sports are much more popular conversation topics than what is going on in someone's personal life, and their feelings.

Ilana, class of 2006: Dublin, Ireland

In Spain I found the social experience to be quite difficult. Social life is centered around going out - my host mom explained this to my roommate and I - Spaniards in general don't spend a lot of time "hanging out" in their own homes.

This was pretty frustrating at first, because I got pretty sick of going out and trying to meet people at clubs and bars and other situations involving alcohol, mostly because in general the guys would be pretty sketchy if you were an American girl, even if you weren't/wouldn't speak English.

My advice for those going abroad in countries where going out is the norm and people don't just sit around in dorm rooms or apartments and chill and watch movies, is that they should try to find a conversation partner who they actually have a lot in common with. If the program matches you with someone you don't like, try to find another one, or make friends with your friends' conversation partners.

Julie, class of 2006 Spain

I would advise to NOT hang out with other Americans and to do your best to make connections with classmates. Be outgoing, but try not to be obnoxious, or fall into stereotypes of Americans. Don't be afraid to make the first move, most people didn't approach me at first because they assumed all Americans were assholes.

Desiree [details missing]

Please don't exoticize people from your host country. Not only is it obscenely rude, but it will alienate you and ruin your chances of developing meaningful relationships. Granted, there are those who will definitely exoticize you, but one can only hope that together, overtime, you can teach one another about your differing (or not so differing) cultures.

With that said, friends here in Delhi tend to be a little sketchy on commitments. If you both mutually agree to meet for coffee at 3, chances are you won't be going till about 5 or 6. Sometimes, you won't go till the next day... or week . . .

Marilu, class of 2007: Delhi, India

To get to know everyone on campus, go to the college bar. They're ubiquitous in UK universities and act as the nexus of the social scene by serving drinks and offering recreational space with fooseball and snooker tables, a tv, jukebox, etc. JCR meetings, dances (called bops or entz), and open mikes nights are held there. Whether you want to pre-game with cheap drinks before going to a club (government subsidized liquor--wahoo!) or sit around over a pint talking about tutors and traveling, the college bar is the place to be.

Korri, class of 2007: North Oxford, England

Host families are the best bet for getting to know 'real' people, families, and the culture. It is a wonderful experience to be welcomed into another family's life. If the others on your trip are also Americans, it is even more helpful to have host family experiences.

Chelsea [details missing]

2) Students to Students on finding/making host country friends abroad on Programs and Orientations where your classmates are all from US colleges

Try in every way possible to integrate yourself with foreign students and to be respectful of the host country's culture, even when you are with just American students. I think it is also a good idea to try and find an activity in which you are forced to get away from friends and other students on your program, such as volunteer work.

Aria, Florence, Italy, 2004-5

There were six people in my program. Four were best friends that had been at school together before going to Brazil, one girl wanted nothing to do with any American or speaking of the English, and then there was me. I didn't really click with the group. SO I made other friends. There were a lot of intl students at the university in Rio, and most of my friends were from that group. But we included people not only from all over America, but Europe and Latin America. It was great because we had to speak Portuguese, but we were all in the same, "I'm new here and it's a little odd" boat. I made great friends there that I still talk to often.

Rebecca, class of 2007: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

I have found that the Americans studying abroad, especially after being together in a small community during our family home visit, are my support network, if not my constant companions. They've handled all the issues I have so it's good to compare notes. Lady Margaret Hall is small so while we've all branched out in our friendships we're still connected by mutual friends and college events. English students have not been shy about making us feel welcome and educating us about the geography of their natal land and the merits of lager while we've imported, with great success, beer pong.

Korri, class of 2007: North Oxford, England

During orientation, when my entire program was staying in the same hostel, and no one had yet gotten a mobile phone, everyone pretty much hung out together. As everyone moved into their own flats, cliques started to form, but at the same time each of us felt more independent, and had the opportunity to go out and attempt to meet Irish and other international students.

Ilana, class of 2006: Dublin, Ireland

It's very reassuring to have American friends abroad and know that you'll always have someone around the talk with and go out on the weekends with. That said, I avoid hanging out with other foreigners as much as possible. People approach you to chat much more when you're alone, and you'll be much more likely to go up to somebody else and start a conversation if you're not in a group of people. Also, it really helps the image of Americans abroad- the local students will like you much more if you're outgoing and talk to them, not just other Americans.

Molly, class of 2007: Puebla, Mexico

Do not underestimate the importance of the social aspect of an abroad experience, especially friendships. As much as you may plan and debate and weigh the pros and cons of programs and countries, you have no way of anticipating what friends you can make. In addition to having good luck, this is really up to you. First, have a clear sense before even going of whether you want to hang out with other Americans or whether you're aiming for making friends from your host country. From what I observed in my year in Bolivia, sticking with a group of fellow Americans is all too easy. Even the students determined not to do so did. So, if you want to make friends from your host country, and you think that you might be tempted to hang around with Americans instead (it is easier, and in the first month or so, it is something sure and secure) be really firm about setting limits.

Caitlin, class of 2006: La Paz, Bolivia

Social life is set up in a very specific way on an SIT program. You spend most of your time with either a) the other SIT students (there were 23 of us on my program, 9 boys and 14 girls) or b) with your homestay family. I would say that the homestay families are the most incredible resource you have for making local friends. Having said that, there are opportunities to go out and really get to know the Cape Town social scene and night life. This is something that should be taken advantage of as much as possible... Cape Town is a fun, young town with lots to do and experience.

Ok, dynamics of the study abroad group. This was something that was PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING in my group... oddly enough, the division was on gender lines, and it was bad. But, what I came to realize was that I was (thanks to Smith) very used to, and happy with, forming close relationships with women and that my experience in South Africa was not going to be dictated by the tensions experienced with the 9 boys in the program. The friends that I did make in the group were a wonderful source of support. And in general, the challenges you face with a group, or with anyone abroad, are all part of the experience and part of learning about yourself and growing... and they should be dealt with with that understanding.

Ariana, class of 2006: La Paz, Bolivia

While it's nice to hang out with your own "American group," where you can discuss the ups and downs of studying abroad and the discrepancies between American and Indian mentalities, it's also wonderful not to have to depend on them for all your social needs.

Marilu, class of 2007: Delhi, India

3) Local Friends and Travel on Weekends: A contradiction?

I found that traveling on the weekends does make it more difficult to have good local friends. I was gone most weekends first semester and, I tended to feel like I was missing out when my flatmates would talk about things that happened over the weekends when I wasn't there. Also, I found they would just not invite me to things because they just assumed I wasn't going to be there because it was on a weekend. So 2nd semester I decided to wait until I had breaks from class, and the end of the semester after classes are over to travel. Which is working out great! Now I get to have fun with my flatmates and friends on the weekends, and I can spend more time in the places that I travel too!

Barbara, class of 2007: Edinburgh, Scotland

My experience was that most locals went home on weekends, so traveling on the weekend isn't a huge problem for making friends. The best thing to do is politely invite yourself to go back with a friend to their house for the weekend.

Emily, class of 2006: Galway, Ireland

As for weekend traveling, I wouldn't recommend going away on weekends more than two or three times per semester. It is great to travel and see new places, and of course you should see as much as you can. But keep in mind that most Scottish universities have several long breaks over the course of the year. For example, at St Andrews we had a week off during the Fall semester, two or three weeks off for Christmas, another two or three weeks off for semester break, and then a two week Easter break in the spring. With all these long breaks, you should have plenty of opportunity to travel.

Traveling is wonderful, and you should absolutely take advantage of being abroad and being close to so many great places- but just remember that no matter how often you travel, you can't see everything there is to see, so just try not to go crazy trying to cram everything in. There are going to be university events on weekends that you will want to participate in, and you should also remember to take advantage of those opportunities as well.

Also, you should keep an eye out for university travel groups. For example, at St Andrews there is an Outdoors Society that takes day and weekend trips to various places around Scotland. They go hiking around some absolutely beautiful places, sometimes places you normally wouldn't get to on your own. And since it is a university club, you can go away on these trips and still be meeting other students at the same time, so it's a great way to travel and meet new people at the same time.

Jill, St. Andrews, Scotland

In Queen Mary, everybody goes home over the weekend anyway so weekend travel is not a conflict. It's good to have an American friend base so that you have people to hang out with over the weekend.

I've only been here a month and it's true what they say...the British are extremely cautious in making friends. Just be fun and relaxed and you'll be fine.

Abena, London, class of 2007: England

Local friends and Travel on weekends: a contradiction?

Not necessarily, as many Irish students studying in Dublin will go home to their cities on the weekends, and socialize with their friends there. Many of them go out on Wednesday and Thursday nights, at least at Trinity College. Irish students will in general go out on more nights of the week than many American students would.

Ilana, class of 2006: Dublin, Ireland

4) Students answer the Question: -What advice do you have regarding Romance and other dimensions of Dating, Attraction, etc. ???

People are much less judgmental abroad. I felt much less self-conscious of how I looked physically (though I was more self-conscious of how I dressed). Dating abroad can be very fun, however it can be extremely hard when it comes time to leave. The distance can work, but it isn't easy.

Emily, class of 2006: Galway, Ireland

As far as dating goes: be prepared for uncircumcised penises. Most men in America are circumcised--most are not in other countries.

Desiree, class of 2007:

Here's my advice on dating. You are in a foreign country where you don't know many people and where the customs and, in many cases, the language, are foreign to you. Dating someone will open up your social circle and provide you with a friend who can interpret cultural issues for you and be your personal guide to the country. However, everything in your new country will be much more complicated just by virtue of being foreign. So your relationship needs to be as simple as possible. The minute it gets angry and dramatic, or the minute you find yourself in tears over that person, should be the minute that the relationship ends. Also, you should probably warn your new boyfriend or girlfriend at the outset that you are going back to America and can't stay in the country with him or her forever.

And if you are living with a host family DO NOT under any circumstances start to date your host brother or sister. I have seen several people attempt it and it always ended badly. If you really want to date that person, move out of the house first.

Frances, class of 2007

Some girls have three boyfriends while abroad while other girls make cookies. It depends on what you prefer. If you are outgoing in the United States, once abroad you will definitely see an increase in dates. If you are more reserved or picky, then expect less dates and social interactions with possible mates.

Gayla, Geneva 2005-06

Find a Germanophone/Francophone/Italian-speaking lover. Very good for improving your language skills.

Eleanor, Amherst class of 2006: Geneva, Switzerland

* Have fun abroad, but don't lose yourself in a new relationship just because it's new and exciting. You're abroad for *you*, and that's really important to remember. Have your own life, even if it includes a new someone special.

Colleen, class of 2006: Dublin, Ireland

As every Smithie knows, house booty is bad booty. This golden rule should apply to all small university campuses. Things can get awkward unless it is a semi-permanent arrangement and even then...

Korri, class of 2007: North Oxford, England

As far as dating went, I hung back a bit and let moves be made on me to see how things were approached before I made an effort to involve myself in a romantic relationship. I found that things like, public displays of affection were a sort of ring on the finger kind of statement. Almost like staking out your territory, as it were. Also, people were big on PDAs everywhere. In the streets in broad daylight, on the beach, nightclubs... much more so than I ever saw in public in the US, and it's very acceptable there to see two people practically groping on a crowded street. I had to assert my discomfort with this practice more than once. My advice: if you date a native, it's fun to go with the flow and experience how another culture does the dating thing. But don't let yourself get uncomfortable. If you don't like something, assert yourself, let your partner know, and if he/she can't handle that, then oh well. Call it your crazy American hang-up if you must.

Rebecca, class of 2007: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

As for romantic relationships, anything can happen. You might find people from another culture whose norms and expectations don't mesh with your own. You may just have fun. But you may also get involved in a serious relationship. So realize that like any relationship in any place, you may, for better or worse, encounter something unexpected. I started dating the guy who had become my best friend in my first few months in La Paz. We spent the whole year together, continue to be together, and plan to stay together for the long haul. I surely didn't expect that to happen upon arriving in La Paz.

Carlita, class of 2006: La Paz, Bolivia

Men here are exceedingly sketchy. They will look at you, and if you're not careful, make a grab at you without even thinking twice. However, as uncomfortable as I may feel about saying this, it is true that the attention one receives is proportional to the way one looks. In other words, conservative, less western looking clothing draws the least attention.

So dating is very, very sketchy if it's with men. Mostly however, this applies to strange men you just met. If you meet a male friend through a friend you trust who trusts the man in question, then I wouldn't say it's cause for any concern. Just be careful. As for dating women, well, it's not so much sketchy as nearly impossible to do. It's only that same sex attraction and dating are extremely on the down low and it might be difficult to meet women who are openly gay.

Marilu, class of 2007: Delhi, India

5) Students to Students on Lesbian Social Life Abroad

In general for homosexuals and heterosexuals, it is best to not to discuss your sex life with your host family. It is best to remain as vague as possible. Even if your family keeps pressuring you or making assumptions, remain firm. The less they know about your girlfriend or your "booty calls", the better.

[lost citation, will track down in subsequent draft]

Unfortunately, Smith is not the world. Don't expect to find another Diva's. In Geneva, there are more gay men's clubs. That is not to say that there is not a lesbian population. Again, if you are outgoing you will find your community.

Gayla, Geneva, Switzerland, 2005-06

Find out before you leave what the cultural appropriateness of open relationships is. In South Africa, lesbianism is legally sanctioned but not yet socially appropriate in most areas. It is important to be cautious about open expression of romantic situations, especially with another woman.

Chelsea, class of 2006: Durban, South Africa

Depending on how one feels on voicing one's sexuality, and on the group of friends you make at LSR, it's generally a no-no to openly being a lesbian. The pressures on a heterosexual life, on the track to being married are rather extreme (as compared to what we're used to), and while many will profess to being "cool with lesbians" . . . they will talk . . . and it will not necessarily be pretty.

As far as an exclusively "lesbian social life", I'm sure it's possible . . . well, maybe that's me being extremely optimistic.

Marilu, class of 2007: Delhi, India

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

1) Bill Hoffa on Culture Shock

Many travelers go through an initial period of euphoria and excitement, overwhelmed by the thrill of being in a totally new and unusual environment. As this initial sense of "adventure" wears off, they gradually become aware of the fact that old habits and routine ways of doing things no longer suffice. They gradually (or suddenly) no longer feel comfortably themselves. If this happens to you, as it is likely to, you will feel like the outsider you in fact are. Minor problems may quickly assume the proportions of major crises, and you may find yourself growing somewhat depressed. You may feel an anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse, a kind of psychological disorientation. You will indeed be experiencing what has come to be referred to as "Culture Shock". Such feelings are perfectly normal, so, knowing this and with a bit of conscious effort, you will soon find yourself making adjustments (some quite subtle and perhaps not even noticeable at the conscious level) that will enable you to adapt to your new cultural environment.

There is no clear-cut way of dealing with culture shock. Simply recognizing its existence and your accepting vulnerability to it is an important first step. As long as you know in advance that you will probably fall victim to culture shock at a certain level, you can prepare yourself psychologically to accept the temporary discomfort and turn it into an advantage by learning from it. Remember that you are not the only one experiencing occasional frustration, irritability, and depression, etc. Falling victim to culture shock, in other words, does not imply the existence of any psychological or emotional shortcomings on your part. As Robert Kohls says, "Culture shock is in some degree inevitable... and is the occupational hazard of overseas living through which one has to be willing to go through in order to enjoy the pleasures of experiencing other countries and cultures in depth."

Undergoing culture shock is in itself a learning experience that you should take advantage of. It is a way of sensitizing you to another culture at a level that goes beyond the intellectual and the rational. Just as an athlete cannot get in shape without going through the uncomfortable conditioning stage, so you cannot fully appreciate the cultural differences that exist without first going through the uncomfortable stages of psychological adjustment. ⁴

2) Students to Students on Culture Shock and Cultural Adjustment

I think the word "culture shock" is problematic. When I first heard it I thought that there was no way I would go through that phenomenon, being an independent woman who has traveled a lot. I was definitely mistaken! Upon arriving in Spain, after the first few days of jet lag and excitement, I became homesick for the first time in my life at 21. The hardest adjustment for me was the pace of living. Coming from years of routine, classes, eat, more classes, sports, rehearsal, study, the change to a completely open ended schedule equipped with a mandatory three-hour period of free time in the middle of the day came as a shock. I remember feeling angry at all the students and alumni who had told me their JYA was the best time of their college years because I felt it was a waste of time, especially being in the arts, a non-existent field in the European university system.

I moved from a homestay to an apartment, found Spanish friends and places to study painting, dance and theater in addition to art history and literature. I am starting an internship with a theater company and I

have settled into a routine. So far I think it has been worthwhile, but it hasn't been easy.

I felt it was necessary to write something honest that doesn't glamorize the option of spending a year abroad, that going abroad also involves compromise, patience, expansion and personal growth. Reaping the fruits of living in another country takes dedication, sacrifice and faith in the unknown.

I think more appropriate phrases for "culture shock" could be , "lifestyle adjustment" or "environmental flux"

Kelsey S., 2005-06: Spain

[Two weeks into the program:]Culture shock hasn't been as much a problem for me as the process of starting completely from scratch socially. It's rather like going to Smith for the first time. I feel uprooted, and have to put a lot of effort into meeting and making small talk with those around me. It's difficult having no one who really knows you, and it takes time to build close relationships.

Kelsey, 2005-06: Budapest, Hungary

⁴ Hoffa, Bill

What I have found to be the hardest part about adjusting to living abroad is the constant feeling that everything is just a little bit different from usual. At first, I had the feeling that I could never quite understand what was going on--things like the university system, social cues, etiquette, etc etc. You just have to embrace the absurd things that happen and think of them as enriching, because if you let the feeling of things being a little bit off from normal bother you too much, you'll be very unhappy. Eventually, things do start to make sense and until then, just remember that a zillion young college students have made it through and you will too.

Jessie, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

3) Bill Hoffa on Fitting In: Key Cultural Differences

Social customs differ greatly from one country to another. It is therefore impossible to give guidelines that will be applicable in every culture. Generally speaking, you can be yourself as long as you remain friendly, courteous, and dignified. Always keep in mind that you are the guest in someone else's country. Therefore, you would be safe to assume that your behavior should be regulated pretty much in the same manner as if you were the guest in someone else's home. On the other hand, as an outsider, especially if you err on the side of being respectful, some allowances are likely to exist for the things you do not immediately understand or feel comfortable with.

POLITENESS: In keeping with the relatively formal manner of social customs abroad, you should place much more emphasis on the simple niceties of polite social intercourse than you might at home. Be prepared to offer a formal word of greeting to whomever you meet in your day-to-day activities. For example, should you approach a clerk in the local market in Strasbourg always be courteous enough to begin your conversation with, "Bonjour, Madame (Monsieur, Mademoiselle)" before you launch into your inquiries about the products, and become familiar with the appropriate expressions of gratitude in response to your hosts' hospitality.

HUMOR: While each country has its own particular brand of wit and humor, very few cultures appreciate the kind of "kidding" that which Americans are accustomed. Comments, even when intended to be humorous, can often be taken quite literally.

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE: When it comes to language, most people will be extremely flattered rather than amused at your efforts to communicate in their native language. Do not be intimidated or inhibited when practicing your own limited command of the language. A couple of words of caution might be in order: do your best to avoid slang expressions, which are usually unique to the particular culture, and which may therefore be totally meaningless or inappropriate in the context of another culture. Be aware of the differences between the "familiar" and the "polite" forms of address and be sure to use them properly.

Do not try to translate American idiomatic expressions direct into the native language. Idioms as a whole may be complete nonsense when translated into another language. While it is not true that all people speak English, it is true enough for you to be wary of making impolite or tactless comments on the presumption that those within hearing distance will not understand what you are saying.

PHYSICAL CONTACT: When establishing social relationships, "play it by ear" in determining the level of familiarity that you should adopt at the various stages of your relationship. Physical contact, for example, may not be especially appreciated or understood by someone unfamiliar with the American idea of camaraderie; a cheerful pat on the back or a warm hug may be quite embarrassing and uncomfortable in certain cultures.

All cultures have different notions about social space, for instance how far away to stand or sit when conversing, or how to shake hands or wave farewell. Restraint is advisable until you learn how the locals do it and what they expect of you.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS: Let your hosts point the way when engaging in "small talk." While Americans may find it easy and quite appropriate to talk about themselves, in some countries, your hosts may view this as being as impolite as asking personal questions of them.

DRINKING AND DRUNKENNESS: Be extremely sensitive of others' attitudes and feelings when it comes to drinking. You will probably find that your hosts enjoy social drinking as much as any American, but they might not look upon drunkenness as either amusing or indeed tolerable. Know the law, local customs, and your limits.

PRICE BARGAINING: Haggling over prices can be another sensitive and vague subject. Haggling is not only appropriate but even expected in some circumstances. The trick is to know under which circumstances haggling is appropriate. Unless you clearly understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate circumstances for this sort of social bargaining, you may very well find yourself insulting the merchant and further reinforcing a negative stereotype of Americans. You can always test the waters by politely indicating that you like the product very much but that it is a bit more than you had anticipated spending; if the merchant wishes to bargain further, this will give him the opening he needs to offer you the product at a lower price; if it is not that kind of an establishment, you can simply (and politely) terminate the conversation.

TALKING POLITICS: Expect people abroad to be very articulate and well-informed when it comes to matters of politics and international relations. Do not be at all surprised if your counterparts try to engage you in political debate. There is certainly no reason for you to modify your own convictions, but you should be discreet and rational in your defense of those convictions. Here again you may very well find yourself butting heads with another of those unfortunate stereotypes, such as the arrogant American who thinks everyone must fall in line with the United States.

PHOTOGRAPH ETIQUETTE: You may want to record many of your memories on film, and it is often convenient to include some of the local populace in your photographs. However, remember that the people you 'shoot' are human beings and not curiosity objects. Be tactful and discreet in how you approach photographing strangers; it is always courteous and wise to ask permission before taking someone's picture.

SUMMARY: Social customs differ from one country and culture to another, and there is simply no way you can fit in and be at home unless you learn what is and isn't appropriate behavior. It is impossible to make generalizations that can be applicable to every situation. Therefore, it is not inappropriate to inquire politely about local customs and social niceties. Expect things to be different overseas. One of the basic reasons for your participation in a study abroad program should necessarily be to develop a sensitivity to and appreciation for the people and customs of a totally different culture and way of life. Anyone who goes overseas demanding that everything be the same as what (s)he is accustomed to in the United States will be sorely disappointed and probably better served by staying at home. Be flexible and receptive in dealing with these differences and you will find your own life experiences will be greatly enriched.⁵

4) Students to Students on Feeling Like This is a Big Mistake

Wait as long as you can before making a decision. There are difficult moments, but I think anyone who succeeds in sticking them out will be grateful.

[missing source].

[From a student who started study abroad in January, written in February:]

Don't let anyone lie to you. It's hard. I came into this semester knowing I would be lonely at first, and I still am horribly depressed half-way through. In the past week especially, I've spent a lot of time in my room crying, thinking that I've made a horrible mistake in coming. I wasn't sure I wanted to come at all when I got accepted. I let friends talk me into it and I told myself it was an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Right now, I regret coming. But I wouldn't know that without being here. I remember running across in the Smith literature several times the theme that it was also ok not to go abroad. I remember specifically at the predeparture meeting that they said that when we talked to people who had gone abroad, we were getting the warm glowing feelings from the end. It's true. It's completely true. And if you have serious doubts about how much you want to go, think twice. Ultimately, it's just going to be you who has to live with the decision. Right now, I think the only horrible mistake I did not make was picking a mercifully short four-month program.

It's especially been hard seeing pictures of everyone else's seemingly fabulous times abroad. It doesn't help that I have a friend doing a year-long program who never got homesick and had a native boyfriend by the end of first semester. I feel lost, and like I should have considered the social aspects more carefully. I don't drink and am uncomfortable in situations where people are drinking heavily – parties, bars, clubs. For American students, and especially in the U.K. at least, study abroad seems to revolve around drinking to ridiculous excess. That's fine for some people. If you want to spend a semester or year more focused on drinking than school, then by all means come to Scotland, go abroad. For those who don't drink, it can be done, but I am having an exceedingly difficult time doing it. In the U.S., I have managed to carve out a life I'm happy with that doesn't center around those things, but it didn't happen overnight. I thought I picked a program that would be Smith-like in that it would give me a lot of work which I could fill my time with. Unfortunately, it has not been even close to rigorous, and borders on the ridiculous how little time I need to invest in it. I feel like I am wasting a semester at college, coming from academically challenging Smith that fits me so well.

I still don't think what I'm experiencing is culture shock. I feel like Scotland is not very different at all from the U.S. In fact, I could sum up my whole experience thus far with one word – disappointment. And the fact that it doesn't feel different stems partly from the fact that my program is all Americas – who I live, have classes, and work with. It's difficult to make any native friends in that context. I'm trying to join clubs, but making friends is slow work. While it's easier to make friends in a program like mine, I wouldn't recommend it because of that barrier to meeting non-Americans. I know one intern in the program who lucked out and is living in a flat with all Brits, but she is one of nineteen and was randomly assigned to that flat.

Right now, I wish I could take it all back. I am counting down the weeks until I leave. I don't know if it has been worth it. I don't think so, at this point. I have never cried more in my life than I have in the past few weeks. I do not like it here. I can't deal with a place where it is normal to go out and get completely trashed drunk nearly every night. I want nothing more than to get on a plane and go back to Smith, but I know I'd be forfeiting a semester of college if I dropped out this late. I don't really have anything inspirational, because I am just drained and sick of it at this point. Sorry.

⁵ Hoffa, B.

Email or call the Office of International Study at Smith. The person whom I emailed was very understanding of my situation, and offered some constructive suggestions both for how to get over homesickness, and what to do if I ultimately decided that Ireland was not for me. Also, talk to the representatives from your program. I was surprised at how sympathetic the Dublin staff was. I heard similarly encouraging reports about Arcadia's staff in other places in Ireland as well as England. They are supposed to be working for you, make the most of them.

Ilana, 2004-05: Dublin, Ireland

5) Student to Student on Race and Ethnicity Abroad

--use the experience as best you can to see how Americans (of any ethnic background) are viewed from abroad. i think having an open mind and a thick skin are the most important elements. in the worst case, it can become an opportunity to open up other people's minds and have really interesting conversations. Comments that may seem offensive in reality can come out of a genuine curiosity, with no ill intent. [citation missing]

Being African American in Europe is a different experience than in the United States, especially in western European countries where you are exoticized or fetishized. The line of demarcation between the United States and Europe is so blatant once you step foot on the airplane or walk through customs. You notice that people look at you a little longer. Old people and children stare at you. In their faces you can see them trying to figure out "what" you are. On my first day in Switzerland, I was waiting for an elevator and this elderly Swiss woman asked me, "Are you black?" Often times, I and the other African American student in the group have been asked, "Are you African?" or "Where do you come from?" These questions are not innocent small talk but are indicators of how African American women are seen in Europe. After you respond, "I am American," their eyes widen as if surprised! Some walk away in disbelief, others continue marveling.

The other black student [on my program] had a white man pull her hair one day when she was walking on the streets of Geneva. She also had another white man ask her to perform his fantasy while waiting for a bus. My experiences with exoticism have been less conspicuous. My Togolese friend confided in me that I was "driving all the men crazy" around our apartment complex. Initially, I was quite flattered but as I continued to probe this compliment, I learned that is was not because these men were necessarily interested in me, but more interested in "what" I am, --- a black American, rocking a fro, and "with a booty (these were his words)"

My methods for dealing with this bizarre behavior may not be politically correct and may diverge from the higher moral ground that people of color are expected to take when encountering brazen willful ignorance, but it sure feels good. I return the question, "Where are you from?" and respond with the same bewildered disbelief. "WOW! You are German?!" Or after someone pets my hair uninvited, I pet his or hers as well and remark, "My! You have very straight hair. I would not like to have to deal with that mess." Usually they do not understand my motives but that is not my problem. It is not my job to educate the world. If they were really curious about black people, they could read a Cornell West book. I am sure some have been translated into French.

Gayla, Geneva 2005-06

Of course, in South Africa race is a huge issue. For me (being white) it was a challenge more in the sense the many white South Africans that I met seemed to think that I would sympathize with their slightly racist ideas. Of course, I didn't, and this sometimes proved difficult in making friends with local people.

Ariana, class of 2006: Durban, South Africa

Hmm, it's a little different for me coz I'm not really American.

The British are frankly fascinated by all things American and nothing throws a damper on their conversation quite like saying "I'm not really American". Lol. It's quite interesting to see.

Race issues are complicated I think. I've seen more mixed couples here than I have in the States, and more mixed-race babies but there's also a lot of cliquiness. *shrug*

I haven't had any blatant racist remarks/gestures made towards me (because London is so international anyway). The difference in race is probably more obvious outside of the city...but it doesn't have to affect you if you don't let it.

Just be extra careful around drunk football fans coz you might be wearing the wrong colours.

:) That's probably why everybody wears black.

Abena, class of 2007: London, England

6) Student to Students on Transgender Issues Abroad

Finding "safe" bathrooms can be an issue (but I suppose this applies anywhere and not just in foreign countries). This was something I wasn't necessarily thinking about prior to studying abroad because it's not as much of an issue for me at Smith. Just something to take into consideration when traveling anywhere, I suppose.

Nicole, class of 2007: [country needed]

7) Bill Hoffa on Issues for US Women Abroad

Some women students, in certain places (e.g. South America, the Middle East, and parts of Europe) have a hard time adjusting to attitudes they encounter abroad, in both public and private interactions between men and women. Some (but not all) men in such countries openly demonstrate their appraisal of women in ways that many American women find offensive. It is not uncommon to be honked at, stared at, verbally and loudly appraised, and to be actively noticed simply for being an American woman. Sometimes the attention can be flattering. However, it may become very annoying, and potentially even angering. Indigenous women, who often get the same sort of treatment, have been taught how to ignore the attention. Many American women students find this hard to do. Eye contact between strangers or a smile at someone passing in the street, which is not uncommon in the States, may result in totally unexpected invitations. Some women feel they are forced to stare intently at the ground while they walk down the street.

You will have to learn what the unwritten rules are about what you can and cannot do abroad. Women can

provide support for each other, and former students suggest that you get together several times early in your stay overseas to talk about what works and what doesn't for dealing with the unwanted attention. American women are seen as "liberated" in many ways, and sometimes the cultural misunderstandings that come out of this image can lead to difficult and unpleasant experiences.

Needless to say, this special and surprising status may make male-female friendships more difficult to develop. Be careful about the implicit messages you may be unintentionally communicating. Above all, try to maintain the perspective that these challenging (and sometimes difficult experiences) are part of the growth of cultural understanding which is one of the important reasons you are studying abroad. Prepare yourself by trying to understand in advance not only the gender roles and assumptions which may prevail elsewhere, but also the uniqueness of American gender politics, which may or may not be understood, much less prevail, in other countries.

7) U. Montana Student on Body Image Abroad

Essay: "I knew You Were American Because You Were Bigger" May, 2002

By Ann Ulvin, who was a University of Montana study abroad student in France for the 00-01 academic year (Ann's email is annulvin@hotmail.com if you would like to contact her regarding this essay.)

A year ago I was a fat American trying to blend in with the locals in Southern France. Today, I am a petite young woman living in the United States. Has my body changed significantly in the past year? No, not really. So then how can one's body image shift from fat to thin simply by taking a transatlantic flight? After extensive research on French versus American culture, particularly in our relationships with food, I am beginning to comprehend the answer to this question. I am now well aware of the fact that an unhealthy obsession with my body comprised an enormous part of my year abroad. Before leaving for France, a respected professor assured me that the year abroad would change my life. What he failed to tell me was that many of these life-changing lessons would not be understood until I had returned home.

"Well here we are in Montpellier after wandering aimlessly and asking various passer-bys in broken French how to find the internet café. We finally found it - fortunately luck seems to keep falling our way. But it just hit.

We're going to be here for 11 months. That's forever. Staying with the French family is what made us realize it. It was a great experience though - a real French meal with bread, then salad, then meat, cheese, and of course, wine. I can't believe how they eat - how do they stay so skinny?" (my journal - 9/1/00).

I had been in France for all of three days and was already wondering this. Little did I know that this question would prove to be the bane of my existence throughout the year in France. An American to the core, I was raised in a society obsessed with low-fat foods, exercise crazes, fad diets, nutritional supplements, skim milk, and anti-smoking campaigns. Yet here I was in the south of France, surrounded by heavy creams, rich desserts, cigarette smoke everywhere, and unavoidable starchy-white bread. The notion of working out in the mind of the average French individual involved maybe playing tennis for a half-hour, taking breaks to smoke. So why are they so thin? Perhaps even more curious, why do they live longer than we do?

A quick vacation to France would likely cause the average American to notice the general thinness of the population and hence ponder such questions. In fact, as Thane Petersen states in his article "Why So Few French are Fat," this really seems to bug

Americans. American tourists soon leave the country, barely affected by the feelings of abnormality when comparing themselves to the French. However, for female Americans in their early twenties immersed in the culture for a year, indifference toward the issue proved to be much more difficult. What started as a simple awareness and curiosity about the French thinness quickly evolved into a rather depressing matter. Our American eating habits apparently were not compatible with French cuisine. Combining our cultural tendencies to overeat with emotional issues such as homesickness, culture shock, and an abundant amount of free time resulted in us not only noticing the thinness of French women around us, but led us to feel increasingly fatter than them as time passed.

In attempts to combat these sentiments, many of us became tempted by eating disorders. In retrospect, our obsession with our bodies and reaction to those around us seemed a bit extreme, but as I attempt to rationalize it all I am becoming increasingly aware of the reasons for the madness.

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I was sitting in the make-shift computer lab on the Universite Paul Valery campus in Montpellier, France. It was early March; I was six months into my study abroad experience. A month beforehand, on February 1st to be exact, I had begun my intense diet and exercise plan. As I was waiting for the incredibly slow Apple computer to load my Hotmail account to the screen, I saw a guy out of the corner of my eye sit down beside me. I really wasn't in the mood. It was hot, I was tired, and all I wanted to do was check my email. Fending off unwanted male attention was not on my agenda for the day. "Bonjour mademoiselle," he said. I half-smiled "Bonjour." Then, in French he muttered the following, "You were in my class last semester, right? The first time I saw you I knew you were American because you are bigger."

Interestingly enough, the French word for "big" is "gros," much like "gross." So really what I literally heard was ".....parce que tu es plus gros." I was gross, and at that point, was well aware of it.

"There are many cross-cultural differences in the meanings of food and in standards of beauty. Students with eating disorders may find these differences create additional challenges for them" (2).

Before going abroad, we were sent through multiple orientation programs, warning us of all the adjustments that we must make to adapt to our new environment. The concept of "culture shock" was ingrained into our heads, and we were assured there would be no way to avoid it. When attempting to assimilate into a foreign culture, one cannot help but feel a loss of control. "Cultural differences can be so great that a student may need extra time to adjust. This is normal. The new cultural elements a student encounters may be so different that they seem "shocking" in comparison to cultural norms they feel at home" (3). We were told we would go through periods of bliss, then depression, then happiness, then homesickness; essentially the entire year would be a cyclical mood swing. However, we were also informed that the year abroad would be one of the most valuable and worthwhile experiences we would ever undertake.

"Dear Ann, I am writing in response to your inquiry concerning eating disorders abroad. As an advisor for several countries, I find that many students recovering from eating disorders relapse while abroad. Also, some who think they have control lose control overseas. I also have an (untested) theory that certain countries (i.e. France) contribute more to these types of disorders. Eating disturbances, like over-exercising, are common, too" (Alexis H. Northcross, Georgetown University).

The food in France was incredible. We couldn't get enough of it. I watched as the entire population of French women around me enjoyed pastries and cheese, and naturally assumed by looking at their thin frames that the food must not really be fattening. But I forgot one important fact: I am American. I came to France, but so did my cultural eating habits. Though I eat fairly healthy as compared to an "average American" who dines on fast foods and processed boxed meals, I am still accustomed to our tendencies of eating fast, eating on the go, and if something tastes good, eating quite a bit of it. Also, I have a psychological disdain for certain foods, thinking of them as bad, and hence deprive myself of something that would otherwise be tempting. Of course, as a result of this deprivation I crave it even more, and the result is typically a binge of some form or another. An example of this may be seeing a small piece of chocolate and refusing to eat it regardless of the desire to do so. After staring at it long enough, I cannot help but cave in and instead of the small chocolate chunk, an entire Snickers bar is practically inhaled. It is the American way.

"It is very easy when you are abroad to become susceptible to eating disorders: you are in a different place, the food is different. Your stomach may not agree with the types of food there, or you may feel like you're eating too much. You may also experience depression or loneliness manifesting itself in the form of an eating disorder. Be aware if you start to spend a lot of time thinking about eating, food, weight and body image. Another sign of an eating disorder is when you feel anxious when eating with other people around. If you are an athlete, don't be overly concerned about 'getting out of shape,' or not exercising enough. If you think you may have a problem, talk to a counselor or nutritionist and learn about good nutrition." (4).

If someone had forced me to read this passage before I went to France, perhaps I would have been more aware of what was happening to me. Depressed? Yep. Loneliness? Uh-huh. A lot of time thinking about eating, food, weight and body image? Define "a lot." I thought about those issues every time I looked in the mirror, every time I opened my fridge, every time I put something in my mouth, every time I got dressed. I especially thought of them whenever I compared myself to French girls.

"Ann - I am currently a senior who studied abroad last semester in Granada, Spain. I am writing in reference to the inquiry about any experience with eating disorders while abroad. While I was in Granada, a girl that I was very close friends with who was from the US was obsessed about her weight. When we got to Spain she weighed about 105-110 pounds. During the first two months we were there she put on maybe 10 or 15 pounds. She became absolutely obsessed with losing the weight. Instead of going out, she went to the gym for about three hours per day and she began to regret her decision to study abroad because of the weight she gained. By the time we left she was almost smaller than when we got there, and she still thought that she needed to lose weight" (Nicole Flisher, Virginia Wesleyan College).

I know this story, it is my own. In fact, it is the story of my dear friend Evelyn and I as we "supported" each other through the year in France.

Our first official French meal was on the airplane. Sure it was airplane food, but Air France served us a four-course meal, complete with cheese, a pastry, coffee, and wine. I suppose one could say that was the beginning of the end, although it would take quite some time before we would realize it. Essentially the French eat lesser amounts, but their food is richer and hence tastes better. They sacrifice quantity for quality. In the US, it seems to be the opposite. We can eat loads of non-fat, low-calorie foods that don't taste very good. We give up quality for quantity. Unfortunately,

during my first semester in France, I was hoping to benefit from the best of both worlds: high quality, and high quantity.

Looking around, it seemed to make sense. "Everyone in this country is so darn thin. I'm excited to be skinny when we return" (my journal - 9/7/00). A few days later, I began to realize what was really happening "So much for our 'get skinny' plan - I swear I'm getting fatter every day" (9/15/00). By September 20th all the symptoms of culture shock seemed to be taking over "I hate this, I'm pretty sure. My head hurts all the time from a combination of stinky French people, smoke inhalation, and squinting my eyes trying to understand the language. Just what is it that possessed me to ever take interest in French? Why am I here? To prove a point? I'm becoming addicted to chocolate. I have a disgusting roll on my belly to accompany my coated-with-cellulite legs and butt. Great." Two days later, I wrote "We've been here for almost a month, and we hang out in these dorms and eat everyday. I must stop eating - an entire chocolate bar tonight. What in the world? Health club here I come!" (9/22/00). Then "I was grossing myself out today with the rolls hanging over my jeans. It's disgusting" (9/26/00). One month down, only ten to go. In retrospect I now realize that the preludes to my disordered eating were already at this point in full effect.

It didn't seem real at first; the fact that we were getting fat. At first it was more like a joke. It was a conversation topic we would resort to talking about each day. By October or so I had established the group of friends I would spend time with the remainder of the year. We were six Americans, all complaining and joking about getting fat. However, there were two of us that were truly becoming depressed about it while the others remained calm. "While on this trip many, if not most of the girls, including myself, gained weight. I'm pretty sure that it was a combination of an extremely different diet, different sleeping and exercising routines. But most people accepted this and realized that when they returned home, they would most likely lose the extra weight" (Nicole Flisher). Evelyn and I refused to accept it. Once we decided we were fat, we were committed to do anything in our power to take care of it. Our biggest fear was to deplane in America, greeted by sympathetic friends and family with a look of shock thinking "oh dear, she got fat."

November was a rough month. The weather was turning cold, we were homesick, and had become rather frustrated with our broken French conversations. We turned into virtual recluses, refusing to go out, spending each weekend sitting in our dorm rooms crocheting and eating. We would eat until it hurt. Sometimes we would change from jeans into sweatpants to allow more room for our stomachs to expand. The goal was simply to make it until Christmas break. We were warned that depression would likely hit about three months into the experience, and were convinced that if we could just make it to vacation we could travel, regroup, relax, and enjoy the second semester. I realized that my relationship with food had truly become a problem on Thanksgiving. I had eaten an entire baguette for "Thanksgiving dinner," by myself, in a matter of about 10 minutes. When it was gone, I stuck out my arm, which greatly resembles a baguette in terms of size, shape, and color, in amazement. "I just ate my arm. I ate a baguette the size of my arm. Where do I fit an extra arm?" (11/26/00). Unfortunately, a few days earlier I had also just cut off my hair. My long curly locks were gone. I got a roll of pictures back and realized how much fatter I had become. It was no longer a joke. I was fat, depressed, and I no longer had long hair to draw attention away from my alleged double chin. I felt absolutely unattractive, unintelligent, and unwanted in this new culture, and hence had lost virtually all self worth.

Evelyn, my 105 pound friend originally from Peru, was experiencing the same sentiments. She had gained about 15 pounds, and it was fairly obvious. Looking back, neither of us looked particularly bad, we just felt horrible. "Most women who

say 'I feel fat' mean 'I feel bad'; when they feel thin, they feel good" (5). As my mother told me when visiting in April "No one would say that you're FAT, honey, you've just gained weight." This is not what a 22-year old girl wants to hear. Evelyn and I were convinced that we were fat, and hence devised a plan. It was November, Christmas break was coming, as was the inter-semester break during the last two weeks of January. We therefore concluded that it would be infeasible to seriously combat our weight gain until February, since traveling over the respective vacations would not be conducive to working out and dieting. So, it was "fat 'till February." We knew we were fat, had admitted it to ourselves, and would change it in two months. In essence, we gave ourselves permission to continue bingeing until February. Clearly this is not a healthy approach. In the mean time, we carefully devised a scheme involving fasting, dieting, and exercising that would be readily adopted on February 1st. We dubbed our plan "Fat Camp," and although the rest of our friends disapproved, no one would get in our way. . On January 30th we took a roll of fat pictures, which would serve as a reminder of how gross we looked and hence help motivate us and monitor our progress. "Fat camp begins Thursday - absolutely cannot wait. I now am at peace with having tasted and taken advantage of the foods of Europe, and now it's time to get healthy once and for all. I'm very excited" (Italy - 1/29/01).

Indeed it did begin. And realistically it didn't end until later in the summer after having been back in the States for a few months. The first step was our 36 hour fast

I'm in the midst of the fasting deliriousness. This is hour #27. Feel like crap. Very dizzy. No energy at all. All I ate yesterday morning was a grapefruit. Yikes. Get to eat cabbage salad at 6:00PM. Very weak, have headache, kind of feel like I'm going to puke, but have nothing in tummy. Got fat pictures back yesterday. Oh my God. Gross. Evasive action necessary. Running starts Monday (2/1/01).

Eventually, Fat Camp came to consume our existence. I had long since realized that I would never look like a skinny French girl, but was committed to at least looking good when returning home. Having been gone for so long from the US, I was beginning to forget what "normal" looked like. Was I normal? Was I fat? Did I look like I used to look? "Can I please go back to having a purpose? Must get skinny, must let hair grow" (3/12/01). Evelyn and I had developed a strange obsession with food. We refused to touch baguettes anymore, which proved to be quite a feat considering they are everywhere in France. We vowed to not eat after 6PM, though I often caved into this restriction. My daily breakfasts became yogurt with granola, a half peanut-butter and jelly sandwich, half an orange, and a cup of coffee. The good days were those when I was too busy working out to eat. I was running five days a week, diligently writing down the exact number of minutes run on my calendar, and working out at a gym six days a week. "Ran 38 minutes today. Pretty proud. Went to gym. How are those French girls so skinny? They're totally weak and can barely make it through step class. Then, as soon as they're done, they go outside for a smoke. I'm still fat. Not happy. I think my metabolism is extremely messed up" (3/14/01).

How could my metabolism not be altered? I went from extreme bingeing on rich foods to eating like a bird. I was hungry all the time but convinced that as long as I was working off more than I was consuming in terms of calories, I should see beneficial results. Evelyn was shrinking weekly. Of course, she was only eating about 800 calories a day. My parents came in April for a visit. "Reality check today - mom brought me jeans from home, and the ones that were already kind of tight definitely no longer fit. I'm glad I know though. I'm eating straight-up rabbit food from here on out" (3/14/01). And so it continued. I was in panic mode. My running intensity increased. I added an arm weight-training program to my original routine at the gym. Meanwhile, Evelyn

could no longer work out. She had strained her back and the doctor insisted that she quit exercising. In effect, she stopped eating. I was jealous. I couldn't seem to refuse food. I was hungry, and for good reason. Fortunately one day in early May my mentality changed considerably.

Nine of us girls decided to go on a kayaking day trip. We loaded onto a bus, headed to the river, and rented our respective boats. Evelyn was so weak she could barely stand. She had to rent a two-person kayak, as there was no way she could operate one alone. Meanwhile, I found myself to be the strongest of the bunch. Throughout the day I was happily paddling along, not at all fatigued. In fact, at some points we were required to physically carry the kayaks over some rough points of the river, and I found myself hauling the other girls' kayaks as many of them were not strong enough. This was a new concept for me. Never before had I felt so "in shape." Suddenly I remembered days in America surrounded by my athletic friends, jealous that they were so active and strong. I had never been particularly weak or lazy, but always longed to be one of the "athletic ones." And that's exactly what I was that afternoon in France. Suddenly it didn't seem to matter that I may be a bit bigger than the others. I finally realized that I was stronger as well. Evelyn could barely walk, while I went on a five mile run after the day of kayaking.

After that day I gave myself permission to eat. Interestingly enough, I believe that after I began eating "normally" again without depriving myself or feeling guilty about caving into cravings, I finally began to lose weight. One day in late May I went shopping and found myself buying a size 38 skirt. I bought a new swim suit for the beach and for the first time since I can remember actually enjoyed wearing such an article, as my toned muscles looked quite nice. I wasn't French, I was American. I was bigger, but I was stronger. At that point I was no longer concerned with fitting into French society, but rather somewhat anxious about being "normal" in my own culture.

I can't believe it's over. What a year of discovery. Amazing. Some things I wasn't too pumped about discovering about myself, but what can you do? What a year. I'm scared of what I've become. Me, moderately wild and fun Ann was anti-social and boring all year. I wasn't at all cute little Ann. Instead I was the older one, the bigger one, the un-cute one. What a blow to the self confidence. I remember the days of feeling like I had it all - was pretty, was really smart, was witty, and everybody liked being around me. This year - just a nobody. It was worse than my Freshman year. Fortunately this time around I was old enough to know that "this too shall pass." I just wonder what it will be like when I get back. Hopefully I'm not fat. Weird now that it could go either way. A lot of times I feel really fit and thin, but then I swear my face is huge, plus I weigh more. I could look the best I've ever looked, or I could

be a blimp. I really have no idea. I know it doesn't really matter, but it's been the underlying, no, the ONLY, issue all year, so I'm curious to find out what's up. Anyway, hermitude is over. I must enjoy my last evening of solitude before it all changes. Vive la France! Hello America. Thank you God (7/2/01).

The next day I boarded a plane for the States. Evelyn, all 89 pounds of her, was with me. I stepped onto that plane in Paris as a big, "gros" foreigner. I walked out of the terminal in Seattle as an attractive and slim native. A few months later we would discover the aftermath of our year abroad. Evelyn was immediately referred to a nutritionist and a psychologist to combat her potential anorexia. I soon was diagnosed with a stress fracture and five cavities due to my lack of bone density and estrogen from malnutrition. Neither of us had menstruated since February.

"Experiencing new cultures, and obtaining a better understanding of your own culture, can result in some of the most positive, life-altering experiences possible while studying abroad" (3). Indeed it did alter our lives. I would never trade my year in France for anything. I learned more about myself than ever thought possible. And this learning continues even today. Now, almost a year after my return, I can attempt to explain just what happened to us in France. Did I develop an eating disorder? Yes, without a doubt. What were the causes? I felt abnormally large surrounded by inherently smaller women. I was going through culture shock, loneliness, and depression. I was bored and had too much free time, thus leaving more time to eat. I was confused in terms of the different cultural eating habits, and couldn't adopt the French mentality of moderation in food consumption.

Essentially, I was obsessed with my body the entirety of the year abroad. Have I recovered? Yes, and in fact I believe I have a healthier relationship with food now than ever before. What did I learn? I am American. I must accept this. It is my cultural heritage, and no matter how hard I try to fight it, the culture is ingrained within me. I will never, nor should I aspire to be, a skinny French woman.

Any regrets? There's no reason to have regrets in life, as every experience results in a lesson learned. I'm sure there were much better things to do with my time in France than worry about my body, but I can't change that now. There was a purpose for me to be in France, and although it wasn't what I expected, it was necessary. It was truly the best and the worst year of my life. It wasn't always fun, at times it was incredibly tough, but as they say "C'est la vie."

MONEY

1) What Money Comes From Smith, and When?

Stipends - be sure you know how much they will be and when to expect them. I've been at my program for two weeks and haven't yet received any of my food, housing, or transport money, though I have received a promise that they're coming! Again, this should be something to work out beforehand. [Office note: be sure to turn in materials on time.]

Kelsey, 2005-06: Budapest, Hungary

Smith deposits our lunch stipends directly into our bank account (if you have direct deposit set up). This works beautifully and I recommend it. No check cashing hassle.

Mara, 2005-06: Florence, Italy

I got my Smith stipend a week or two after I arrived in Scotland, which was fine because the first week was a homestay where I didn't need to worry about food. It has been more than adequate and I'm thrilled with it. I have direct deposit, and Smith e-mailed me to tell me when it had been deposited, so it was incredibly easy.

Carly, class of 2007: Edinburgh, Scotland

2) How Much Money Will You Need?

Probably more than you imagine. Students told me 3000 dollars plus 1500 to be used during travel breaks. I lived pretty frugally and found that this amount was on the conservative side.

Re: advice about how much cash to carry when you first arrive, and how much to carry when you travel for breaks

--I would say a few hundred dollars worth in cash, if not less, a debit card linked to a U.S. account, and an additional few hundred dollars in traveler's checks in case of emergency.

Aria, Florence, Italy, 2004-5

This goes without saying but: bring twice the amount of money you think you'll need! It comes in handy when your friends are planning international excursions or splurging on a fabulous dinner! Also, you never know what will surprise you in respect to clothing, products, etc. I found out it actually *was* cold in Cordoba, Spain despite popular belief...several people I knew, myself included, had to purchase winter jackets. You may have preconceived notions about style or weather-appropriate clothing, and they may just be wrong! Be prepared to supplement your wardrobe.

Chelsea, 2005-06: Cordoba, Spain

If you're going to England, go with a lot of money because the cost of living is huge.

Erin, 2004-05: Oxford, England

Unless you're great at multi-tasking and are an expert bartender, you will most likely NOT find work when abroad so SAVE EVERY PENNY before you leave. Coming from someone who loves to spend her paychecks this was a difficult task. Starting in June I kept telling myself "spend it now and you'll have no money in November!"... it worked!

Elizabeth, 2004-05: Edinburgh, Scotland

Bring as much as you can (especially if you like to go out) because that's what you'll be doing your first few weeks, and until you get used to the value of money [you'll spend a lot].

Also it's a very good idea to let your bank know you're leaving the country...Bank of America almost shut down my account because I didn't tell them that I was leaving so be sure to do that right away.

Abena, 2005-06: London, England

Carry "emergency" cash on you when you arrive-- the local currency, just enough to take a taxi or two if necessary, and to eat something! If you have your cost of travel estimated at the time of your arrival, bring that amount plus a little extra. It is better not to carry a lot of money on you when you arrive, as thefts are most likely to occur during this time, while you are stressed out, tired, flustered and not familiar with your surroundings.

Frances, 2007: Mexico

When you first arrive in Geneva, it is good to have about 75 USD for taxis and food etc. You can exchange the money right before you leave the airport and taxis stands are right on the curb waiting to drive you to your destination.

Gayla, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

In Europe, you don't need to carry much cash when you arrive. I showed up with no money in the local currency, because as long as you have a debit or credit card or travellers checks, you can get money right away in the airport rather than dealing with changing money before you go. When you travel, it's good to have some cash, but it depends on where you are going--if it is a big city where you can use other means (debit/credit cards, travelers checks) easily, \$50-\$100 in cash is probably plenty--don't carry too much because that will be lost forever if you get pick-pocketed, unlike cards and travelers checks. It can be hard to find ATMs sometimes, even in bigger cities, but almost anywhere will accept Visa or MasterCard payments.

Jessie, class of 2007: Geneva, Switzerland

Best to not exchange money in airports. They take a huge profit by charging a large percentage of the amount of the transaction and frequently do not give the best exchange rate.

Mara, 2005-06: Florence, Italy

3) Students to Students on Travelers Checks and Credit Cards

Do not assume that many businesses in developing nations will accept travellers' cheques. Bring a credit card in case you need to buy an emergency plane ticket or to pay for hospital bills. You don't need to use it if you don't want to.

Chelsea, 2004-05: Durban, South Africa

I DO NOT recommend travelers' cheques for Italy--American Express or Visa. When cashing them at a change point you lose anywhere from 7-15% (yes, 15%) of the amount that you cash. The best thing to do is use ATMs. HOWEVER, Visa or Mastercard or whatever company your bank uses to issue the debit card will usually charge anywhere from 1-3% of the transaction amount as a fee for foreign transactions. However, the fast cash access and the exchange rate make using the ATM a perfectly good option. Credit cards may or may not give you a favorable exchange rate depending on the card and will charge you 1-3% of the purchase amount depending on the credit card that you have. In my case, I am charged 1% of the amount of the transaction at the ATM making using the ATM the best option for me...even better than a credit card. Some do not, so if you want to use a credit card...do your research!

Mara, 2005-06: Florence, Italy

I used some travelers checks in London so as to avoid the double exchange rate costs (dollars to euros to pounds). Mostly I found them useful for emergency back ups and money for the end of the year in case I found my funds running low.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

When I first arrived in Mexico, I was staying in a hotel for orientation, so money was no problem because the front desk could change dollars to pesos or cash travelers' checks. However, that was the only easy time I ever had with travelers' checks. My advice would be that if you have orientation in a different city than where you will spend the semester, find a place that will cash them when you first arrive in the country, and cash about 200 US dollars' worth. You might not be able to find another place to cash travelers' checks for a while.

Frances, 2005-06: Puebla, Mexico

Credit cards are great. Visa and American Express are widely accepted. Make sure you have your passport or, even better (and safer), a photocopy of your passport available whenever using plastic. Also, you will probably be charged a conversion fee, but this fee is usually insignificant. I asked my parents to pay my credit card statements; meanwhile I kept track of them through online banking. I kept a record of exactly how much I owed them, and wrote them a check when I got home.

Chelsea, 2005-06: Cordoba, Spain

Call your credit card companies before you leave to notify them that you'll be abroad. Sometimes, if they weren't notified, they may think your card was stolen once it's in another country; some types of credit cards do not work AT ALL in certain countries. Example: any card with a "STAR" logo, although it is Visa, is blocked for security reasons in all of Russia. Traveler's Cheques can only be cashed at certain banks, be prepared to try a few first.

Huelo, 2005-06: Irkutsk, Russia

I have a visa debit card and withdrawing internationally usually comes with a small fee. However, my home bank (a credit union) has no fees, and most ATMs in Europe that I have found also charge no fees. So, unless your home bank charges you, you'll only have to pay the small international fee.

Travelers checks are great backup to a debit or credit card, because they can be replaced more easily and quickly if your wallet is stolen or lost. I would recommend getting enough money to get by for about a week (assuming you aren't traveling, this isn't much) just in case.

Jessie, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

When I was in Brazil, I used travelers checks and ended up losing out big time. When I got there, the exchange rate was 3 *reals* to 1 dollar. If I took cash out from the ATM, the rate was about 2.95 (or close to that). In Salvador, there are very very few places that exchange travellers checks, and the rate was about 2.65. It did not help. But it is good to carry at least 100 in case of extreme emergency.

Amanda, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

Most visa cards work all over Brazil. I had friends who had travelers' checks and they were kind of a pain because in some banks you needed a Brazilian to vouch for you in order to cash them, or at least you had to have your passport. (carrying my passport around always made me nervous because of theft)

Jennifer, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

Paying Bills From Abroad

I signed up for online, paperless statements. I recommend that you set up automatic bill pay with your bank to pay the credit card bills. It is a life saver and extremely easy.

Amanda, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

As for paying my credit card bills from abroad... I left my checkbook at home with my parents. I didn't trust the Italian postal system to deal with my statements and trans-Atlantic payments in a timely manner, so my credit bills were just sent to my US address and my parents used my checks to pay for them. They also transferred money from my savings account into my checking account at my request, so I never had more than about \$500 at my disposal at once, which is a nice precaution. If my debit card had been stolen, my life savings wouldn't be lost.

Karen, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

4) Students to Students on Banks, and Accessing & Tracking Money

If you are staying more than a semester, opening a bank account is recommended. If you keep track of the exchange, open it during a day/week when the exchange is more favorable.

The best way to keep track of credit card statements and US bank account statements is to start an online account with your bank/card company. Most offer this service for free.

Xiomara, 2004-05: New Zealand

Find out if it is possible to set up a short term bank account while you are studying abroad in a developing nation. If so, and there are accessible ATMs, this will help you save a lot on withdrawal charges.

Chelsea, 2004-05: Durban, South Africa

I am studying abroad in Delhi, India. I found it really useful to join with a Bank that had branches in the US, in NYC where I am from and in India, which you can find out online by asking the bank where branches are located. In the global market that is not actually very hard to find.

I joined with HSBC which is in the US and throughout Asia, but I also know that Citibank is in Delhi too. This made a lot of sense because then if there were ever any problems there are people here I could talk to who work for HSBC. Also, I had my wallet stolen a few months back, in it was the equivalent of 10 US dollars and my ATM card so I could not withdraw money, obviously I had to cancel the card and send for a new one which was fine but because there are HSBC banks here I could still use my checkbook to withdraw money when I needed it, until I got my card back. Also because there are HSBC ATMs I did not have to pay fees to use the ATMs.

Suzanne, 2005-06: Delhi, India

In terms of money, I found it helpful to keep my home bank accounts. I was warned that my local-local bank (it's a not for profit bank in Ithaca, New York) bank card would not work abroad, but surprisingly, it worked at most ATMs in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. However, because local pin numbers and obscure bank chains can be unrecognizable abroad, it is advised to have at least one bank account in a larger bank like Bank of America, Fleet, Citibank, etc.

Gitanjali, 2004-05: Costa Rica

There are a lot of HSBC banks all over Brazil so if a student wants to have banking as easy as possible, I would suggest opening an HSBC account here (USA) first. Register with your bank to do online checking. Have a connected savings and checking account so that you can transfer funds from saving to checking if you need to. Keep a modest amount of money in your checking account. This also prevents theft of large amounts of money if your debit or checking card is stolen.

Jennifer, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

In Brazil you cannot open a Brazilian bank account. Before you leave, ask your bank how much you will be charged for using ATM abroad (and you WILL be charged, usually 2 bucks each time you use ATM). Plan accordingly. I was in Brazil for the year, and in all I racked up about 200 in ATM fees - just using the ATM to get money! If your bank charges a standard fee, then take out what you need for the week once a week- this will also help with planning your spending and cut down on fees. Only take out cash for transportation, such as buses and taxis, which of course, don't take Mastercard or Visa.

Amanda, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

Being in Western Europe, there's really no need to carry lots of cash on hand at any time. There are ATMs everywhere, and the dollar is really easy to exchange. The only downside is that ATMs usually charge a fee for making withdrawals in foreign currency, so it's cheapest to make a few large withdrawals than to just run to the bank for twenty euro. The Italian bureaucracy is SUCH a mess that opening a bank account there is totally not worth the headache! (Even the program directors will advise against it.)

Karen 2004-05: Florence, Italy

In England I don't think you're allowed to open up an account in a local bank if you're staying less than 6 months. But luckily Barclays [a big branch in London] is affiliated with Bank of America so using your atm card has no transaction fee.

Haeun, 2004-05: London, England

There are huge fees (like \$20) sometimes, with the conversion rates, at ATMs. There are a few banks that operate in both the U.S. and U.K., it would be good to have an account with one of them. I think Natwest is one of them.

Erin, 2004-05: Oxford, England

It's sexy to have a Swiss bank account. The Banque Cantonale de Genève, usually runs the best deals for students.

Gayla, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

In Switzerland (and in some other countries in Western Europe) it's easy to open an account with the post office. Often that comes with a locally accepted debit card. If you are getting a stipend in cash, this is probably a good idea. Applying for the account can be a little complicated--you have to fill out a form and wait until several things are sent to you in the mail, and then your account can receive deposits--you don't deposit money when you open the account. In Switzerland, the post office account is really the only option, since most Swiss banks require suitcases full of cash to open an account.

Jessie, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

5) Students to Students on Economizing : Making Money Stretch

Restaurants in Europe often put together menus for the day that include a drink and dessert. Investigate such options but keep in mind that the daily menus often cannot have any substitutions.

Caitlin, 2005-06: Madrid, Spain

Before I left I added up my personal spending money and, separately, the money Smith gave me for food. I then took each total and divided in 4 (for four months) and divided THAT in half (for the currency exchange rate... the pound KILLS the American dollar). That final total was my budget every month. I stuck to it and wrote down every penny I spent. Was it annoying? YES. But come December I was one of the only one in my program with money left!

Elizabeth, 2004-05: Edinburgh, Scotland

Budgeting is hard to do when you have never been to the country, and you always end up spending more than you want. It is one of those things that once you

are there you get a feel for the average cost of things. Really think twice if you need to buy a lot of things or not. But treat yourself once in a while, and don't always think in terms of the dollar- always think of it in terms of your local currency. I guarantee you will budget accordingly. After a month in Brazil, it thought 1.50 for the bus was ridiculous and saved money that way!

Amanda, 2004-05: Salvador, Brazil

One thing to be careful of is getting too excited about the conversion from the dollar to the shekel. Though things in Israel are relatively cheap comparing to US standards, you need to be careful that you don't let it get the best of you and end up spending more than you realized. The best way to handle money is to only carry a few hundred shekels with you at a time. Also realize that 100 shekels in Israel (about \$25 US dollars) is considered a lot of money. If you think like an Israeli, you'll save a ton and still have money left for that trip to Eilat ;)

Jacqueline, 2004-05: Tel Aviv- Israel

6) Worthwhile splurges, and items worth skimping on or skipping

I would say never to hold back from entrance fees to churches and museums. even though they are often over-priced, they are worth the money. I would say a good general rule is to spend more money on experiences than on material things. And as far as material things (clothes esp.) go--at least in Florence-- there are huge seasonal sales in January and in early summer, in which the prices are drastically reduced. So, wait until January to do clothes shopping.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

If there is one piece of advice to have to give, I would say do not spend your entire time abroad with a "tourist mentality." This is especially important if you do not want to spend a small fortune while abroad. For the first half of my stay I found myself commonly justifying spending money on frivolous things by saying to myself "I will never get this opportunity again." This is a mistake. While it may be true for some things, every purchase should not be made on this basis.

Xiomara, New Zealand, 2004-5

Be thrifty on everyday stuff, splurge on things you wouldn't find anywhere but your host region/country.
Example: my splurges in Russia were a fur hat, a winter coat, and a vacation to the coldest place on earth.

Huelo '07: Irkutsk, Russia

It would have been incredibly easy to have spent loads of money traveling, shopping, chatting, etc. but I knew in advance I simply didn't have the money so I set what I thought would be realistic limits, revised them once I arrived and knew better and then allowed small amounts of money to be set aside for random adventures or experiences that cost. Although there were things I passed on because of finance--I had a fabulous time and never felt like I missed something I needed to see, hear, or otherwise.

Anna, 2004-05: Cordoba, Spain

I had a lot of friends in Australia who would spend lots of money on tourist-y things (like t-shirts etc.) As I travelled around the country I didn't buy ANY tourist t-shirts, and was able to save my money to splurge on an outfit from an Australian designer, that would remind me of my time in Australia (as well as Australian fashion), instead of having kitschy t-shirts.

Katherine, 2004-05: Australia

7) Culture-specific money issues: Tipping and Haggling, and other matters

Ask locals who you trust about tipping. In many places in Europe (Spain, where I am) tipping is only done when service is wonderful. If you feel like being generous you can leave a little change but for the most part it is not needed. Tipping when not in restaurants is also different. Be sure to ask about customs for tips in areas such as hair salons or other businesses.

Caitlin, 2005-06: Madrid, Spain

Haggling in Spain is often appropriate at small "unofficial"-looking tiendas. If you are a foreigner they will take advantage of you! Tell them you don't have enough, and you'll look for a cheaper one. Walk away! Most products sold at these little stands are quite ubiquitous, and you can always ask prices at several stands. Meanwhile, there is a good chance they will call you back and give you a better offer. This method also avoids insulting anyone by specifically arguing over a price. Your best bet, if possible, is to go with a native resident and have them do all the talking.

Chelsea, 2005-06: Cordoba, Spain

So, I was in Siberia where stuff was pretty cheap so I don't know how helpful I'll be to students in places like London or Paris. If you can, I think it's a more fun and frugal experience to go shopping with a local. This person will be able to show you haggling etiquette in your country, and merchants are less likely to try and cheat them (or quote them astronomical prices) than they are you.

Tipping in Russia is never more than 10% when it is done at all. Don't take it personally if merchants/service staff are more standoffish than in the States. Usually, a waitress will come to your table and say a simple "What do you want?" instead of smiling, listing specials, and asking if she can start you off with anything to drink. They're not mean, it's just the way things are done.

Huelo, 2005-06: Irkutsk, Russia

In western Europe, tipping is not required, but if you have good service, it's not uncommon to leave a small tip. It's not insulting to leave only 50 cents or even less.

Jessie, 2005-06: Geneva, Switzerland

Bargaining is the custom in most Central American countries and even though it may seem rude at first, you eventually will learn how to do it tactfully, i.e. to compliment the seller on the product and maybe ask questions about the origins of the fabric, etc, before trying to lower the price. In Costa Rica, it is roughly 500 *colones* to the dollar, so when someone offers you, say, an 8" by 11" cloth woven bag for 10,000 *colones*, that's probably too much. I would try and get it down to say 5,000 *colones*. Some of the skirts are made of finer materials, or imported from other countries and all hand-made, and typically, I would find a nice wrap-around skirt of "Guatemalan" weave and style to be a "good deal" if it was about 8,000 *colones*, or roughly, 16 dollars.

Anonymous, 2006: Costa Rica

In Geneva, Switzerland: No haggling unless at a flea market. No tipping unless the service was really good. Tips are generally included in the bill.

Gayla, Geneva, 2005-06

In New Zealand the tip is already included in the bill, so it is not customary to tip. Tipping is considered generous in most places and pompous in some.

Xiomara, New Zealand, 2004-5

In Australia, the custom is to not tip! Waiters, waitresses, hair salons, taxis, etc.: none of these services expect a tip. It's customary to leave the silver coins you get as change, and sometimes for exceptionally good service the gold coins (\$1 and \$2) as well. There is one exception, and that is at SUPER fancy restaurants, but even then, a tip is not "required" as it is in the States.

Katherine, Melbourne, Australia, 2004-5

One last thing, look at how people carry their money. Ask a trusted local when it's ok to hand over a large bill (i.e. if you take a taxi and will have to use a bill larger than a 20, make sure to ask if the driver has change or if he needs to stop). Also, if people are using coins, do they just take a change purse with them and put bills in their as well or do they have a whole wallet? When it comes time to pay, those who perhaps might be most likely to pickpocket you watch your every move with money, so keep an eye out. Caitlin Joffe, class of 2007: Madrid, Spain

Try and carry lots of small bills in different places. Not only is it safer than flashing large amounts of cash or having it all in one place, many Russian kiosks and street markets are reluctant to change large bills (500 or 1000 rubles) and sometimes completely refuse.

Huelo, 2005-06: Irkutsk, Russia

8) Sample Budget Worksheet

Item	Cost per week															
<i>Housing (stipend or program)*</i>																
<i>Food (stipend or program)*</i>																
Daily Transportation																
Telephone																
Computer/Internet Access																
Photocopying																
Laundry																
Clothing/Personal Maintenance																
Health Supplies/Medication																
Gym Membership																
Entertainment																
Total:																

*tracking of the food and housing stipends is covered in "Budgeting for use of Smith Room and Board Stipend(s)", below.

Item	Cost per semester
Travel to Program	
Arrival Expenses	
Books/School Supplies	
Student Club Memberships	
Insurance- Health etc	
Total:	

Note: There are going to be expenses that happen once each semester or just right after you arrive. Among them are the cost of getting an apartment furnished with furniture, appliances, rugs, and kitchen necessities.

Vacation Budget	
Total:	

Note: It is helpful to know how much you plan on spending on your vacations in order to figure out your semester budget. When it comes time to plan your vacation- make a new budget in order to stay within your limit.

Getting Ready to Go Back

1) Student to Students on Applying for post-grad fellowships like Fulbright from abroad

I applied for the Fulbright upon my return from abroad. it was more difficult that way because i had less time to prepare, but i think the most important thing is to keep yourself informed during the JYA year, even if you aren't actually taking physical steps to applying for these things.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

2) Student to Students on Registering for Smith classes from abroad

a. On-line registration

Make sure to leave extra time even for on-line registration. The computer labs at Trinity College wouldn't allow me to access the Smith website, and I had to register at an internet café. It all worked out, but did require a little extra hassle and money. Also, remember to email your advisor for a registration code in advance. [Editor's note: this should not be necessary, as students abroad can register without the code.]

Ilana, 2004-05: Dublin, Ireland

b. Alternate ways of registering when on-line won't work for you

I was able to register via fax, because I was on a class trip during the registration time.

Aria, 2004-05: Florence, Italy

3) Requesting Smith Housing for your return

Remember to fill out the House Decision Card on time. Keep in mind the speed of international mail. Email Randy Shannon with any questions well before it is due. Also remember ask someone to be a proxy for you at Room Draw.

Ilana, 2006: Dublin, Ireland

4) Travel back to the US – advice for international students

Re-Entry: Literally

Re-entry for international students:

If you are planning to transit through the US on your way home, you can still use your student visa. Just make sure your I-20 has been signed by Dean T. A word of advice on the I-20...get it sorted long before you plan to leave. I did not attend to it until my last two weeks in London and as a result it came back late, I missed all my connecting flights and had to pay extra £200 to get all the tickets changed. I am sure most of

you would like to avoid spending that extra money. And I would hate for anyone to go through what I did.

Otherwise if you do not get your I-20 signed, make sure you have a transit visa or you will get into a lot of trouble at whatever airport you are entering from. If you can, try and avoid going through the US until you have to return to Smith. It will save you lot of trouble and lots of money as well.

Meraia, Class of 2006: London, England

Being Back

1) Bill Hoffa on **Reverse Culture Shock**

Just as you will have had to brace yourself for a period of psychological disorientation when you leave the USA, you should know that after your time abroad, you may also have to prepare yourself for a parallel period of readjustment when you return 'home.' Why? Simply because, if you have had a full experience living and learning overseas, you are likely to have changed some, while you have been away, so the place you return to may itself appear to have changed, as indeed it might have. Even though these changes are seldom huge, and may not be apparent to others, you are likely to be very aware of them, and this can be confusing, all the more so because it is unexpected. Brigham Young University's CultureGrams offer many insights on customs and lifestyles of individual countries. Phone 1-800-528-6279 or visit the website at <http://www.culturgram.com/>.

Immediately after your return, you can probably expect to go through an initial stage of euphoria and excitement. Most people are overwhelmed by the sheer joy of being back on their native turf. But as you try to settle back into your former routine, you may recognize that your overseas experience has changed some or many of your perceptions and assumptions, your ways of doing things, even what it means to 'be yourself.' You might have become, in a sense, a somewhat new person. After all, that is what education is all about! But this intellectual and personal growth means that you can expect a period of disorientation as you adjust to the "new" environment at home.

The re-adjustment period is usually rather short-lived, since 'home' will never be as "foreign" to you as the foreign environment you adjusted to overseas. Also, your experience of dealing successfully with culture shock abroad will have provided you with the psychological tools for dealing with the challenges of readjustment. Obviously, the more you have changed--often a by-product of the time you were away and how deeply you immersed yourself--the more difficult it will be to have things go back to a previous notion of normality. However, if you are aware of the changes (and seek to learn from them, smooth adaptation is more likely."

As a means of readjusting and staying in touch with the international scene, you may want to consider contacting students who have been abroad, who are currently abroad, or who are thinking about going abroad. There are many ways of maintaining contact with friends you made overseas, foreign and domestic, and also of remaining in touch with the culture you entered and now have left--via letters, e-mail, phoning, magazines, books, etc. and other means. Discussing things and sharing experiences with others is almost always worthwhile. Remembering what it was like for you to have been, for a time, a 'foreigner' should inspire you to try to get to know the international students on your campus or others from 'minority' backgrounds, who may themselves be feeling some of the same social dislocation and alienation you once felt when you were overseas. The key is to build on the cross-cultural coping skills you now possess and to find conscious ways of integrating your new 'self' into your evolving personal and academic life, not seeing it as a 'dream' or something irrelevant to your future.⁶

2) Student to Students on Coming Back to the US and to Smith – Am I the Only One Who Feels Crazy?

Q. Am I the only one who feels crazy?

A. No! for me, the most difficult adjustment, rather than leaving the U.S., was coming back to it.

Aria, class of 2006: Florence, Italy

I was on the Smith Hamburg program and we had lots of support in going, and being there, but coming back it felt like we were completely on our own - socially, academically - it was strange having made close Smith friends abroad and suddenly being back in the old way of things and not seeing them as much, and being back in the Smith academic environment. I think it would be very helpful to know that everybody's like that (to varying degrees of course), and to know it can take a whole semester to adjust back (or just a week) and that that's okay.

Kersten, class of 2006: Hamburg, Germany

As for coming back to the US, it took a lot of readjustment. I wasn't used to driving a car, for one thing. I also had to stop myself from kissing people on the cheek (as they do in France and Switzerland) rather than shaking hands or hugging. Switching from French to English responses also took some time. The biggest transition, however, was from

⁶ Hoffa, Bill

the University of Geneva to Smith. I had fewer classes in Geneva, less reading to do, fewer papers to write, and generally much more time on my hands and much less academic pressure weighing me down. Although I was thrilled to come back to Smith and had missed it a great deal, my reentry into the high levels of stress, coursework, and other scheduling demands at Smith was rough. Students in Geneva were under pressure too, of course, but it wasn't as unremitting as it is here.

Katherine, class of 2006: Geneva, Switzerland

Before you get back... keep a journal! It's not a big commitment or hassle to write in while on trains/ in a hostel before bed/ at a meal- you'll be surprised by how much you appreciate reading forgotten details. They may have seemed insignificant when you wrote them down- but they remind you of how you felt while you were there. Take more pictures of friends and places that you can't find on postcards. But also enjoy travelling without always looking through a camera- sketches can be even more meaningful after the fact than pictures.

Things I took back with me:

skills: Budgeting- keeping track of costs, survival foods- quick meals.

souvenirs: books in foreign languages, dictionary, flag, packaged food, magnets, postcards, Some clothes- but left a lot of it there..

self-made: journals- lists of hostels, travel route, cities; scrap book- Ticket stubs, calling cards, and maps cut from brochures.

Sara, class of 2006: Copenhagen, Denmark