



STUDYING ABROAD MAY NOT
BE ON THE TOP OF YOUR LIST
WHEN YOU START COLLEGE,
BUT STUDYING OVERSEAS,
EVEN IF IT'S JUST FOR SPRING
BREAK, HAS ITS BENEFITS.

“The whole point of coming to college is to have new experiences and to see things from a new perspective,” said Marie-Louise Abram, Penn State Harrisburg’s Director of International Programs, External Relations and Special Projects.

There’s anywhere from 150-200 options across the university for studying abroad for a semester and courses overseas during spring break and a variety of overseas experiences available — general education classes, classes related to your major or even internships.

She encourages students to go through an academic advisor, who will look at their degree plan to figure out what kind of experience could fit into their schedule.

Although being able to immerse yourself in a culture or learn a foreign language abroad is a great opportunity, just having an international experience matters, Abram said.

“If you want education beyond skill training, it’s going to take being out of your comfort zone,” Abram said.

If you are interested in studying abroad, here are some tips and tricks from people who studied abroad at different universities. >>

SO YOU WANT TO STUDY ABROAD

- ✓ If you're studying abroad for a semester, you shouldn't need more than a checked bag and a carry-on bag or back pack. So leave the towel behind, which you can always buy when you arrive and leave when you depart, and pack the raincoat instead.
- ✓ Fill that carry-on bag. Pack three days of clothes, valuables and at least two weeks of medication in your carry-on. That way you won't be scrambling if your bag is lost.
- ✓ Keep important documents on your body like your passport and medical insurance plan along with a day's worth of cash and your credit card in case your wallet is stolen.
- ✓ Buy a converter for your electronics before you go.
- ✓ Check and double check visa requirements and any necessary documents or paperwork, and make sure to apply for visas ahead of time.
- ✓ Will your phone work? Many use their phones on a daily basis to figure where you want to eat dinner or get directions. See if you can get a SIM card overseas and if your phone can be unlocked to do so.
- ✓ If your phone doesn't work, make sure you have printed out or screenshots of directions to the train or bus to get to your accommodations. Download offline maps to get around.
- ✓ Read reviews before you book that Airbnb or hostel. Yes, it may be cheap, but do you really want bedbugs?
- ✓ Don't sit in your room and watch Netflix. Studying abroad can be overwhelming between meeting new people and learning your way around town, but most people make friends their first week. Don't be afraid to branch out and make friends with locals or students from other universities.
- ✓ Explore your home city. Go to that bar opening. See that local show.
- ✓ Eat local. You may be craving a Crunchwrap Supreme from Taco Bell, but when will you have the chance to say you ate a beignet in France? But make sure to research local eating habits to see if it's rude, for example, to talk loudly in a café.
- ✓ Be aware of local hazards. Is the water safe to drink? Maybe your stomach just isn't used to different types of food, but being sick isn't a fun way to spend the weekend. Consider packing medicine like Pepto-Bismal just in case.
- ✓ Ask locals about unsafe places to be, and make sure not to wander home by yourself if you go out to a bar at night.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to treat yourself. Trust me, I know how expensive studying abroad can be, but if you budget and spend wisely, don't feel bad about spending money on that once-in-a-lifetime experience or weekend trip.
- ✓ If there's something you want to see, make sure to double-check their hours on the off chance that it's closed or requires ticket purchases ahead of time. Get there early. Major attractions like the Acropolis or the Vatican are busy around midday.
- ✓ Consider downloading a free audio tour of whatever museum or site you're visiting. Plus, it will help cut down on costs.
- ✓ Try solo traveling. That way you can see what you want to see, and not worry if you want to stay longer at a museum. But it can be terrifying, too, because you may get lost alone in a place that doesn't speak your native language. Be patient, and take a deep breath.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to practice self care. Getting the most out of your experience may seem like a priority, but remember to take time for yourself.
- ✓ Remember, you're a guest in that country. As my mother told me the first time we traveled overseas and ate in a nice restaurant, "For God's sake, if you ever had manners, now is the time to use them." It will be easier to ask for directions when you inevitably get lost if you are polite.