

The Ultimate Study Abroad Checklist



What to know before you go
to have a successful
study abroad experience





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Do you have additional ideas to share?

Share your tips on social media using #knowb4ugo or send them to us at studyabroad@wespeke.com

Interested in sharing your experiences on the WeSpeke blog during your time abroad?

Get in touch with us at studyabroad@wespeke.com

Are you ready for the experience of a lifetime?

Congratulations on making the decision to study abroad! You are about to embark on an adventure that will prove to be fun, memorable, and rewarding – if you do it the right way.

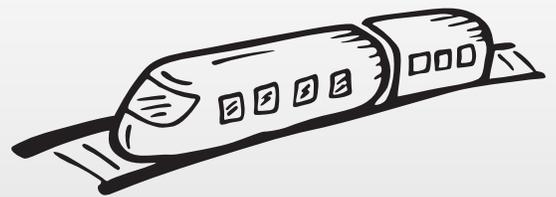
Have no fear, that's why we're here! At WeSpeke, we believe that by taking a little time to know before you go, you can make the most of your study abroad experience

We thought back to our times studying abroad, and asked our users and our friends for their top tips. We put together a checklist that goes beyond the basics about what to pack, do, and ask before you leave. It is our hope that this checklist reminds you of a few "must do's" that aren't on your list (you have a list, right?). In addition, we'll suggest how to use social media and WeSpeke to find the local community and make connections where you are going before you leave home.

We invite you to read additional suggestions for building cultural awareness and build global skills for career preparation. Follow our blog for all of our study abroad tips.

Safe travels and have a wonderful trip.

WeSpeke



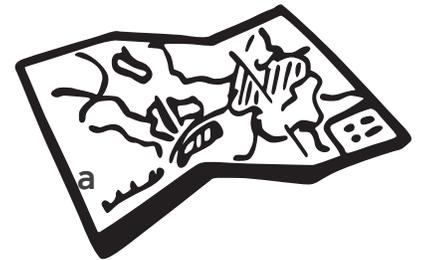
Know how to stay safe

- Find out which areas of your town or city are safe and unsafe during the daytime and night and avoid them.
- Don't put yourself in a potentially dangerous situation. Avoid areas that are dimly lit, narrow alleys, or shortcuts.
- Know the local emergency numbers such as police and fire. Know the location and how to reach the nearest embassy or consulate.
- Write down the address of your hotel, dorm, or host family and any phone numbers.
- Write down the information for emergency contacts back at home.
- Don't discuss your travel plans or personal information with anyone you don't trust.
- Know how to get around. Research commuter options and plan your route before you head out. Look confident and purposeful when walking on the streets. Even if lost, act like you know where you are going. Be discreet when consulting a map.
- Photocopy your passport, leave one copy with someone you trust in your home country, and take another copy with you.
- Don't be a target for petty theft. Be extra careful in public places and crowded surroundings. Wear any purse or bag across your chest. Be cautious when approached by people (or children) asking for money, selling trinkets, or offering to be your guide.
- Don't hang your purse on the back of the chair at a restaurant.
- Wear a money belt. Put any money you might need for the day in your front pocket.



Know how to fit in

- Don't stand out like a tourist or foreigner. Select clothes that will blend with the style and culture of the host country and understand which type of dress is considered culturally offensive.
- Avoid items of clothing that scream "tourist" such as baseball caps, short skirts, hoodies, yoga pants, loud or offensive t-shirts, expensive sneakers, and bright colors. Leave the good jewelry at home. Once there, watch how the locals dress and do the same.
- Don't be a noisy tourist. Keep your voice and laughter at a low level when with your friends in restaurants, on public transportation, and on the street. Avoid walking in large group and taking over a sidewalk.
- Learn some of the language before you leave home. Greetings and basic questions are always useful, as are words you might need in an emergency ("police" or "hospital", for example).
- Learn some of the customs. Do you know the appropriate way to greet someone and say goodbye? What is an appropriate tip in a restaurant? Do you tip the taxi driver? What time to people eat?
- Expect to experience some culture shock (transition shock). It makes sense; you are visiting a new country with a different culture and perhaps a different language. But if you try out the tips in *Know How to Go Straight to the Source*, you'll feel more comfortable when you arrive.



Know how to take care of the three Ms

Money

- Apply for a credit card that will adhere to credit card practices in your host country (eg chip vs no-chip) if you do not have one.
- Photocopy your credit cards (front and back), leave one copy with someone you trust in your home country, and take the other copy with you.
- Research banking and ATM fees for foreign transactions.
- Consider opening a bank account in your home country that will provide you with fee-free foreign ATM withdrawals.
- Notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be travelling abroad.
- Research the exchange rate where you are going. Create a print (on paper or cardboard) “cheat sheet” that quickly converts your money into the local currency and vice-versa.



Medical

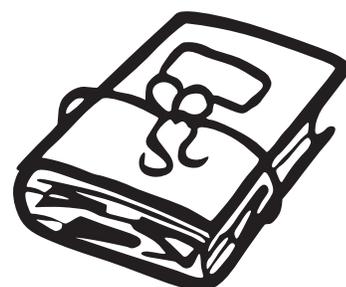
- Learn how to access your health insurance abroad and how to find a doctor in case of an emergency.
- Pack a first-aid kit that includes basic wound and digestive care.



- ❑ If you have allergies, be prepared with the appropriate treatment (Benedryl, Epi-pen, etc). Do not assume that you will be able to find the medicine in your host country.
- ❑ Pack any medications in your carry-on.
- ❑ Find out the process for getting the medication in your host country in case you need more. Bring a copy of your prescription and, if possible, keep the medication in its original packaging.
- ❑ Do not assume health care is free to you, even if your host country offers “free” health care. This is typically a benefit that is extended to tax payers only.

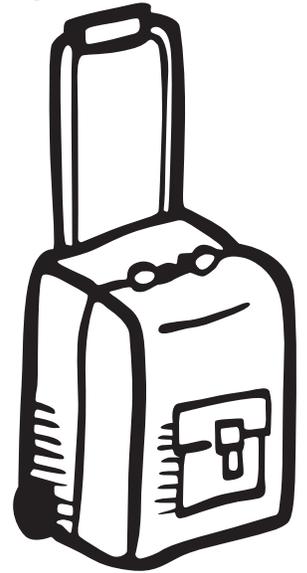
Mobility

- ❑ Determine whether or not your cell phone or tablet will work in your host country and what the fees are (they can be very expensive, be careful!)
- ❑ Research options to purchase a mobile phone in your host country to use during your study abroad period.
- ❑ Make a plan in terms of how and when you will communicate with family members at home.
- ❑ Set up a Google Voice, Skype, or WeSpeke account for friends and family at home to get in touch with you, without the burden of international charges.
- ❑ Download any apps you might need such as travel and study abroad apps.



Know that you have what you need when you need it

- ❑ Pack a water bottle, because water is often expensive. Make sure, though, that the water you fill it with is safe to drink. Bonus idea: a water bottle with a built-in filter.
- ❑ Learn which commonly-used products are not available in your host country (women often struggle to find tampons and contraception in certain countries).
- ❑ Bring a small duffel bag, backpack, or tote for short weekend trips.
- ❑ Socks and underwear: this may seem basic, but bring double what you think you will need.
- ❑ Travel packs of babywipes will save the day when you most need them, include them in your travel tote. Kleenex, too!
- ❑ Pack your suitcase, then leave half of what you packed at home.



Know how to go straight to the source

- Use social media to help plan your trip. Find local bloggers and news sites so you know what's going on before you get there.
- Connect with someone who lives where you are going on WeSpeke. Ask WeSpeke users who live in your host city about:
 - Must-do activities and must-see places during your trip
 - Local food and dishes to try and the best places to taste them.
 - Advice on places that are safe and unsafe.
 - Tips they'd offer a first time visitor.
 - Attitudes of the local people towards visitors from your home country.
 - What they are most proud of about their community and country.
- Practice your language skills with a native speaker. Use WeSpeke to find people who live where you are going.



Make friends in your host country before you travel

Create a **FREE WeSpeke** account today to:

- Meet students travelling to the same country as you
- Connect with locals to learn more about the community
- Practice your language skills

Visit www.wespeke.com/studyabroad.html to learn more.

The screenshot displays the WeSpeke mobile application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, People, Matches, Classes, and Interests, along with a Notifications bell icon and a settings gear. Below the navigation bar, the app is in a chat mode. On the left, a user profile for Samantha W is visible, including her name, age (18-24), languages (Portuguese and English), location (Pittsburgh, USA), and a 'Full Profile' button. The main chat area shows a conversation where both users are interested in 'Soccer'. The chat bubbles include: 'Let's talk about it.', 'I would love to see them.', 'Você deve visitar as Cataratas do Iguaçu .', and 'I'm traveling to brazil to study abroad.'. On the right, a user profile for Eugene S. is visible, showing he is 'Available'. At the bottom of the chat area, there are five utility buttons: 'Need a Word', 'Write It', 'Slow Down', 'Say Again', and 'Say this Way'.

