



CEPA Europe Pre departure Handbook

Faculty-led programs in Europe

This handbook is intended as an aid to study abroad advisors
faculty leaders and students who are preparing
for their upcoming faculty-led program in Europe.

Table of contents

Importance of a Pre-Departure Orientation3	Staying in touch while abroad 12
What to expect?4	Post and Stamps
Personal growth	E-mail
New perspectives	Cell Phones and calling cards
Career enhancement	Fax/Printers
Travel documents5	Health issues 13-14
Passport/Foreign entry requirements	Checkups
Visa	Pre-existing conditions (allergies)
Travel arrangements	Prescriptions
(made through CEPA Europe) 6-7	Emotional and mental health
Flight arrangements	Nutrition
Hotel arrangements	Medical kit
Ground transportation	Family emergencies
Visits to companies, institutions, museums	Travel and Health Insurance 14
U.S. Citizens8	Learning about your host country 15
Absentee voting	Language (learn vocabularies)
U.S. customs	Preparing to be “the American” Abroad
Power of attorney	Arrival and Orientation 16
Money Matters 9-10	Immigration and Customs
Currency exchange	Jet lag
Expected extra costs	On-site orientation
Bringing cash	Traveling as a group 17-18
Credit cards, ATMs and debit cards	Student diversity
Traveler’s check	Faculty leader roles and responsibilities
Getting money in an emergency	Itinerary
Wiring money	Timing / punctuality
Personal checks	Free time
Luggage and Packing Tips11	Adult behavior
Packing and baggage	Cultural adjustment and exploration 19-22
Weather forecasts	What is culture?
Electricity	Culture shock
	Survival strategies
	Fitting in and being accepted
	Learning and respecting local customs
	Discrimination
	Staying Safe and Healthy 23-24
	Obeying the law 25

Importance of a Pre-Departure Orientation

One of the greatest challenges for a study abroad adviser or faculty leader is to make sure that their students are well prepared for the many concerns that will come up as they make plans to go abroad. Despite the numerous meetings you may have with students before their departure, not everything that needs to be addressed will probably actually be covered. Therefore, the importance of a well-planned pre-departure orientation is invaluable. Many routine practical issues and concerns about life abroad, and what will happen upon return, must be discussed thoroughly.

Pre-departure orientation is not something that can be done at the check-in desk before take-off. We encourage you, especially if you have not ever travelled with students or abroad, to take the time to read through this handbook and plan to discuss this with your students.

The better prepared you and your students are for your study abroad experience abroad, you will have less surprises once you arrive and the more meaningful your experience will be. It should go without saying that you should try to learn as much as you can about the countries which you will visit: their language, history and culture as well as social and political conditions.

There are many ways to do this: use the Internet as a great resource, read books and magazine articles, talk with people from there and who have been there etc. As Socrates said, "The innocent eye sees nothing."

Although we have tried to include and update as much information as correctly as possible, the information presented for courtesy. If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact CEPA Europe for assistance at any time.

What to personally expect from the program?

Study abroad can be an enriching and eye-opening adventure, where learning extends to the world beyond the classroom walls. There is no substitute for living and studying in a foreign country if you want to gain in-depth knowledge of another culture's customs, people, and language. In addition, you will find that living and studying in another country can develop important transnational competencies that can be of interest to future employers.

Personal Growth

Students who return from a study abroad program often see it as an experience which matured them personally and intellectually. They praise being exposed to new ways of thinking and living, which encourages growth and independence. For many students, going abroad to study and travel is the first time they have really been away from 'home,' from familiar surroundings of the USA, as well as from friends and family. This is seldom an easy experience, but it is universally praised as worthwhile, often even life-transforming. After immersing themselves in a new culture, mastering the challenges of learning in a new and different environment, and experiencing the many highs and lows of being a 'foreigner,' students typically return home with increased self-confidence and justifiable pride in what they have achieved.

New Perspective on World Affairs

Study abroad can broaden students' intellectual horizons and deepen their knowledge and understanding of international, political, and economic issues. It is almost certain that they will return from their sojourn abroad with a more informed and accurate perspective on world affairs. They will also have first-hand knowledge of how another culture approaches the tasks and challenges of everyday life, a sense of how 'global' the international culture has become, and an appreciation of the importance of international cooperation. They will probably also gain a broader understanding of, and appreciation for, the United States, its way of life, and its role in international affairs. Through you, the students in your program, and people you meet, you'll learn how others view the United States and its world role. If you live in a country where English is not the native language, or is spoken only by some, you will learn the practical importance of learning another language and using it.

Career Enhancement

But study abroad does more than promote academic enrichment and personal growth. It also can enhance students' employment prospects, especially in the fields of business, international affairs, and government service. Employers increasingly seek graduates who have studied abroad. They know that students who have successfully completed a study abroad program are likely to possess international knowledge and often second-language skills. Such students are also likely to have other transnational competencies that graduate and professional schools and employer value just as highly: cross-cultural communication skills, analytical skills, an understanding of and familiarity with local customs and cultural contexts, flexibility, resilience, and the ability to adapt to new circumstances and deal constructively with differences.

Travel documents

Passport and Foreign Entry Requirements

1. All persons traveling internationally will need to have a valid a passport.
2. According to the US State Department - When entering the EU, passports should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. **Check your passport's expiration date!**

Further entry and exit information for all countries can be found on the **US State Department** website:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Apply early for a new passport or a renewal. The average processing time can take six weeks or longer. If participants have never had a passport, they may apply to a passport agent at a U.S. Department of State agency. They can also make application through selected post offices or clerks of any federal, state or county courthouse.

Every participant (including the faculty leader(s) is/are required to have a valid passport for travel to the program destination(s). Participants are also encouraged to contact the appropriate consulates regarding individual visa requirements which may apply while traveling in a foreign country. CEPA Europe does not assume responsibility for obtaining passports, nor take any responsibility if participants do not acquire the required documentation and must cancel participation in the programs as a result. Regular cancellation terms will still apply.

All participants traveling internationally will need to carry their passport with them at all times. This is the only form of identification which verifies your citizenship while abroad. Some countries will also require an additional entry document called a visa. (see next section) Passports are issued by your country of citizenship, while visas are issued by a foreign country and are usually just a stamp or sticker on a page in your passport, although they can be a separate certificate as well.

Visas

U.S. citizens may enter all EU countries for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa.

For stays longer than 90 days or for a purpose other than tourism or business (ie. studying at a foreign university or internships), a visa or other type of permit may be required.

Other nationalities will need to check with the embassy of their home country.

Information relating to visas may be obtained from the nearest embassy or consulate of the country or countries in which you will study and/or travel.

In most cases, you will need to get the visa well in advance and prior to your departure date. It is the responsibility of all participants to inquire about visa requirements for all countries you plan to visit while abroad; this includes countries that you plan to visit before or after your study abroad program. You may need to provide special letters or documents that must accompany your visa application. Note that you may also need passport-size photos. It's a good idea to have extra copies of these photos for this purpose and other situations. You may be denied entry into, or be deported from, a country for which you have not obtained a required visa. CEPA Europe is not responsible for obtaining visas nor are we in any way responsible for visa denial.

Countries of the European Union (as of March 2009): Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom

Travel arrangements (made through CEPA Europe)

Flight arrangements

You should start looking into arrangements for your group flight as early as possible. When making your flight arrangements, check around with at least several different travel agencies and travel companies to compare prices and options. Also, be sure to ask for student fares and/or student discounts wherever you call. Check into price differences (and flexibility options) between buying a round-trip or two one-way tickets.

Please note that it is important that you book one flight for your whole group. If members of your group take different flights, it might happen that one group arrives much later than the other one e.g. due to problems with the connected flight. Also consider that students who fly without a faculty leader might feel uncomfortable, as it could be their first overseas flight. Another issue to consider is that CEPA Europe provides only one airport transfer per group. If you need two transfers, you would need to pay for the extra transfer.

As soon as you know your flight details (incl. destination involved, airlines, flight numbers, arrival and departure times), please send this information to your CEPA coordinator, as we need it to coordinate your airport transfer, forward your check-in time to your first hotel and include this information in your itinerary.

Hotel arrangements

CEPA Europe takes care of all your hotel arrangements according to the offer we made for your group. If not arranged differently, we will usually book twin rooms with private bathroom in the Château de Pourtalès in Strasbourg, where only rooms with shared bathrooms are available for students. Please inform your students about this before departure so they will not be surprised to share the bathrooms with other participants. For you and other faculty leaders we provide rooms with private bathrooms at the Château.

Breakfast is always included when we book a hotel for your group. Your students should know that the breakfast offered varies from country to country and hotel to hotel: Most of the time a continental breakfast buffet is offered, but e.g. in Paris it can happen that you are only given croissants with jam and a coffee, and in Rome only an espresso with biscuits.

The standards of the hotels we book vary also from country to country, city to city and hotel to hotel. We always book hotels that have a min. 2 to 3 star standard and are located in a safe and central area of the town.

Air conditioning is not as common in Europe as it is in the U.S., and not all hotels provide it. More and more hotels have internet access available in all hotel rooms or at an internet room at extra costs. CEPA Europe is always eager to find a hotel for your group that offers air conditioning and internet access, but you and your students should not expect American hotel standards in Europe.

During your pre-departure orientation, please ask your students with whom they would like to share a room during the entire study abroad trip. If you have an odd number of male and female students, you have the following options: students could share a triple room or one student could stay at a single room at extra cost. If your groups' rooming list is complete, please send it as soon as possible to your CEPA coordinator as she will need it in order to finalize your hotel bookings. Do not forget yourself on the list!

Ground transportation

All ground transportation you need in order to reach your activities and destinations during your study abroad trip is arranged by CEPA Europe. Your offer states what kind of transportation is included in your package price and which kind you will use: private bus, train, public transportation, etc... Students should only expect extra expenses, when traveling during their free time.

CEPA Europe will always provide an airport transfer upon your arrival by private bus to your first destination. So nobody needs to worry about directions or modes of transportation after a long overseas flight. We also provide an airport transfer by private bus on your departure day to guarantee that you do not miss your flight home.

When you are traveling with the train (e.g. Strasbourg – Paris), CEPA Europe will organize your train tickets and distribute these to you, together with an itinerary, when you get onto the train, in case you need to change onto an other train when traveling.

CEPA Europe provides public transportation passes for larger cities together with a map of the town and of its transportation system. CEPA coordinators will explain on-site how to use these. Students should know that in case of loss, these tickets are non-refundable.

Visits to companies, institutions, and organizations...

Besides cultural visits such as a guided walking tour in a city or a visit to a museum or castle, CEPA Europe organizes special professional visits to institutions, companies, organizations, etc. related to your field of study. These visits make something special out of your study abroad trip, because normally not just anyone can get an appointment to see and learn what you will. Most companies arrange special private guided tours, presentations, or lecture especially just your group. Therefore it is very important for all participants to show their interest, respect and attention.

We organize visits to luxury hotels and resorts as well. It is important that students dress and behave professionally during these visits so that the guests of the hotel do not feel disturbed during their vacation or business meeting. Hotel managements always point out that this is extremely important for them in order to allow future student groups to visit their hotel.

Visits to European and international institutions like the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the international Committee of the Red Cross, the NATO headquarter, etc... make your faculty-led program special. These institutions do have different security requirements in order to let your group into their building. We always need to provide a list of participants for them with additional information such as: birth date, passport number and nationality. In case you have not asked for this information when the students applied for your study abroad trip, ask for this during your pre-departure orientation. Please forward this information to your CEPA coordinator as soon as possible. Most institutions insist on having this information well in advance.

When visits to museums or sites are stated in your offer, the entrance fees are always complimentary. Depending on what has been arranged between you and us, we will organize a free visit with no guide but enough time for the students to explore the museum and site by themselves or we will organize a guided tour at no extra cost for your group.

To make the best out of your visits, students should prepare themselves appropriately. They should e.g. do some internet research to gather some information about the companies and institutions they will visit. They could share this information with all other participants during short presentations during your last pre-departure orientation. On the itinerary you will receive from us all visits are also listed together with a little introduction to the company or institution.

It is essential for you and your students to be in attendance in all classes and other scheduled visits. If students would like to miss an activity they should ask you for your approval in advance and inform their CEPA coordinator accordingly. If you would like to forbear from a complete visit, please inform CEPA Europe early enough, since it has happened that a company put us on a blacklist, because one of our partner universities did not show up for their planned visit. Thank you for your understanding!

U.S. Citizens

Absentee Voting

If elections are going to take place in the United States while your group is overseas, registered voters can still take part in the elections process by completing an absentee ballot well in advance of the program. Contact your local election official to obtain information about absentee voting.

U.S. Customs

If participants plan on taking expensive items, such as cameras, CD players, personal computers etc., they should consider registering them with U.S. Customs before you leave. That way those items will not be subject to duty when they return. They should save receipts for major purchases made overseas, as they may be able to get reimbursed for the taxes (VAT) paid. In most cases, when returning home, you will be given a card to fill out that will require your passport information, items you have purchased overseas and are bringing back into the country, and the cost of these items. Retain all receipts, or make an itemized list of purchases, prior to customs inspection. If the total cost of your purchases exceeds a certain amount, you will be asked to pay a tax on all items over the allotted amount.

The following is a general list of items that cannot be brought into the U.S.: Plants, animals, drugs, firearms, knives, explosives, and gas canisters. Items you can bring into the U.S., but there are limits on bringing in are alcohol and tobacco. Check with customs for updates on these legal quantities. Check with your airlines to find out its regulations for what you can and cannot pack in your carry-on bags. Under no circumstances should you ever take anything from, or hold anything for, anyone who asks you to do so. If anyone does ask you, simply say “no” and walk away. Do not be afraid to say no to friends. You need to think about the potential consequences before you hold anything from anyone. Once you have picked up your bags from baggage claim, and are on your way to customs, be sure to keep a close eye on all of your luggage so that no one but you has access to it. If you are stopped and asked to open your luggage, cooperate with the customs officials. Customs officials often conduct random baggage searches; just because your luggage gets searched, it does not mean you have done something wrong.

Power of Attorney

Giving a family member or trusted friend power of attorney, while students are abroad for a longer period, is a good idea. Power of attorney gives that designated person the power to act on the students’ behalf in case a legal document requires their signature while they away. This is especially important if they receive financial aid. Checks that they receive to cover educational costs must be endorsed by them before they can be deposited. It may also be helpful when completing and signing other financial aid forms. Students can also give someone power of attorney by simply writing what duties that person will be allowed to perform on their behalf and having the paper notarized.

Money Matters

It is best to make sure participants of a study abroad trip have a good mix of cash, travellers checks and bankcards to cover all financial eventualities when they are traveling. Cash is handy when they first arrive somewhere, travelers checks are the safest way to carry money and bank cards give you access to funds from all over the world.

Currency Exchange

Managing one's finances is one of the most important and challenging aspects of a successful and enjoyable academic experience abroad. Dealing with a new currency and cost of living and traveling are the beginning of the challenge. Before participants leave home, they should pay attention to the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the host country's currency; mainly Euro, Swiss Francs and British Pound. Good currency converters are available in the internet. Remember that there are daily fluctuations. Students should learn to think in that foreign currency, and not forget the value of a good pocket calculator.

Expected extra costs

How much money do participants need for their time abroad? It is very difficult to make guidelines - students will spend as much as they take. What our program prices cover varies. Students should be sure they know how much money they will require beyond what they already paid for the program e.g. for beverages during planned group dinners, for meals, for using public transportation, for entrance fees to museums and sites they would like to visit during their free time, for souvenirs and for phone calls etc... The amount they will need for incidental expenses will depend on their lifestyle as well as local costs. They should take a close look at their expenses and prepare a budget.

Bringing Cash

It may be wise to have some cash in the correct currency before participants enter their host country. They should purchase foreign currency at their bank in the U.S. Upon arrival, you can generally change money at the airport or nearby cash machine, but they should prepare to have enough cash for the first couple of days. Carrying cash is always risky; so they should avoid bringing too much cash to cover all their needs while abroad.

U.S. dollars can be exchanged abroad for the local currency at banks and exchange bureaus. Exchange rates vary slightly or significantly, from place to place and over time. In Europe, you can get acceptable exchange rates at railroad stations. Participants should shop around for the best rate in the city they are before they exchange their dollars. Students should not be tempted by people who offer to exchange money on the street, or "black market." This is illegal in most countries.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are convenient for most purchases, emergencies and cash advances, although there are usually higher interest charges for cash advances. Most major credit cards are honored abroad (e.g., American Express, MasterCard or Visa), but there are exceptions, especially in smaller towns and cities, so don't rely on using only a credit card! However, credit cards make foreign currency transactions easy and are invaluable in a financial emergency.

Take a credit card along, but use it wisely as it can be dangerous because it is easy to overspend, service fees and interest charges can be costly, and the loss or theft of a card can inconvenience you, especially while traveling. Seek advice from the issuing company as to the card's applicability abroad and the billing rate for converting the amount of purchases abroad into dollars. Make sure to learn your PIN before departure. Contact your credit card company to find your credit limit and number to call in case your card is lost or stolen. Also inform your credit card company about your travel dates and locations. When transactions are normally made at home and then start being used abruptly abroad, some credit card companies will flag the cards as being stolen to avoid possible fraud and other security issues.

When you use a credit card the company charges at the exchange rate at the time of purchase. The interest charged on an outstanding balance adds up quickly so you will need to leave someone you trust in charge of paying your monthly credit card purchases since most credit card companies will not send bills to non-U.S. addresses. But this is only of interest for students planning to stay for a longer periods abroad.

ATMs & Debit Cards

ATM (cash) machines are available in most cities across the globe and are a fast way to obtain foreign currency. An ATM, debit or checking card is excellent for international travel because it allows you to withdraw money from your bank account in the United States in the currency of the host country. Debit cards with Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus or Plus signs are the most widely accepted cards. The ATM machine will give you a menu choice of different languages and will ask you how much money you want in the currency of the country where you are traveling. The transaction will debit the money from your checking account in the United States at that day's exchange rate. There are usually transaction fees, and the fees vary significantly. Be sure to call your bank and check on the fees charged per each transaction. For larger transaction fees, be sure to withdraw larger amounts each time to avoid multiple fees. Note that some ATMs abroad may not work with the system (i.e. Honor, Cirrus, etc.) of your ATM card. Check the back of your debit card to know which system your card belongs to. Be sure that you (and someone back home) know your PIN number for ATM or credit cards. It may be wise to carry travelers' checks as back up cash in case your bankcard becomes demagnetized.

Traveler's Check

Traveler's checks are a convenient and safe way to carry money. In addition to being easy to cash, they are widely accepted for payment of goods and services in most establishments and usually treated as cash. Furthermore, if the checks are lost or stolen, the company that issued them will replace their full value, as long as you have a record of the serial numbers. Keep the receipt of the check numbers separate from your checks. Traveler's checks can be purchased at just about any bank in the United States, usually at the rate of one percent over the value of the checks you are buying. The American Express service is quite complete, and they also have offices in major cities around the world. Traveler's checks in dollars can be exchanged at banks and money-changing houses overseas but remember to bring your passport as identification. Sometimes there is a charge per transaction.

Getting Money in an Emergency

If students run out of money or an emergency comes up while they are abroad, there are several options for getting money from home. Cash or traveler's checks can be wired to them through companies such as Western Union or an American Express office (located in major cities). This service is fast but expensive. Postal Money Orders are another option. A family member or friend can buy a money order from a US post office and send it to the student abroad. They will be paid the amount of the money order at their local post office. Postal money orders have the advantage of being inexpensive, but the disadvantage of being slow: they take as long to get abroad as an airmail letter.

Wiring Money

If you think you might need to use bank transfers visit your bank before you leave and ask them for a list of the correspondent banks in your host city. Let them know who is authorized to initiate cable transfers for you. Once abroad, you can contact your home bank by phone and receive the money, usually within 48 hours. Be advised that you will probably have to pay the transmissions charges for both banks, in addition to a commission charged by the host bank. Money can also be transferred from home through American Express; this type of transfer will take two to five days and the charge varies according to how much money is sent. You can also notify your home bank and request that a bank draft in your name is mailed to you, via registered mail.

Personal Checks

Some study abroad programs have an arrangement with a local bank to cash their students' checks. If yours does not, your participants are unlikely to be able to cash checks abroad. Personal checks made payable to participants and drawn on a American bank are impossible to cash. Tell your students to not have their family members send them checks of any kind. However, if they have an American Express, Visa, or MasterCard credit card, they should be able to take some blank checks with them. They can cash checks at any American Express office abroad if they have an American Express card. Certain Visa and MasterCard cards also have check cashing privileges abroad; students should check with the bank that holds their card.

Luggage & Packing Tips

Packing and baggage

Our favorite two pieces of packing advice:

- *“Pack your bags, then take out half of the stuff & put it back in the closet. You can live very comfortably with very little.”*
- *“If you can’t carry everything you’re taking up and down a flight of stairs by yourself, you’re taking too much.”*

It is nearly impossible to bring everything you want. The trick is to pack what you need and what you can carry! All participants of our faculty-led programs should aim to travel light. Remember the airline will limit your checked and carry-on luggage by weight and dimensions. Check with your individual carrier for specific limitations. Some students use a backpack as one piece of luggage because it comes in handy on side trips. You might do a lot of traveling with busses, trains and stay at different hotels. Keep in mind, that you will always have to carry your luggage to your hotel room (carry up some stair cases) and in and out of your bus and train.

The best advice about packing is to take only what you will need. Another comment we hear over and over from past participants: “I took too many clothes!” No matter how much clothing you take, pack basic wardrobe items that can be mixed and matched, layered, and worn again. Casual clothes are appropriate for classes, but you may need at least one dressy outfit for special occasions and special visits. Leave room in your bags for items acquired abroad. If you have forgotten one thing to bring, you will always have the possibility to buy something abroad.

You will be walking far more than usual. Bringing a good pair of comfortable shoes is a must!

Please do not take extremely valuable jewelry or watches with you when you travel. It is difficult to keep track of while you are away, you will have less to worry about if you leave it at home.

Everybody should ensure that your suitcases have your name and address on both the inside and outside. Never leave your bags unattended!

Be sure to pack your passport, return plane ticket, your itinerary, a change of clothes & essential toiletries, and any medication you may need on the plane or within the first couple of days upon arrival in your carry-on bag! If you wear contact lenses, bring an extra set of contacts, cleaning solutions, your written eye prescription and extra glasses. You will need your documents to clear immigration prior to picking up your checked bags. The other items will be handy if your luggage is temporarily lost. Remember not to pack metal implements such as nail files and tweezers in carry-on luggage, as airport security no longer allows these items onboard aircrafts.

Laptops: All students are allowed to bring their laptops overseas. They will need to purchase a converter in order to plug their power chord into outlets overseas. They are responsible for the care of their computer and it is recommended that, if they plan to take their computer overseas, they should secure appropriate insurance and only keep it at safe and looked places abroad.

Weather forecasts

Before you start packing, check out the local weather conditions of the places you will visit while abroad. Keep in mind that the weather in Paris is different from the weather in the Swiss Alps. Be sure that you pack clothes and are prepared for all these different weather conditions. Planning to dress in multiple light layers is a good way to be prepared for most types of weather. Check out www.weather.com for the weather forecast of your trip. The vacation planner of this website will show you all information you need.

Electricity in Europe

The voltage in Europe is 220 volts, much higher than in the US (110). There are also different electrical outlets in Europe, which will vary from country to country. Please bring appliances with dual voltage and a plug adapter for the country where you will be traveling as well as transformer if needed. Your electrical appliances, like your laptop or hairdryer, will work well with an adapter, but there is always the risk that they will burn out. Check with your local appliance store before you leave to find out what option is best for you.

Staying in touch with family and friends while abroad

Post

Regular or express: Postcards and letters are still an important and inexpensive method of communication. The post office for most EU countries needs about a week for an airmail letter to be delivered to the US.

International postage is more expensive than domestic postage; but if you keep it to letters or postcards, it will not cost too much. Mailing packages by surface mail is less expensive than by air mail, but allow a lot of time. Letters should be marked "air mail" to ensure prompt delivery. If it is not marked, mail may be sent by ship and can take up to three months to be delivered. Mails sent internationally must include the destination country as a final line in the address to ensure delivery.

Students should not forget their address book! Their family and friends will love getting postcards from them. If students are staying quiet long abroad, they will be delighted to go to their "mailbox" to find a letter or package from home. Students will get addresses of the hotels and campuses they are staying at together with their itinerary. It is advisable to leave a copy with family members.

E-mail

E-mail has become the main mode of communication, both domestically and internationally as it is the least expensive and easiest method of communication for people in different time zones. Students can have access to computers in internet cafés and/or in the hotels where you are staying. E-mail is great to have as it saves time when dealing with practical matters. However, students should avoid the temptation to sit at a computer all day instead of exploring daily life in their host country. Students should be aware not to let their real experience become a virtual study abroad.

Phone (Calling cards)

"Phoning home" from a foreign country can be a complicated process. Calling collect is always an option, but usually quite expensive. **International Calling cards** - the most reasonable way to communicate between the country abroad and the U.S. may be through the use of an international calling card. Almost all of the U.S. long-distance telephone companies (AT&T, MCI and Sprint) have access codes for each country. It is highly recommended to obtain the access code of long distance companies before going abroad as it is very difficult to find this out while abroad. These numbers will connect you directly to an AT&T, Sprint or MCI English speaking operator and will be charged to your calling card. In some cases, the charge can also go on a credit card. Specific information about calling cards can be obtained by calling any of those long-distance carriers. Be sure to compare calling card rates; companies are interested in being competitive and will usually negotiate prices. Pre-paid calling cards may not work in some countries, so check with the provider if you are interested in using pre-paid services.

Most U.S. based cell phones do not work in Europe on their system unless they are GSM capable. Check on options for cell phone service for your host country. Short text messages sent from a cell phone may be a cheaper way to communicate internationally, provided the person you are messaging can receive text messages of his/her cell phone. Many phones abroad require phone cards instead of coins. The cards are inserted into a phone slot and debited as you place calls. You can purchase them at post offices and other locations for a fixed price. Students should avoid expensive calls from hotel phones; there is usually a surcharge, sometimes even when using international calling cards. Participants should verify the hotel charges for phone calls at the reception desk of the hotel they are staying at before they use the hotel phone! If students use a hotel phone, they should be prepared to pay the bill when they check out.

Students should remember to remind their family and friends at home that they may not have a phone immediately available. As a result they may not be able to phone you as soon as you arrive. When calling, do not forget about the time difference! A time that might be convenient for you may not be convenient for your family and friends. (Central European Time zone is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time zone.)

Fax

Faxing is a good alternative, as long as there is easy access to a fax machine at each end. Faxing is cheaper than long distance phone charges, but far more expensive than e-mail. Faxing gets around time zone disparities, meaning that what is sent can be read at the other end whenever it is convenient, which may not be when it arrives.

Health issues

Many places you will go have no special health concerns. Health-care systems and facilities in many European locations are quite similar to what you have in the United States. However, participants' health during their study abroad experience will depend on the choices they make and precautions that they take prior, during, and following their time overseas. There are no guarantees or absolutes with regard to health in any setting, especially an international one. Before they departure, everybody should make sure that they are in good health, get any immunizations that are required and learn as much as you can about the health and safety conditions in their host country.

Checkups

All participants should have a physical and dental checkup before they go, especially if they will be gone at a time when they would normally schedule these appointments. This will give them an opportunity to talk with their health care professionals about any general health precautions they should take.

Pre-existing Conditions (allergies)

If students have an ongoing medical problem, such as allergies or diabetes, they need to take special precautions in preparing for and managing your condition overseas. How will the stresses of the environment and the study abroad experience impact their health? If they have a disability, how will their needs be met?

If students have food allergies, please in form us in advance, as we will consider this when choosing menus for group meals.

Prescriptions

If students take prescription medications regularly, they should bring a supply to last throughout their time abroad, if practical. Foreign drugs are not necessarily closely related to those standard in the United States, even if they have the same chemical formula. They may be marketed under different names and may not be available in the strengths one desires. It might be wise to also have a letter from a home physician or pharmacist describing one's medicines, their dosage, a generic name for them and describing the condition being treated. This letter could be helpful in an emergency.

Participants should make sure all drugs are in the original pharmacy containers and are clearly labeled. They should carry copies of the prescriptions to avoid problems with Customs. In the case of narcotic medicines, it may not be prudent to carry additional supplies because of possible Customs difficulties. In that case, they should bring a prescription with the drug's generic name.

If students are diabetic or have another medical condition in which a syringe is needed to administer medication, they should bring a supply of disposable syringes. These are not available in all countries, and are essential to protect themselves against HIV, hepatitis, and other communicable illnesses. Even if they do not routinely inject medication, it is a good idea to bring a few disposable syringes if they will be studying in a country where they are not available, in the event that they need an injection. Some countries, however, restrict the import of syringes - as well as certain medications and contraceptives. Before departure, these students should find out of this applies to their host country.

For certain conditions such as diabetes, asthma, mild epilepsy, or allergy to penicillin, it would be wise to wear a tag or a bracelet or carry a card to identify the condition so that the student can be treated properly. Students should take an extra pair of eyeglasses and/or contact lenses if they wear them. They should bring along extra contact lens solution too. They should not pack their medications in their checked luggage. They should better pack them in their carry on so as not to be without them if their luggage gets lost.

Emotional and Mental Health

Emotionally and mentally, international living can be stressful. Most travelers will experience a degree of culture shock during the normal adjustment period. Culture shock causes feelings of disorientation and unease which can be intensified for students dealing with ongoing unresolved emotional or medical issues. It is thus very important that students with such problems discuss these with you, mental health providers, or other trained medical personnel before leaving. Once on site, there our staff available to help you through the adjustment cycle.

Nutrition

Participants should be aware that they will probably experience a change in their diet and eating habits. They may start eating a healthier diet, as people in most countries do not eat as much processed food nor drink as many caffeinated and sweetened beverages as Americans do. It is customary in many countries to eat more grains, fresh fish, fruits, vegetables, etc. Before your group leaves, they should try to learn more about the foods eaten and the eating habits of their host country. These are an integral part of the culture.

Medical Kit

Everybody should be prepared for minor health problems with a home medical kit.

This should include: bandages, gauze, and adhesive tape, sterile cleansers, antibacterial cream, painkillers, anti-diarrhea medicine, insect repellent (for any warm climate).

Family Emergencies

Students should discuss with their family what they will do in the event of a family emergency, illness or death. It is much easier to have these conversations around the kitchen table prior to departure than in an intercontinental phone call in the midst of a crisis.

Travel & Health Insurance

It is extremely important for all participants of a study abroad program to have adequate international travel and health insurance before traveling abroad. Very affordable luggage, accident and health insurance can be booked for an additional fee through CEPA Europe. If you would like to book this insurance package for your group or just some of the participants, please let us know. We will take care of arranging for the insurance and handling all claims for you.

Learning about your host country

Language

One possibility to familiarize yourself with the culture of your host country is to learn some of their language. Please encourage your students to practice some phrases in the language of the countries you will visit. "Hello, goodbye, thank you and please" are the most important words you should know in your host country's language.

Students can find many translation charts online with common phrases, food and menu translations, and pronunciation on the Internet. Students should not be afraid to make mistakes they do not need to speak the foreign language fluently. For example, a simple "Bonjour" at the beginning of a conversation with a French person in France will sometimes do wonders.

Preparing to be "the American" Abroad

As students deepen their learning about a new culture, they should also be aware that in a foreign environment they will occasionally be put in the position of being a spokesperson about the United States and American culture. News accounts of happenings in the U.S. or foreign policy that moves around the world will cause some of their foreign friends and contacts to ask them searching questions.

Students should ask themselves if they are sure they know enough about their own country. After returning home, many study abroad students often remark on how they sometimes had a difficult time explaining the history, politics, and culture of the United States when pressed by their friends, much less in an academic classroom. They say they wish they had done some boning up on American history and looked at their own cultural values more critically before they went abroad. What are the American values? Will your students be able to describe the characteristics of the American people to someone overseas - your social structures, your political system? They should be prepared with some answers!

Are your students Swedish-American, Mexican-American, German-American, or just American? How do they identify themselves? Whoever they are, however they define themselves, they will bring with them some amount of "cultural baggage" wherever they go. Cultural baggage can be defined as the assumptions you have about yourself, your family, friends and the world based on your own experience. Cultural baggage can weigh you down at times, but it can also be used as a resource to help you through uncomfortable situations. To understand your own cultural baggage will help all participants in the quest to understand someone else's.

How to Handle Anti-American Criticism - Avoid becoming defensive

You sometimes cannot help becoming defensive - you are, after all, an American. Try to avoid becoming defensive as much as possible. Keep an open mind, and remember to try and understand your critic's motives.

Strategies for Responding to Anti-American Criticism

There is no one right or wrong way to respond to attacks made against the United States or yourself for being American. You will have your own method for dealing with confrontation based on your experiences, your way of dealing with conflict, and your opinions. You may choose to take an active role, and respond to the questions or accusations, or you may choose to take a passive role and not say anything in response. As you begin to respond to any criticism; keep the following strategies in mind.

Draw upon personal experiences

When someone asks you a question like, "Why are Americans so wasteful of natural resources", your first response might be to say: "Oh, not me." Whether or not the question is based on fact, one way to respond might be to draw on your own experiences and observations. In this case, you can say that while you cannot speak for the rest of the American population, you have your own personal practices, such as recycling, water conservation or use of public transportation.

Arrival and Orientation

Immigration and Customs

When your plane lands in your host country, immigration officials will ask about the purpose of their visit and how long they propose to stay in their country. They will examine your passports, as well as visa and immunization certificates if they are required. They may then stamp your passport, and you are free to enter the country. Depending on local practice, as well as sometimes as the season and time of your arrival, this procedure can range from being quick and cursory to laborious and time-consuming. Even though you will be eager to exit the airport and start your study abroad adventure, it is important to be patient and respond very politely to any questions.

After Immigration, comes Customs. You will be asked to declare (perhaps in writing) if you are carrying certain items in your luggage. Be sure to declare any restricted items, as luggage may be opened and checked. Always be respectful and polite. Never make jokes about bombs or illegal drugs. This kind of behavior can get you detained by the police.

Jet lag

When you arrive in Europe you will probably experience jet lag. What causes jet lag? The most important factor in jet lag is how many time zones you cross, and traveling east seems to be worst for most people. Jet lag occurs when you cross over a number of time zones and disrupt the normal 'circadian' rhythms which help you wake up in the morning and go to sleep at night - your 'body clock'. If you have a rigid routine, it is likely that you might suffer more than someone who adapts easily to change.

The symptoms of jet lag can include fatigue or exhaustion, a feeling of disorientation or fuzziness, and the inability to sleep. You may also feel dehydrated from being stuck in an air-conditioned cabin for hours, which in turn can cause headaches, make your skin dry and make you more susceptible to colds or viruses.

Everybody has his/her own method of trying to combat jet lag, find here some helpful ways to counteract jet lag:

- change your watch as soon as you get on the flight, the quicker you adapt to the time zone the lower level of jet lag is likely
- when you arrive spend some time outside during daylight hours. Natural light can help cue your body clock
- try to adjust your bedtime and mealtimes to the new, local timetable as soon as possible it can help to schedule commitments at times when you are likely to have maximum energy: in the evenings, after flying east, or in the mornings, after flying west
- the impact of alcohol on the body can be two to three times more potent when you are flying, so one glass of wine in-flight has the effect of two to three glasses on the ground. Avoid feeling even worse with a hangover by reducing alcohol intake before and during your flight
- get as much exercise as you can. Walking up and down the aisle, rotating your ankles and doing gentle stretching exercises in your seat can help to reduce discomfort, and allow you to have a more relaxed flight
- during extended stopovers on a long-haul flight, try to grab a shower: it can really wake up your circulation and get things moving

When you arrive at your destination try to stay awake until it is time to go to sleep in the context of the destination time, not your home time. Eat meals that match the destination daily cycle, not your home cycle. For example when I arrive in Berlin in the morning, eat breakfast, such as is available and stay awake until bedtime Berlin time.

On-site orientation

If it is included in your program, we usually arrange for a CEPA coordinator to meet your group at the airport and transport you by private bus to your first accommodation – directly or with a planned stop-over on your way. Upon your arrival at your first accommodation e.g. Château de Pourtalès in Strasbourg we will provide a first orientation for your group to inform you about the local site and your upcoming study abroad trip. The topics that will be covered during this orientation vary according to your first destination, your itinerary and the length of your stay in Europe.

Traveling as a group

Student diversity

As your group may consist of students that have never seen each other before, they should be aware that they have different backgrounds: different family backgrounds, different university levels, different fields of studies and different attitudes and values etc. Everybody needs to respect and help everybody while traveling together as a group. Sometimes it can happen that students have to participate in an activity they do not like, but the majority of group does. To make the best out of your group experience your group decisions should stand above individual decisions and be always be in favor of the group. Nevertheless, there will be enough free time for your students to do individual activities.

You should be aware that no two students studying abroad ever have quite the same experience, even in the same program and country. This same variety is true for students of color and those from U.S. minority ethnic or racial backgrounds. Reports from past participants vary from those who felt exhilarated by being free of the American context of race relations, to those who experienced different degrees of 'innocent' curiosity about their ethnicity, to those who felt they met both familiar and new types of ostracism and prejudice and had to learn new coping strategies. This is just an example how different your students could be.

Faculty leader Roles and Responsibilities

Before you leave the U.S. it is important that you adhere to all program deadlines as deposit and payment for transportation, accommodation, and facilities overseas are often made well in advance. With this in mind your cooperation is needed in order to provide us with accurate participant lists to companies and organizations that will provide services to your group during your trip.

While abroad, keep in mind that traveling requires organization and coordination. Schedule trips, movement at airports, and other areas concerning travel arrangements will often necessitate certain regimentation. Students are required to cooperate, realizing that it is imperative to follow your directions or CEPA coordinators at such time.

It is important that your role and responsibilities are clear to yourself and to your students before your trip starts.

The efforts of you, as the faculty leader are the single largest determining factor in the success or failure of a study abroad program. Being a faculty leader requires a tremendous commitment of time and effort before and during the trip. A successful faculty leader must enjoy working with students and possess strong administrative skills. You should be comfortable in providing basic student counseling and in taking disciplinary action, if necessary. In addition, it would be good if you are familiar with the host country and its culture, and have a basic understanding of the native language. If not, it is no problem as you will have a CEPA coordinator with you (if booked), who will coordinate your group during your trip.

You should have ultimate authority to make decisions regarding students and instructors in the program during the time that the group is abroad. You will have significantly more authority and responsibility than you would at the home campus.

You are mainly responsible for the following areas while overseas:

Academic: Overseeing the academic portion of the program.

Societal/Administrative: Serving as an arbiter in disputes or disagreements involving students, faculty and locals and trying to solve problems to the furthest extent possible.

While the group is abroad, you should be prepared to be essentially "on call" around the clock. If this seems a bit over stated, it is important to keep a few thoughts in mind: Some students who participate in the program have never traveled outside the country. Some may never have been on an airplane. There will be many situations which they will be facing for the first time in their lives, including homesickness, culture shock and communicating with people from other countries.

Ordinarily, while on campus, professors do not have to concern themselves with the welfare of their students outside the classroom. This situation changes dramatically abroad. It is important to understand that you could be held legally liable for any misfortune that befalls a student during group excursion that was organized as part of the trip. The parents of some students also have the expectation that you are providing a great deal of hand-holding and personal attention to the students.

You are not expected to be able to watch over the students like a parent or to anticipate all possible problems. However, it is important that students know how to reach you at all times during the length of the program in the event of an emergency.

While almost all study abroad trips run smoothly, real emergencies have occurred. Some examples include serious illness and accidents that required students to leave the program early or a death in the family of a student abroad. This information is not provided to discourage you leading a study abroad program, but provided as examples to illustrate that there is an enormous difference teaching abroad and at home. You should be prepared and willing to take on this added responsibility. You should have emergency contacts of your students, so that you can contact their family in case of an emergency.

Students should have the feeling that they can always come to you when they have a problem of any kind. Even before departure, students will have questions ranging from “how do I register for classes” to “what is the weather like”, a balance must be reached where sufficient support is provided while fostering an atmosphere in which students can develop independence and self confidence.

Our CEPA coordinators will be more than happy to assist you with any problems that may occur with your student group. On the other hand we would be very thankful, if you would assist our staff when needed. A good team work during your study abroad trip will guarantee be a good experience for your students.

Itinerary

About 2 weeks before you depart to Europe, CEPA will send you the final itinerary for your program. All institutions, companies, museums, cities and sites you will visit during your stay are included in the itinerary so that your students can prepare themselves. Especially when they visit companies and institutions it would be got for them to do some research in advance. The itinerary includes your daily schedules and activities along with information on what to wear and what to bring for a special activity. National holidays are also listed in the itinerary as they occur, as in Europe most stores are closed on holidays and life is a little bit different from usual working days.

Emergency contacts of the hotels you will be staying at, of CEPA employees and offices as well the mobile phone numbers of your CEPA coordinator will be stated on the itinerary. Therefore we suggest that you have it with you at all times during the trip, not only to know what will happen next, but also to know whom to contact in case of an emergency. Please note that the itinerary is still subject to change during the program due to last minute changes not under our control. Your CEPA coordinator will discuss the changes with you before your students are informed.

Timing / Punctuality

Your itinerary might be really busy on some days. Since you do not want to miss out on anything from your guided tour, to the start of your company visit, it is important that everyone in your group is always punctual at meeting places arranged by CEPA coordinators or yourself. Also it is not really nice of an individual person to keep a whole group waiting before they can move on with the itinerary.

Free time

Our itineraries allow students free time to spend as they wish. They may use the time for some practical things like exchanging money, buying food and beverages for the next excursion, eating lunch and dinner, writing emails to family and friends etc. They could also do some sight seeing in the city they are actually in or they could do some shopping. At the Château de Pourtalès in Strasbourg they would also have the opportunity to participate in some sports: jogging, biking, inline skating, boules or beach volleyball.

If they have a free day or weekend they have the option to visit another European city on their own. Your on-site CEPA coordinator will be more than happy to help advise you about some possible options. Students will gain more self-confidence when traveling and solving problems alone. But when you are staying in a big city e.g. Berlin, London or Paris, we suggest due to security reasons to advise your students to always stay together in pairs or small groups.

You could also use the free time to give your students a lecture or a project to work on in order to fulfill your academic responsibility of the study abroad trip.

Adult behavior - all students are considered adults

We expect all participants on our programs to take full responsibility for their actions and conduct during the program.

- Respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and CEPA employees.
- Observe and obey university rules, the laws the United States of America, as well as the laws of your host country
- Responsible to recognize your and our university's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning
- Responsible for their own health, safety and behavior while participating in the program

Students need to be made aware of the consequences for their actions.

Cultural adjustment and exploration

Living and learning overseas successfully usually means adjustment to a different lifestyle, food, climate, and time zone, often accompanied by the necessity of learning to communicate in a foreign language. This process is never easy and can include mood swings alternating between heady exhilaration and mild depression. At the beginning, participants will probably feel excited about their new experiences and environment. Soon, they may find the excitement of new surroundings and sensations increasingly replaced by frustration with how different things are from home.

What is culture?

Culture...

- influences our expectations of what is appropriate or inappropriate
- is learned
- reflects the values of a society
- frames our experience
- provides us with patterns of behavior, thinking, feeling and interacting

In summary, culture affects every aspect of daily life - how we think and feel - how we learn and teach - or what we consider beautiful or ugly.

However, most people are unaware of their own culture until they experience another! In fact, we do not usually think about our culture until somebody violates a culturally based expectation or we find ourselves in a situation where we have the feeling that we violated somebody else's cultural expectations, but are uncertain how.

Culture Shock

Going abroad requires that participants of our study abroad programs adjust to the same sorts of things as if they would move to another part of the United States: being away from family and friends, living in an unfamiliar environment, meeting new people, adjusting to a different climate, and so on. These changes alone could cause high stress levels, but everybody will also be going through cultural adjustments and may experience "culture shock."

In another cultural context, participants will often find that their everyday "normal" behavior becomes "abnormal". The unspoken rules of social interaction are different, and the attitudes and behavior that characterize life in the United States are not necessarily appropriate in the host country. These "rules" concern not only language differences, but also such wide-ranging matters such as family structure, faculty-student relationships, friendships, gender and personal relations.

Culture shock can be defined as "a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcement from one's own culture, to new culture stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences" (Peter Adler). It can also be defined as the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar (R. Michael Paige). However, experts feel the name "culture shock" is misleading because it makes us think of a single moment of shock rather than the more accurate idea that culture shock evolves over a longer period of time and involves mixed emotions. Although a culture can be shocking at times, the reaction to differences is usually more subtle because it is the accumulation of many experiences in a new culture that forms our opinions. For this reason, many experts in this field prefer the term "culture fatigue."

The phrase "culture shock" was coined by Cora DuBois in 1951. Kalvero Obert, the first to systematically define and study culture shock, described it as being cut off from your own cultural cues.

"These signs and cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life – when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people; when and how to give tips; how to make purchases; when to accept a date and when to refuse invitations; when to take statements seriously and when not."

Symptoms can include depression, sleeping difficulties, homesickness, trouble concentrating, an urge to isolate yourself, and irritation with your host culture.

Even if participants are used to being away from your family, they may still have problems. After all, they are now away from everything that's familiar. There are numerous ways to combat these feelings of disorientation until they pass (as they usually do).

There is almost no way to avoid culture shock completely, everybody should try to accept it as something everyone goes through. Keep in mind that students returning from study abroad programs often describe working their way through culture shock as a necessary maturing experience, something that provided insight into their own cultural assumptions.

Survival strategies

Recognizing the existence of one's vulnerability to culture shock will certainly ease some of the strain, but there are also several short-term strategies one can use beforehand as well as on-site when you recognize culture shock and are faced with the challenge of adjustment.

Here are some strategies you can give to your students:

- **Become more familiar with the local language**
Independent study in the local language should facilitate your transition. Continue your study of the foreign language until your departure. Do not become so concerned with the grammar and technicalities of a language that you are afraid to speak once you are abroad. Do not worry about words coming out wrong, use the language! Do not forget, "practice makes perfect"!
- **Know your own country**
You will find that people around the world often know far more about the United States and its policies than you do. Whether or not you are familiar with current events, particularly foreign policy, expect to be asked about your opinions and to hear the opinions of others. Start preparing now by reading newspapers and news magazines.
- **Examine your motives for going**
Although you will certainly do some traveling while you are abroad, remember that your program is not an extended vacation. Set realistic academic goals. Reduce your expectations or simplify your goals in order to avoid disappointment or disillusion, but do not forget to study!
- **Recognize the value of culture shock**
Culture shock 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.
- **Expect to feel depressed sometimes**
Homesickness is natural, especially if you have never been away from home. Remember that your family and friends would not have encouraged you to go if they did not want you to gain the most from this experience. Do not let thoughts of home occupy you to the point that you are incapable of enjoying the exciting new culture that surrounds you. Think of all you will share with your family and friends when you return home.
- **Expect to feel frustrated and angry at times**
You are bound to have communication problems when you are not using your native language or dialect. Even if they speak English in your host country, communication may be difficult! Moreover, people will do things differently in your new home, and you will not always think their way is as good as yours. Once you accept that nothing you do is going to radically change the different cultural practices, you will save yourself real frustration. Remember that you are the foreigner and a guest in the other culture.
- **Expect to hear criticism of the United States**
If you educate yourself on U.S. politics and foreign policies, you will be more prepared to handle these discussions as they occur. Remember that such criticism of U.S. policies is not personal. Do not be afraid to argue if you feel so inclined. Most foreign nationals are very interested in the U.S. and may know more about U.S. politics than you do.
- **Talk to someone if you have a serious problem**
CEPA staff is near at hand to counsel students with serious problems. He/she has first-hand experience with adjustment abroad and can be a real friend in times of need. Share smaller problems with other students since they are going through the same process and can provide a day-to-day support group.
- **Keep your sense of humor**
Almost all returned study abroad students have wonderful stories about how much fun they had during their time abroad. If you have a terrible, frustrating day abroad, remember that it will pass. Time has a way of helping us remember the good times and turning those horrible times into fascinating stories!
- **Write a journal**
One of the best ways to deal with cultural adjustments and to reflect thoughtfully on the differences between U.S. and the other cultures is to regularly write a journal. As you write, you will think your way out of the negative reactions that may result from your unfamiliarity with language and cultural behavior. Journaling will force you to make meaningful comparisons between your own culture and the host country. When you return home you will have more than just memories, souvenirs, and photos of your time abroad; you will have a written record of your changing attitudes and process of learning about the foreign culture.

Here is a practical strategy for those students, who face a cultural problem when abroad:

One of the effective ways to combat culture shock is to step back from a given event that one's has bothered, assess it, and search for an appropriate explanation and response.

Students should try the following:

- Observe how others are acting in the same situation
- Describe the situation, what it means to you and your response to it
- Ask a local resident or someone with extensive experience how they would have handled the situation and what it means in the host culture. Learn as much as you can from them.
- Share your experiences with other American students, as they have to handle the same situations abroad.
- Plan how you might act in this or similar situation in future
- Test the new behavior and evaluate how well it works
- Decide how you can apply what you have learned the next time you find yourself in a similar situation
- **Be open-minded and flexible!!!**

Fitting in and Being Accepted

Studying abroad is an invaluable experience – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live in a foreign country, to learn its customs and culture, and to adapt to new surroundings. The success of one's experience depends upon one's own efforts to acclimate oneself to living and studying in a foreign culture. Participants will have moments of exhilaration and moments of real frustration. Gradually, as they come to terms with the culture, the frustrations will become fewer and fewer.

One of the greatest benefits of living in a foreign country is an added depth of appreciation and understanding of U.S. culture. The insights everybody will gain into themselves and their native culture will be of immeasurable value.

In adjusting to their study abroad environment, they will have to deal with real as well as perceived cultural differences. They should keep in mind that people of other cultures are just as adept at stereotyping the U.S. American as they are at stereotyping them - and the results are not always complimentary. The following, for example, are a few of the qualities (some positive, some negative) that others frequently associate with the "typical" U.S. American:

outgoing and friendly, informal, loud, boastful, immature, hardworking, extravagant and wasteful
sure to have all answers, lacking in class consciousness, wealthy, politically naïve

While a stereotype might have some grain of truth, it is obvious when we consider individual differences that not every U.S. American fits this description. Participants should keep in mind that this same thing is true about their hosts vis-à-vis their own preconceptions. Remember that all participants are an ambassador for your university and the United States. They should avoid falling into any of the "ugly American" categories.

The study abroad experience of all participants will be heightened if they try as much as possible to become part of the local social environment. In the beginning, it is perhaps wise to behave like a guest, as indeed they are. For a while they may even be accorded a special status, that of a well-meaning (but not-quite-with-it!) outsider. But as time goes on, they will want to be able to behave in ways similar to that of the local students and citizens - and others will begin to expect such behavior of them. This means learning what behavior is and is not appropriate in this new setting, and acting accordingly. Everybody should observe local students in their dormitory, on campus, on the street. It is often best to dress conservatively by local standards, so they cannot be identified on sight as a tourist or U.S. Citizen. It is fine to ask questions about local customs and ways of behaving. In fact, people will appreciate that they are trying to learn about the host culture and lifestyle, and are likely to help them adjust.

In some countries more than others, there is an unflattering stereotype of an American tourist, one who throws money around, drinks too much, is loud and rude, expects all foreigners to speak English, thinks the United States is better than any other country, and is always in a hurry. There are other countries in which all Americans are seen as happy, cheerful, carefree, and above all rich. Locals in your host country may assume parts or all of this to be true about your group, simply because you are from the United States. Remember that their images of what 'Americans' are like are based on the other Americans they have seen, if not in person, then indirectly through our movies and media. Such is the nature of stereotyping. The challenge is to go beyond misleading images and false impressions, so that your group and they can be yourselves, and mutual understanding can deepen.

Learning and Respecting Local Customs

'When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do' is not legal counsel, but rather seasoned advice to newcomers. Certain ways of acting in a country not your own affront local custom and show ignorance or disrespect, or both to local citizens. In many countries, for example, women traditionally cover certain parts of the body, such as the head, arms, and legs. In others, it is frowned on for couples to hold hands or display other types of physical affection in public. Most countries have customs associated with religion and sacred places. In certain Islamic societies, non-Muslims may not enter sacred sites. In Thailand, Buddhist monks must carry out an elaborate purification ritual if a woman touches them, including sitting next to them on a bus!

Understanding local customs will help to feel as a part of the new culture and avoid potentially embarrassing situations. Especially if someone is not fluent in the local language, the body language is often what expresses oneself. Saying hello or goodbye via a simple hand gesture is, for example, done quite differently from place to place, even within Europe. When to shake hands or kiss is signaled between people in different ways from country to country. How close to sit or stand when talking also varies greatly. These are just a few of the many simple habits for your group to learn and then follow in order not to give unintended offense.

Discrimination

CEPA Europe values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. CEPA is committed to the principles of equal opportunity, nondiscrimination and affirmative action. University and study abroad programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, political persuasion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, height, weight, veteran status, or age.

Although discrimination is illegal in many countries, it still occurs. If students believe they are being discriminated against, they should know, that they can always discuss it with you, the faculty leader, or our staff. Discrimination is built on negative stereotypes and prejudices that are influenced by a variety of factors, including the media. Although these attitudes may be frustrating at times, students should remember that one of the main reasons for their participation in study abroad is to learn about other cultures. This includes both the positive and negative aspects. What they perceive as a discriminatory act or remark may not necessarily be one in the context of the host culture, but rather a cultural difference.

Staying Healthy

Food

The food in your host country is almost guaranteed to be different from what you are used to back home and that is great because food is one of the best ways to learn about a new culture. However, in many places, the local diet may be based on meat, entirely vegetarian, very spicy, or just "odd" by U.S. standards. So while your stomach is still adjusting, you may wish to include some familiar foods in your diet. Look around for fruits, vegetable, and foods that you would eat at home. You are likely to find restaurants that serve familiar foods in major cities and tourist areas. The point is that gradual adjustment and adaptation to the local diet makes the best social and usually nutritional sense.

Can/should you drink the tap water?

In most Western European countries, the water quality is quite good. For example, the crystal blue mountain lakes and streams above the Swiss villages provide some of the best drinking water you could ever get. One should note that although the tap water is generally safe to drink in Europe, it is not common and usually not socially acceptable. Europeans stick to their Evian and bottled water which is sometimes with or without carbonation, depending on which country you visit. "When in Rome, do as the Romans"

Alcohol consumption

The legal drinking age in most European countries is 18, which is much lower than in the U.S. The percentage of alcohol is also much higher in most European beer brands and wine is often drunk at meals more than soda pop. So as your provider in Europe, we expect you and your students to act responsibly and not to abuse the use of alcohol during your stay at one of our study centers or during your study abroad trip. Drink responsibly and be a good cultural representative of your nationality.

Drug use

Drug use is strictly forbidden and will result in immediate expulsion from the study abroad program. Students will be asked to return home immediately at their own cost.

Staying Safe

When thinking about safety around the world, it is important to have a balanced perspective. Safety is a global, national, regional, and local consideration. As Americans have come to realize, the U.S. is no more immune to acts of crime or violence than other parts of the world.

While no study abroad program can offer an absolute guarantee that students will be safe, there are any steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of becoming injured, or a victim of crime, abroad. We encourage all students and their parents to be familiar with the following safety suggestions in order to better prepare themselves in the case of health or safety challenges abroad.

Dangers exist at study abroad locations, just as they do on or near U.S. college campuses. Problems can occur if and when students fail to take the same precautions abroad as they would at home. The best way to maximize your safety while studying abroad is to be aware of conditions that affect safety in your host country and any countries you plan to travel to; then adjust your behavior so that you take normal safety measures.

Students can also receive general information by following the international news in newspapers and on all-news television channels such as CNN, though this is often sensationalized and does not accord with local accounts. Safety information on all countries is available from knowledgeable sources such as the U.S. State Department.

The most important factor in your safety abroad is likely to be your behavior. It is wise to do the following:

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Do not wander through unfamiliar areas alone, and always remain alert.
- Do not go out alone at night. Even when you are with friends, stick to well-lit streets where there are a lot of people.
- Do not flash jewelry, expensive cameras, or electronic equipment.
- Use caution when walking or jogging. Remember that in some countries, drivers use the left side of the road. In certain areas, drivers may not expect anyone to be running along the road.
- When crossing streets, keep in mind that pedestrians may not be given the right of way.
- Be careful with alcohol. If you drink, make sure it is only with people you know and trust, and designate one person to remain sober. As in the United States, never drink and drive. Drunk driving laws abroad are sometimes much more severe than those in the United States.
- Do not attract attention to yourself with provocative or expensive clothing or boisterous conversation in public. Observe local students' behavior, and try to mimic it.
- Use only official taxis. Unless meters are used, agree on the fare before you get in.
- Before you travel from your program site, find out what methods of transportation are safest and whether any roads should be avoided.
- Stay away from demonstrations or any kind of civil disturbances. Even innocent bystanders can be hurt or arrested.
- Protect your passport. Keep it with you, in a front pocket or your purse. Be careful when displaying it.
- In general, avoid being engulfed in a crowd. This is the preferred environment of pickpockets.
- Accidents can happen anywhere. If driving, know what local traffic laws are and follow them. Always use a seat-belt. Make sure you understand local road signs and signals.
- Remain alert when walking. Before crossing streets, remember to look both ways; in some countries, traffic will be coming from the opposite direction from what you would expect.

Document safety

Participants should leave all credit cards, keys, and other items not needed during your travels at home. Make photocopies of valuable and irreplaceable documents and maintain an "emergency file" at home containing: airline ticket, passport, traveler's checks, driver's license, blood type, eyeglass prescription, name of doctor and dentist, supplemental insurance policies, and the credit cards they are taking abroad. They should leave one set at home and keep another with them in a separate place from the originals.

Family or friends should have a copy of your group's itinerary and contact information at home. Never pack your passport or any other important documents in your checked-in luggage or your carry-on luggage. Passports including visa page, credit cards, and money should be worn in a pouch or a money belt as close to your body as possible. If your passport is lost or stolen abroad, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance.

Obeying the law

Students should be aware of how foreign laws and how they will apply. When they arrive in another country, they are subject to the laws of that country, and they are no longer protected by the laws and rights to which they are accustomed in the United States.

Please advise your students to the following:

When you visit another country, you are that country's guest and are expected to follow its laws. Do not make the mistake of assuming that other countries will excuse illegal acts simply because you are a foreigner or a student. Even "minor" infractions can lead to severe penalties. Breaking the law will, at a minimum, get you dismissed from your study abroad program and possibly deported from your host country. U.S. embassies and consulates are able to offer only limited assistance to U.S. visitors who break laws. If you are arrested, they can contact your family and provide you with a list of local attorneys. They can visit you in prison to see that you are being treated humanely. They cannot, however, provide free legal assistance or money for bail. Most importantly, they cannot get you out of jail.

Try to understand the cultural context of these laws and regulations. If you disagree with them, it's fine to discuss your feelings with other participants in your program. You may also want to write about objectionable conditions in your journal. However, be careful about discussing your feelings with your coordinator or locals, until you know their views and the cultural context better. They may well be embarrassed and angry to listen to someone criticize their country and culture. If you object so



strongly to local laws or customs that you do not think you can follow them, it may be advisable to choose a different country to for your study abroad program. Talk to your study abroad advisor in the early stages of your planning.

Study abroad is one of the best ways that college and university students can learn about other cultures and citizens of the rest of the world. By spending a year, semester, or even just a short time abroad, students can learn about new languages, ideas, and philosophies of others. Studying abroad affords students the opportunity to be ambassadors; they can set an example, help break down stereotypes and prejudice, and learn while living with others. However, the personal growth available through study abroad comes with personal challenges and openness.

**We wish you and your students a great experience and
we are looking forward to welcoming you in Europe!**

Your CEPA Europe Team

Disclaimer

As a convenience to you and your students who are first and foremost as our guests/customers in Europe, we have tried our very best to present as much practical information as possible as an aid to prepare for your upcoming study abroad program in Europe. We hope you can understand that we can not make any guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the information, materials or resources in this handbook nor can we be held in any way responsible, either directly or indirectly for the consequences which may or may not arise from information contained in this handbook. Thank you for your understanding.

Last updated: March 2010