



# Family Orientation Guide

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# welcome

## WELCOME TO THE ISA FAMILY

As your student embarks on their study abroad experience, they will be surrounded by an experienced team of professionals to provide support throughout the study abroad process. We are pleased to introduce you to our ISA team as well as the roles we play in your student's adventure. Through our combined personal and academic travels, we have gained an understanding of the challenges and rewards of going abroad and we look forward to making every student's study abroad experience a success.

## PRE-DEPARTURE CONTACTS

**SITE SPECIALIST:** This person has specific knowledge of the program and host city. The Site Specialist knows the ins and outs of the program academics, housing, visa procedures, host city, local culture, transportation, safety and security.

**PROGRAM MANAGER:** This person oversees the admissions and acceptance process. The Program Manager processes applications, reviews forms and important documents, handles payments and advises on the use of financial aid (if applicable).

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR:** This person visits campuses across the country, meets students at study abroad fairs and communicates with institutional contacts.

**HOME INSTITUTION CONTACT:** During planning and participating in an ISA study abroad program, your student will be in contact with many people outside of ISA. These contacts can include home institution study abroad advisors, financial aid counselors, registrar personnel, career services and professors. Communication with these people is vital for a successful study abroad experience as they will be the ones to ensure credit transfer, coordinate funding and advise throughout the process.

## ON-SITE STAFF

ISA has a full-time resident staff, on location, that is in constant contact with the ISA US Offices. This team is available to your student for advice and support once abroad. They give students an in-depth orientation known as the Bridging Cultures Program (BCP), coordinate housing, work with our host institutions, hold weekly informational meetings, facilitate cultural activities and accompany students on excursions. They pretty much do it all! The resident staff is available for advising, information on the city or just to chat.

The Bridging Cultures Program (BCP) encompasses the ISA on-site orientation delivered to all students in the first days of their ISA program, with key improvements in areas related to goal setting, intercultural awareness, diversity and professional development. For a number of reasons, the first days that follow a student's arrival on site offer us some of the best opportunities to effectively transmit information to program participants. While the pre-departure orientations that students receive from ISA and their home universities are also important, students are typically more ready to focus on their study abroad experience when they arrive at their host country. The BCP is designed to help ISA make the most of this important opportunity to educate students, and give students the tools that will facilitate discovery and learning during their program. The BCP is an important introduction to a new culture, a new home and a new experience. The BCP is designed to prepare students for a successful, positive and rewarding experience that will influence the rest of their lives.

Again, welcome to the ISA family! Together, based on our collective experiences, we have created this ISA Family Orientation Guide to assist you in playing an active role in planning and executing a memorable study abroad program. This ISA Family Orientation Guide should be read with the understanding that every program and experience is unique. With this in mind, we hope it will serve to assist both you and your student through the various important phases of studying abroad.

"I can hardly find the words to say what it meant to feel assured that there was someone along the way who would be looking out for my daughter. One of the reasons she chose ISA for her study abroad program was she felt that your organization would provide good on-site support. She certainly chose wisely."

**Eileen W.,**  
Parent of Carnegie  
Mellon University  
Student

*The World Awaits...  
Discover It.*

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"I want to commend ISA as an organization and study abroad program. As a parent I have been so pleased with ISA. The whole experience has been very professional and excellent... the application process, the visa process, the initial meeting and travel that she had with your staff in Spain, the Málaga office, the excursions. There are many study abroad programs out there, but I've been glad to recommend ISA to a number of families already. We have had a wonderful experience and my daughter has had an incredible semester in Spain."

**Becky J.,**  
Parent of University  
of Northern  
Colorado Student

# keywords & symbols

## ISA KEYWORDS AND SYMBOLS

Below are common ISA resources that you will find referenced throughout this ISA Family Orientation Guide. Whenever you see one of the following symbols, use it as an indicator to reference the resource(s) noted to discover additional information about that section.

### SP ISA STUDENT PORTAL ACCOUNT

Upon submitting their application, your student will be provided with access to their personalized ISA Student Portal Account. This portal is comprised of two main sections: Student Record and Online Orientation.

The **STUDENT RECORD** section hosts details specific to your student's program, including ISA forms and documents that are required to be submitted by the final forms and payment due date. *For a sneak peak at the Student Record section of the ISA Student Portal, please reference page 7 of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.*

The **ONLINE ORIENTATION** section contains both general and site-specific orientation materials. General information will be available as soon as your student gains access to their ISA Student Portal Account. Site-specific details will become available following the final forms and payment due date.

### OO ISA SITE-SPECIFIC ONLINE ORIENTATION

This resource contains detailed information about customs, culture, transportation, food, communication and banking in your student's host city.

### V VIDEO

ISA Videos are available on our website and YouTube channel, and provide a visual guide to topics ranging from how to pack, how to stay fit while abroad, how to backpack on a budget and so much more!

# ISA website

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ISA WEBSITE

The ISA Website is an invaluable resource to both students and their families. While reading this guide, we recommend having the ISA Website open to use as a supplemental tool. In the top right hand corner of our website, you will find a very helpful search tool. Feel free to use this search tool to answer any questions that may come up, as our website includes a wealth of additional information. Start with a couple of the commonly used keywords below, and see what information you uncover!

### “ADDITIONAL ESTIMATED EXPENSES”

Learn about how much your student can expect to spend on items not included in the program price.

### “CONSULAR AND EMBASSY”

Links to the various embassy and consular websites your student should visit to learn about possible entry/visa requirements.

### “FINAL FORMS AND PAYMENT”

Explanation of application process and final forms and payment due dates for each program.

### “FINANCIAL AID”

Information about financial aid payment options and procedures.

### “HEALTH AND SAFETY”

Detailed information on our safety procedures, travel warnings and on-site support.

### “INSURANCE”

Contains a full description of the Blanket Accident & Sickness Policy provided to every ISA student.

### “PRICES AND DATES-(COUNTRY)”

Outlines the application, final forms and payment due dates, program dates and prices for programs in that country.

### “ALUMNI”

Information on re-entry, the status of transcripts and post-study abroad opportunities.

### “CANCELLATION POLICY”

Details regarding refunds and financial penalties in the event your student has to withdraw from the program.

### “PARENTS”

Links to FAQs, parent testimonials, and other helpful resources (such as a copy of this Family Orientation Guide).

"We want to thank you (ISA) for covering all of the details to the point where we felt calm & secure enough that our daughter, who was traveling to your program alone, was going to be in great hands. You respectfully & immediately got back with us regarding all of our concerns with safety, housing, flights, airport pick ups, visas, etc...no question was too much to be addressed.."

**Nina A.,**  
Parent of University  
of North Florida  
Student

# student portal

## SNAPSHOT OF APPLICATION MATERIALS SECTION OF ISA STUDENT PORTAL

Upon submitting their application, the student will receive an email from ISA within 2-3 business days with login details for their ISA Student Portal. The email will contain a temporary password that is only valid for 5 days, so we encourage students to log on as soon as possible. From here, students will have access to a list containing all required application materials, instructions on how to submit application materials and when these application materials are received by ISA.



Student Details

Program Overview

Application Materials

Family Guide

FAQ

Photo Contest

Video Contest

Geenounce

### Form & Document Upload

Some forms may be submitted online instantly. Others will need to be printed, completed, scanned and uploaded to your account or mailed to our office. Please refer to the instructions provided below and by clicking on the link associated to each document. Contact your Program Manager with any questions.

**\*\*Please note that forms will not show "received" in your account until they have been processed. This may take approximately 2-3 business days following submission.**

### Application Materials

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">ISA Application Supplement Page - Upload Once Complete</a>	Required Submit Online	March 25, 2016	<a href="#">Upload Now</a>	Not Received
<a href="#">Passport Color Scan</a>	Required Submit Online	March 25, 2016	<a href="#">Upload Now</a>	Not Received
<a href="#">Passport Information &amp; Responsibilities</a>	Please Read			
<a href="#">Scholarship Opportunities</a>	Please Read			
<a href="#">Official Transcript</a>	Required - Mail In	March 25, 2016	Mail In	Yes

**ISA CREDIT VERIFICATION FORM**  
(Requires U.S. university advisor's signature)

**OPTIONAL ISA SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**  
(Not required for ISA program application)

**OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT**

### OTHER APPLICATION MATERIALS

- Passport
- Letter of recommendation (if applicable)
- Letter of intent (if applicable)
- References (if applicable)
- Photo
- Course selections (if applicable)

**CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR STUDENT'S ISA TEAM**

Florinapolis Site Specialist:  
Great for questions about academics, registration, housing, the city, or visas.  
p: 612.480.8522  
**Site Specialist**  
[sitespecialist@studiesabroad.com](mailto:sitespecialist@studiesabroad.com)

Florinapolis Program Manager:  
Great for questions about admissions, paperwork, deadlines, and payment.  
p: 612.480.8522  
**Program Manager**  
[programmanager@studiesabroad.com](mailto:programmanager@studiesabroad.com)

Florinapolis Resident Director:  
On-site contact for students once program begins.  
**Resident Director**  
[residentdirector@studiesabroad.com](mailto:residentdirector@studiesabroad.com)

## SNAPSHOT OF FORMS & DOCUMENTS SECTION OF ISA STUDENT PORTAL



### HOME

- Urgent Notes
- Student Record
- Online Orientation
- Language proficiency exam (if applicable)

### STUDENT DETAILS

- Passport information
- Home university
- Student status
- Student contact information

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Program details
- Program dates
- Account Status
- Final forms and payment deadline
- Flight itinerary

### PAYMENT & CHARGES

- View invoice
- Make a payment with a debit/credit card
- Payment history
- Financial aid information (if applicable)
- Blank copy of Verification of Award (VOA)

### FORMS & DOCUMENTS

Complete/view all forms that need to be submitted for the program

### FINAL PACKETS

Housing and final arrival information (will be available 2-4 weeks prior to departure)

### FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

#### Student Details

- Program Overview
- Application Materials
- Payments & Charges
- Forms & Documents**
- Family Guide
- Final Packet
- FAQ

#### Free New York Times

- Digital Subscription
- Photo Contest
- Video Contest
- Goenounce

[Trouble downloading forms? →](#)

#### Form & Document Upload

Some forms may be submitted online instantly. Others will need to be printed, completed, scanned and uploaded to your account or mailed to our office. Please refer to the instructions provided below and by clicking on the link associated to each document. Contact your Program Manager with any questions.

\*\*Please note that forms will not show "received" in your account until they have been processed. This may take approximately 2-3 business days following submission.

Payment can be submitted via credit/debit in the Payments & Charges section of your portal, or you can mail a check to the address below:

ISA  
1112 W. Ben White Blvd  
Austin, TX 78704  
Ph: (512) 480-8522

\*A late fee of \$25/form, per week, may apply to paperwork received after Oct 15, 2015. Late payments are subject to a \$300 late fee. Please contact your ISA Program Manager to discuss any item not expected to be submitted by Oct 15, 2015.

#### Financial Aid

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Verification of Award (sign and GIVE to financial aid office) (Business, Hospitality, Design &amp; Liberal Arts, Florence, Spring 1 2016)</a>	Required Submit Online	Oct 15, 2015	<a href="#">Upload File</a>	★ Not Received
<a href="#">Instructions for Paying with Financial Aid</a>	Required			Yes

#### Payment

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Payment Methods</a>	Please Read			

#### Travel / Itinerary

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Travel Responsibility &amp; Release (SUBMIT with Flight Itinerary)</a>	Required Submit Online	Dec 26, 2015	<a href="#">Submit Now</a>	★ Not Received
<a href="#">Flight Itinerary (REVIEW How to Book Your Flight form)</a>	Required	Dec 26, 2015	<a href="#">Upload File</a>	Yes

Would you like to be contacted by STA Travel to discuss discount student airfare? [Contact Me!](#)

#### Visa

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Visa Information &amp; Responsibilities - Italy (IMPORTANT: Visa appointment required)</a>	Required			Yes

#### Academics

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Academic Records Policies &amp; Guidelines</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Verification of Course Enrollment Florence Spring</a>	Required Submit Online	Feb 6, 2016	<a href="#">Submit Now</a>	★ Not Received

\*\*In your student portal account you will also notice a Language Proficiency Test link. This practice proficiency test in no way determines your language placement and is only intended to provide you with the opportunity to practice taking a language proficiency test, and to receive grammatical and communicative feedback on your current Spanish language proficiency. If your program requires that you take a placement exam, this practice proficiency test is likely significantly different in format, but this practice proficiency test could still assist you in your preparation. ISA recommends you use the feedback from this practice test to help prepare for your host university's placement exam.

#### General

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Code of Conduct</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Disciplinary Verification Form (sign and GIVE to university to complete)</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Profile Photo (clear color photo of your face with clear background)</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Passport Color Scan</a>	Required Submit Online	Oct 15, 2015	<a href="#">Upload Now</a>	★ Not Received
<a href="#">With Acceptable Use Policy</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Program Contract - Florence Semester/Year 2016-2017</a>	Required Submit Online	Oct 15, 2015	<a href="#">Submit Now</a>	★ Not Received

#### Health & Medical

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Medical History (COMPLETE, then bring with Health Clearance form to doctor)</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Stresses of Study Abroad</a>	Please Read			
<a href="#">Description of Insurance Coverage</a>	Please Read			

#### Housing

FORM NAME	TYPE	DUE DATE	ACTION	RECEIVED
<a href="#">Housing Option Form - Florence</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Housing Questionnaire (Non-Homestay)</a>	Required			Yes
<a href="#">Apartment Contract - ISA</a>	Required			Yes

### VERIFICATION OF AWARD (VOA)

Must be filled out by student and university if using financial aid for program costs

### VISA

Important Visa documents to review (if available)

### TYPE OF DOCUMENT

Indicates whether form needs to be reviewed and submitted or just read

### DUE DATE

Indicates the date that forms need to be submitted by

### STATUS OF FORMS

Will read "Processing" once submitted by student, then "Yes" once accepted and reviewed by ISA staff

### INSURANCE

Description of coverage for insurance provided to all ISA students

# pre-departure timeline

## PRE-DEPARTURE STUDY ABROAD TIMELINE

The left side of this timeline will give you an idea of the overall pre-departure study abroad process and important steps along the way. The right side of this timeline highlights specific sections of this ISA Family Orientation Guide that you will find helpful at various points throughout the pre-departure process.

### ISA STUDENT PORTAL EMAIL

- Grants pending student access to their ISA student portal (temporary password – student must login within 5 days)
- Submit application materials
- Contact ISA team for any questions

### ISA ACCEPTANCE E-MAIL

Start working on final forms and program payment\*

\*For students that attend direct bill institutions (indicated in the payment section of portal) all payments will be worked out directly with the home institution.

### SP OO ISA SITE-SPECIFIC ONLINE ORIENTATION NOW AVAILABLE IN ISA STUDENT PORTAL

### SUBMIT TRAVEL FORMS

Submit flight forms and travel itinerary  
Due 4 weeks prior to program start date

### SP FINAL PACKET AVAILABLE IN THE ISA STUDENT PORTAL

- Includes: housing description, arrival details, student participant list and more!
- Documents should be printed and carried during travel

### CULTURE SHOCK AND TALKING POINTS

- Good time to discuss Culture Shock 101 and Talking Points.
- Found on pages 9 to 18 of this ISA Family Orientation Guide

### ISA FORMS AND PAYMENT\* DUE DATE

Some forms may be required earlier, student should reference due dates as listed on their portal

\*For students that attend direct bill institutions (indicated in payment section of portal) all payments will be worked out directly with the institutions.

### OO V LEARN ABOUT THE HOST CULTURE AND ISA PROGRAM DETAILS

- ISA Google Maps
- 'Like' the ISA Facebook pages and follow ISA on other social media like Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest
- ISA Site-Specific Online Orientation
- Guide Books
- Explore Local Movies/Newspapers
- Subscribe to ISA's YouTube channel
- Subscribe to ISA Today and ISA Student blogs

### PACK BAGS!

Packing Lists on page 19 of this ISA Family Orientation Guide and Online Orientation

### THINGS YOUR STUDENT SHOULD HAVE DONE BEFORE THEIR ISA ACCEPTANCE:

- Contact home institution about their study abroad process and credit transfer
- Begin financial aid/scholarship process (if applicable)
- Apply for a passport
- Familiarize themselves with entry/visa requirements (if applicable)

In case of a student emergency abroad, parents will need a valid passport to travel. Please take into consideration the ample processing time needed for any passport applications or renewals.

STUDENT DEPARTS FOR THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!

# culture shock

## CULTURE SHOCK 101

Culture Shock is a normal process that occurs as one leaves their home culture and enters another. As defined in the *Education Abroad Glossary*, published by The Forum on Education Abroad, culture shock is:

The anxiety and feelings (of surprise, disorientation, confusion, etc.) one feels coming into contact with an entirely different social environment, such as a different country. It often relates to the temporary inability to assimilate the new culture, causing difficulty in knowing what is appropriate and what is not.

It is important for students to acknowledge culture shock when it happens and respond positively to the process. One way students can lessen the severity of culture shock is by taking a step back to observe their own traditions and customs, as well as familiarize themselves with their new host culture prior to going abroad. By observing the differences, your student can learn to understand what to expect and not be as “shocked” by the differences they will experience once abroad. Taking a deeper look at the traditions and peculiarities of your own culture aids in the understanding that just because a way of living is different, does not necessarily mean it is better or worse, *just different*.

Culture shock is not only a process that occurs when going abroad, but also when returning home. This is referred to as reverse culture shock and can be just as challenging as the initial culture shock. Upon return, a student may experience difficulties in returning to their previous routine. This is a normal part of the re-entry process that students may experience due to the fact that they have learned to live and identify with another culture. It is therefore important for the student, family and friends to be aware of the challenges that reverse culture shock can impose on everyday life.

The following resources have additional information and activities about culture shock and reverse culture shock to help prepare students for these processes:

**University of California Education Abroad Program Student Guide: Cultural Adjustment**

[eap.ucop.edu/pub/forms/1011/Cross-Cultural\\_Adjustment.pdf](http://eap.ucop.edu/pub/forms/1011/Cross-Cultural_Adjustment.pdf)

**SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Document: Maintaining Strong Mental and Emotional Health**

[globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp](http://globaled.us/peacecorps/maintaining-strong-mental-and-emotional-health.asp)

## RESPONDING TO THE SYMPTOMS OF CULTURE SHOCK

As previously stated, the phenomenon of culture shock is commonly experienced by individuals when they travel and immerse themselves in a new place and culture. The misunderstanding of this process can lead to communication problems and potentially compound frustrations felt while abroad. Therefore, understanding culture shock and how to respond to it are vital in communicating effectively and enabling your student to have a successful experience abroad.

Many students express the symptoms or feelings of culture shock in their communications with home, as this represents their connection to a familiar culture. In some cases, the symptoms of culture shock can be misinterpreted by family members and friends as an indication that the student is truly struggling and in need of assistance. In most instances, however, this is not the case as the student is only expressing normal sentiments that occur during an extremely valuable learning, immersion and growing process.

Every student needs time to learn about and adapt to their host culture and become comfortable with their new environment. This process of experiencing, internalizing and accepting cultural differences is unique to each student and may take some students more time than others, but it is a normal and healthy process. It is important to understand that going through this process is vital for a positive immersion experience and a successful study abroad program overall.

If your student is expressing discontent and frustration (remember this is a normal and expected process), remind them that they have a support system right there on site. Encourage them to speak with our staff abroad as they understand the complexities of the host culture, interact with international students on a daily basis and can assist by giving advice on how to best adapt and enjoy the host culture. When communicating with your student, take into consideration that your student’s response will likely reflect your attitude and reaction to their emotions and concerns.

Along the same lines, you may want to consider shifting the types of questions you are asking your student in order to generate a more productive conversation. Open-ended questions such as “How are you?” can be difficult to answer for a student dealing with the complex nature of culture shock. Inquiries such as “What did you see today on your walk home?” or “Have you gone back to that pastry shop you went to with your host mom on the first day?” can serve to remind your student of all the exciting things happening around them, and how they now fit into that picture. With all of this in mind, use the information above to continue providing them with support and positive reinforcement as they face the challenges of culture shock.

**REMINDER:** This is a once in a lifetime experience... your student should face each day with a positive attitude and an open mind!

# communication

## COMMUNICATION WHILE YOUR STUDENT IS ABROAD

Effective communication between the student and their family and friends back home is one of the most important elements for a successful study abroad experience.

As you probably have already experienced when your student headed off to college, they are embarking on a voyage of independence and growth. This time abroad will prove to be a tremendous opportunity to gain independence and learn about themselves. That being said, you may face a new set of challenges corresponding with your student while they are abroad. Together, you will want to find the delicate balance between staying in touch and allowing for a positive immersion process for your student.

Having a constant connection to home, and using this as a crutch, can prevent your student from fully engaging in the immersion process in their new host culture. This can have a harmful overall effect and may actually worsen the symptoms of culture shock by increasing your student's feelings of homesickness. This lack of integration could hinder them from developing strong relationships and connections with new people and friends abroad. Furthermore, it is important to consider how the advent of the internet, and especially the smart phone, has changed the study abroad experience. Where just 10 years ago a student might have called home once a week, or even month, students are now often in touch with home several times a day through various mediums. Although it is comforting for families to be able to check in with their student when they are so far away, we strongly recommend that students and families limit such close contact.

We have found that it is useful to create a prearranged communication schedule, utilizing various methods of communication, to positively interact and keep up to date with your student abroad. Of course, each student and situation is unique, but we have found that starting out with being in touch a few times per week is useful and effective. This allows students the opportunity to experience and immerse themselves in their new culture, effectively processing and internalizing the experiences they are having. Formulating a basic communication schedule can give both you and your student something to look forward to.

Keep in mind, your student may consider something as simple as posting on a blog or commenting on Facebook to be valid methods of communication.

**REMINDER:** A very small percentage of U.S. college students get the opportunity to study abroad, so encourage your student to make a global network of friends - MEET LOCALS!

[MORE "COMMUNICATION" ON FOLLOWING PAGE >](#)

"We were really impressed by your program and would highly recommend it to any student thinking about studying abroad!"

**Linda C.,**  
Parent of UCLA Student

"When a child travels abroad alone without knowing anyone, it can be a little scary. Staying five weeks away makes it only more nerve racking. When a child does this with ISA it should give parents a sense of peace. The student will be not just O.K., but great! There are not enough words to express how pleased and impressed I am with your organization. My daughter graded her experience A+! I think that says it all."

**Ana V.,**  
Parent of Loyola University Student

# communication

## COMMUNICATION CONTINUED

### METHODS OF COMMUNICATION:

Despite recent advancements in global communication technologies, long-distance communication still has its challenges. Please keep in mind that the methods of communication listed below may not work as well or be as efficient as you and your student are used to here in the United States (i.e. Internet around the world tends to be slower than services available in the U.S.). In addition, it's important to keep in mind that a text message or Facebook post is often unable to convey the full story. We encourage you to communicate with your student via a medium that allows them to truly explain an issue they are facing before becoming alarmed. Remember that the on-site staff are always nearby and available to assist your student in person, and remind your student to always contact local emergency services and the on-site staff when facing a true emergency.

#### OO CELL PHONES (CALLING, TEXTING AND SMARTPHONE APPS)

#### OO SKYPE/INSTANT MESSAGING/GOOGLE TALK/GOOGLE VOICE/ICHTAT

These methods of communication have evolved immensely in the past few years. They are a common and easy way for students to communicate with family and friends back home. These are free internet-based services, many of which also have video chat capabilities.

#### EMAIL

Email is a great way to communicate about what is happening both abroad and back home. It allows for long, thought-out communications which can be easily read and stored by you and your student.

#### WRITE A BLOG

Blogging is one of the best ways for everyone to keep up to date. It is also a great way for your student to document the study abroad experience and keep a journal of memories, activities and events. Blogging is also effective in dealing with culture shock, as writing down words and thoughts can be therapeutic, especially knowing that friends and family back home are reading them.

### COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR STUDENT DURING A MAJOR SAFETY OR SECURITY EVENT:

It's important to establish a communication plan with your student in the event of a major safety or security situation such as a political or natural disaster while abroad. Mobile networks can become jammed or experience an outage depending on the event, and alternative methods such as apps and social media can provide a quick, easy way to check in. Facebook recently launched their Safety Check feature that prompts people in an affected area to check-in as safe. Additionally, students often communicate via WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, just to name a few, and may be able to send or post a short message using one of these channels during an emergency. Establish which channel your student is most likely to use, ask them to accept your friend request, and agree to use that channel as an alternate communication method during an emergency. Also, encourage your student to keep you abreast of their travel plans both during and after their program.

#### OO FACEBOOK/SOCIAL MEDIA

Students can post pictures, update their status, easily keep in contact with friends back home as well as connect with new friends abroad. Facebook is a great way for you to also keep up to date on your student's activities.

#### PHOTO SHARING WEBSITES

Students can post their photos in virtual albums to share with friends and family. This is a great way to make more room on cameras and ensure that photos are saved somewhere safe. Some good examples of photo sharing websites include Flickr, Shutterfly and Picasa.

#### OO INTERNET CAFÉS

Internet cafés are very common in most of our sites and are great places for students to pop in and catch up with family and friends.

#### OO SNAIL MAIL

Remember, you can always send letters and postcards back and forth through the mail. Your student will love to receive these physical reminders from home as well as share photos and postcards from their travels abroad!

"My son had a wonderful time and met some amazing people. He met people that my husband and I believe he will be friends with for the rest of his life. He told us that the ISA staff was so great in seeing that this was an amazing experience for them all. Thank you (and the rest of the staff) for being so supportive and for providing this experience for our son."

**Beth S.,**  
Parent of Wake  
Forest University  
Student

"As a parent, and from my daughter's prospective as well, your organization was so attentive to both her needs and mine. Your follow ups with some issues of lost luggage, and just overall concern and kindness from her group leaders was just exemplary. Again, thank you so much. We will highly recommend this program."

**Augusta K.,**  
Parent of Eugene  
Lang College  
Student

# anticipating problems

## ANTICIPATING AND RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS ABROAD

Throughout your student's time abroad, it is likely that problems may arise. Problem solving is a part of everyday life and this will be no different when your student is abroad. We encourage you to support your student through any challenges, while remembering to let them solve problems on their own. These experiences can be some of the most significant life-learning experiences, ones you will likely hear stories about for years to come, and your student will be proud of the fact that they solved the problem on their own. Again, problems are to be expected and there is always a solution.

### oo HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Your student is responsible for submitting to ISA the required Medical History, Health Clearance and, if applicable, the **SP Specialist Clearance** forms. These documents will be shared with their resident staff and will be referenced in the event medical attention is necessary. The details on these forms are also taken into consideration when assigning housing, establishing academic schedules, coordinating excursions, etc. It is very important that the information provided on these documents is legible, accurate and up to date. If your student faces any new medical updates once these forms have been submitted to ISA, please have them provide the updated information to ISA.

Health and safety will also be a main theme discussed during the on-site orientation and ISA meetings scheduled throughout the program. Within these meetings, ISA resident staff members outline important details such as "do's and don'ts", local laws, transportation and pedestrian safety, emergency contact information and facilities, city orientation, cultural norms, and much more.

### WHAT IF MY STUDENT HAS A MEDICAL OR SAFETY EMERGENCY?

If your student faces a medical and/or safety emergency at any time, day or night, they should contact their ISA resident staff immediately so that they may assist in arranging medical attention, accompany them to a doctor's appointment and/or assist with insurance matters. If necessary, your student should also notify local authorities.

In addition to the support provided by their ISA resident staff, we also have a U.S.-based on-call staff member prepared to assist with matters such as insurance and communicating with appropriate family members, as well as the home university.

ISA participants are advised to take a credit card abroad or maintain readily accessible emergency funds of at least \$500 in the event that an on-site payment for any medical or other emergency expenses is necessary.

In an extreme emergency situation abroad, please reference your student's insurance description of coverage found on the ISA Website as emergency reunion and other benefits may apply. The U.S. ISA Office is more than happy to help you with questions about how to proceed with insurance inquiries. In this type of situation you may find it necessary to travel to your student abroad. To do so you will need a valid passport. Please keep in mind it can take between 6-8 weeks to apply for or renew a U.S. passport. This being said, you may want to consider updating or applying for a passport prior to your student's departure from the U.S.

### HOW DOES ISA SHARE INFORMATION IF THERE IS A POLITICAL, NATURAL DISASTER OR OTHER MAJOR SAFETY OR SECURITY EVENT IN MY STUDENT'S PROGRAM LOCATION?

ISA stateside and on-site staff closely monitor local news for each program location. Our Office of Health, Safety and Security regularly reviews information provided by the U.S. Department of State and its Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization and trusted security analysis sources. When an event that affects an entire program location occurs, information and instructions are first disseminated to affected students, then we will post a message to the Worldwide Alerts page on our website. You can access the Worldwide Alerts page [here](#) or by clicking on the Worldwide Alerts button on the right-hand side of our home page.

### WHAT IF THERE IS AN EMERGENCY AT HOME AND I NEED TO GET A HOLD OF MY STUDENT?

Please call an ISA U.S. office. If your call is after normal business hours, you will be provided with the ISA emergency phone number. An ISA representative who is trained with the appropriate emergency protocol will be available 24/7 to assist as necessary. Please respect this emergency line. If it is not a true emergency, please do not call this line after normal business hours (Monday to Thursday, 7am-7pm and Friday, 8am-5pm CST).

### IF MY STUDENT NEEDS TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION WHILE ABROAD, WILL THEY HAVE MEDICAL INSURANCE COVERAGE?

Blanket Accident & Sickness Policy is included in the price of the ISA program and covers the program participant while abroad for the official on-site period of the program. A description of coverage and information about how to file a claim are available on our website. If your student needs to visit a clinic/hospital while abroad, or is in an emergency situation, they should notify their ISA resident staff and local authorities (if applicable) as soon as possible.

If your student plans on traveling before or after their program, they can contact their Program Manager to discuss purchasing extra insurance to cover that additional time frame.

**REMINDER:** If your student is experiencing health and safety concerns, they need to approach their ISA resident staff. If your student does not inform their on-site staff about their concerns, ISA will not be aware that our extra assistance is needed.

MORE "ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS"  
ON FOLLOWING PAGE >

# anticipating problems

## ANTICIPATING AND RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS ABROAD *CONTINUED*

### FINANCES:

#### WHAT HAPPENS IF THE DISBURSEMENT OF FINANCIAL AID IS DELAYED?

In most cases, the financial aid award package is disbursed as scheduled. However, there are instances when the disbursement of funds is delayed. If this happens to your student, encourage them to contact their home university financial aid office right away in hopes of determining when the funds will in fact be released. They should then inform their ISA Program Manager of this adjustment. The Program Manager will likely request your student's [SP Verification of Award \(VOA\)](#) form be updated to reflect this new information.

If an adjustment to the overall award package amount has occurred, your student must notify ISA right away and make immediate payment for any amount that will not be covered by their previously submitted VOA. If your student has any questions about this process, please encourage them to contact their ISA Program Manager.

ISA's Verification of Award form (VOA) is available only to students using financial aid to pay for their ISA program. This document is located within your student's ISA Student Portal and should be completed by your student and their home university's financial aid office. This document is due back to ISA by the final forms and payment due date.

#### HOW SHOULD MY STUDENT PROTECT THEIR FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL INFORMATION WHILE ABROAD?

Your student should make multiple copies of all cards and forms of identification (front and back) within their wallet. One set of these copies should be provided to a trusted friend or family member, and the other stored in a safe place within their housing while abroad. Your student may also want to share their bank account details with a trusted friend or family member in the event they need emergency funds deposited or transferred into their account. Your student should notify their bank and all credit card companies of travel dates and locations.

#### WHAT IF THEIR WALLET IS LOST OR STOLEN?

Your student should access the copies they have previously made of the items in their wallet to obtain credit/debit card contact information. Have your student notify their bank and credit card companies immediately to have any cards cancelled or placed on hold. Your student should also notify their ISA resident staff as they can assist with next steps such as filing a police report. If necessary, the ISA resident staff can discuss options for acquiring emergency funds.

#### HOW SHOULD MY STUDENT PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL BELONGINGS ABROAD?

Students are encouraged not to bring expensive or irreplaceable items abroad. ISA strongly encourages students to secure insurance to cover the personal belongings they do bring with them. This may be arranged through independent travel insurance, and some homeowners or renters policies may also cover goods while abroad. Students should check coverage through existing policies to see if additional coverage is needed. ISA is not responsible for any damaged, stolen or lost property belonging to students.

### ACADEMICS:

#### WHAT IF THERE ARE CREDIT TRANSFER ISSUES?

Most students will finalize their academic schedule within the first week of their abroad program. Students may have an academic advising session and add/drop period at their new host institution. If your student faces any concerns during the enrollment process at the host university, they should approach their ISA resident staff with questions.

**REMINDER:** Your student should have previously gained coursework pre-approval from their home university for the courses they are taking abroad, as well as understand how their home university will transfer their credits.

#### HOW DOES MY STUDENT EXPEDITE THEIR HOST UNIVERSITY TRANSCRIPT?

In most ISA program sites, this is not a possibility. It may take as long as 3-4 months for the host universities to provide ISA with official transcripts after the completion of an ISA program. For this reason, we strongly encourage all students to collect and save all course syllabi, assignments, grades, etc. from their classes abroad. Having this information may assist with the credit transfer and approval process before the official transcript has been generated. Students should inquire with the financial aid, scholarship and registrar offices as to if there is a specific deadline by which the transcript must be received or if supplemental materials can temporarily satisfy requirements.

To check the status of transcripts, please reference the Alumni section of the ISA Website.

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# anticipating problems

## ANTICIPATING AND RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS ABROAD *CONTINUED*

### OO HOUSING:

ISA collects and summarizes housing evaluations at the end of each ISA program, enabling us to maintain a fluid review of our housing accommodations around the world. Our goal is to provide students with healthy and suitable accommodations, facilitating a successful academic experience abroad. The ISA resident staff reviews each ISA [SP Housing Questionnaire](#) to assign accommodations based on the information that your student has provided on this document. The more your student has shared on this document, the more information their resident staff will have to use as a basis for housing and roommate assignments.

### *What if my student has an issue with housing?*

It is possible your student may experience housing conflicts while abroad and realistically, they have also probably witnessed similar conflicts in their housing at their home university. That being said, there is a resolution.

The following are some common examples of housing issues and helpful ways for them to be resolved:

**HOMESTAY CONFLICTS:** It is our hope that your student's homestay experience (if applicable) will be one of the best attributes of their entire time abroad. This integration will ideally provide your student with a unique window and access to the host culture. If your student finds themselves in conflict with members of their host family, please encourage them to approach the host family to discuss the concern. In most cases, conflicts can be attributed to a simple cultural misunderstanding, an element that is lost in translation. Often, as a result, both student and host family walk away with a better understanding of the other's culture. If your student continues to have difficulties within their homestay accommodations, their next step is to approach their ISA resident staff to further discuss a resolution to the matter.

**ROOMMATE CONFLICTS:** Frustrating as they may be, your student should approach the issue with a mature and respectful attitude. It is important for you and your student to also keep in mind that all parties are going through an adjustment process when learning to live among new people and new cultures. Encourage your student to first communicate with their roommate(s) about any conflict. If an agreed upon resolution is not met, they should then communicate their concerns with their ISA resident staff who can assist as mediators to the conflict at hand. Again, if the ISA resident staff is not aware of the conflicts your student is experiencing, they cannot extend their assistance.

**FOOD CONCERNS:** Many ISA accommodations include meals. If your student has specific dietary needs, please be sure they outline those needs/requests on their ISA Housing Questionnaire. If living in a homestay, once on site your student will want to communicate food likes and dislikes with their host family. If your student expresses a concern about the meals being provided, they should first communicate their concern with their host family. If your student's concerns persist, they should contact their ISA resident staff.

Your student should already be aware that depending on their program location and housing selection, the ability to accommodate specific food preferences will vary.

**REMINDER:** Sharing meals and culinary traditions are great insights into another culture. Your student should take advantage of these opportunities to further learn about their host community. For example, your student can offer to cook their host family a "traditional" American dinner, or request to accompany the host family when shopping, preparing and cooking the meals. This is a rewarding and collaborative way to share the culinary experience.

### FRUSTRATIONS WITH DAILY

**COMMUTE:** Please keep in mind it is highly likely that your student will have a significant daily commute between their housing and the host university or placement site. Many ISA programs are located in very large cities and commuting is simply part of the everyday routine. While your student may find this daily commute to be a burden, this can be a great time to explore the city through various routes, read local newspapers, finish coursework, get some exercise, observe the locals as they go about their day or simply gaze out the window.

It is important to mention that because you are your student's safety net, you may often times be vented to regarding certain aspects of their study abroad that may be, at the time, frustrating or upsetting. **We encourage you to support your student through any challenges, while remembering to let them solve problems on their own.** In the event a problem arises, urge your student to speak with the on-site staff to discuss possibilities of bettering the situation. Although it may be an uncomfortable situation for your student, they must understand that the on-site staff is there as a resource to assist with any issues first hand. Furthermore, while ISA welcomes feedback from our students' families, in order for us to address a problem, we must hear the concerns from the student directly.

**REMINDER:** Flexibility is key to a successful study abroad experience and is always a great tool for traveling.

MORE "ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS"  
ON FOLLOWING PAGE >

# anticipating problems

## ANTICIPATING AND RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS ABROAD *CONTINUED*

### MISCELLEANOUS:

#### *What if my student loses their passport?*

If your student loses their passport while abroad they must report it to authorities immediately. ISA resident staff will be able to provide your student with the contact information for the local consulate/embassy and assist with the application process for a replacement passport. Please note your student will not be able to legally travel across international borders without a valid passport. If your student does not have their passport at the time of an international ISA excursion, they will not be permitted to attend.

We advise students to have an accessible copy of their passport and visa (if applicable) for the duration of their travels, as well as provide a trusted friend or family member with a copy. Please be aware that if your student was issued a visa for their program, it was likely affixed within their passport. The copies made will assist with the process of applying for a new passport (and visa) in the event it is lost or stolen.

Passport information as well as consular and embassy contact information is also available on the ISA Website.

#### *What if my student is homesick?*

It is likely that your student will experience some degree of homesickness while abroad. Please keep in mind that other students are likely experiencing these feelings as well. While these feelings can be short or long lived, your student should look to their roommates, peers and ISA resident staff for support and encouragement through this challenging time.

Homesickness can be a common part of culture shock. Please reference the Culture Shock 101 section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide for a further description and ways to respond.

**REMINDER:** This is a once in a lifetime experience for your student, and it will be over before they know it! Encourage your student to get out and about to explore their host city, make new friends and, in general, make the most of their time abroad!

#### *How can I ensure my student's expectations will be met while abroad?*

In reality, there are many expectations that your student may have that will not be met while abroad. Therefore, it is important to reiterate to your student that it is okay if these realities are different than initially assumed. Different doesn't mean worse. Acknowledging and adjusting to these realities will lead to your student's personal growth as well as sense of independence and accomplishment.

While ISA does its best to prepare your student for their time abroad, nothing will compare to the reality of your student experiencing, learning and understanding their host culture first hand – the joy of traveling!

"Thank you all so much for the wonderful care and support you and the others at ISA provided! It really was a big comfort to us as parents!"

**Cheryl M.,**  
Parent of University  
of Wyoming Student

"Our daughter is having a great time in Granada, Spain! We have been very impressed with ISA and how organized things have been for her (and us!). Thanks so much for all you do at your end to provide these kids with the experience of a lifetime!"

**Gayle K.,**  
Parent of University  
of Minnesota, Duluth  
Student

# talking points

## PRE-DEPARTURE TALKING POINTS

Congratulations on getting your student this far in their academic and professional career! Now that they are preparing to go abroad, there are many things they will want to take into consideration. Such topics may include anything from blogging and banking to culture and credits. Please keep in mind that this can be a very stressful time for your student, and if they've never been abroad before, they may not have thought about these essential topics, let alone have the answers right away. That's to be expected and is why we have provided a suggested list of "talking points" to guide you through useful conversations with your student leading up to the start of their program.

We have found that these talking points facilitate helpful conversations to prepare your student for their upcoming program abroad. Use these as a way to better understand your student's goals for, as well as the realities of, their fast-approaching international experience.

**OO SP REMINDER:** Much of the information needed for these discussions can be found in the ISA Site-Specific Online Orientation available in your student's online ISA Student Portal. As a reminder, some sections will not become available until the final forms due date.

### CULTURE & CULTURAL AWARENESS:

**"Have you heard of culture shock?"** Refer to the Culture Shock 101 section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

**"How do you anticipate coping with culture shock?"** Refer to the Culture Shock 101 section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

**OO** **"What are the gender roles in the host country?"**

**OO** **"What are the cultural norms (religion, politics, gender, social, etc.)?"**

### COMMUNICATION:

"We were really impressed by your program and would highly recommend it to any student thinking about studying abroad!"

Linda C.,  
Parent of UCLA  
Student

Refer to the Communication While Your Student is Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide for additional information to help answer the following questions.

**"How do you plan to document your time abroad?"** Blog, journaling, photo sharing, etc.

**OO** **"How will you stay in touch?"** Phone, email, Skype, Google Voice, Google Talk, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

**V** **"How often and by what means will you communicate with friends/family at home?"** Refer to the Communication While Your Student Is Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

**"How much time do you plan on communicating with friends/family at home?"** Your student's time abroad will fly by. Just think, two hours spent on Skype is two hours your student missed out on enjoying their host city...yikes!

Furthermore, consider how quickly time adds up when you factor in how smart phones make being connected easier than ever! Typical daily activities for today's study abroad student might include 30 minutes on Facebook and Instagram while on the metro, 15 minutes talking on the phone walking to class, 30 minutes Skyping later that evening, and another 60 minutes watching US TV shows online before bed.

Days abroad x hours spent communicating with home = days not exploring their host community!

35 day summer program (5 weeks) x 2 hrs/day = 70 hours or 3 full days

90 day semester program (13 weeks) x 2 hrs/day = 180 hours or a full week!

Keep in mind this doesn't include the time they spend sleeping, eating, attending class, etc.

**"In case of an emergency, what is the communication plan?"** Refer to the Anticipating and Responding to Problems Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

MORE "TALKING POINTS" ON FOLLOWING PAGE >

## PRE-DEPARTURE TALKING POINTS *CONTINUED*

### EXPECTATIONS & GOALS:

**OO** “What are your expectations for housing, transportation and food?”

**“What are your goals for your time abroad?”**

For example, language acquisition, cultural immersion, professional experience, volunteering, etc.

**“How will you accomplish these goals?”**

For example, they can ask resident staff about language exchange partners, attend community events within their neighborhood, get involved with local clubs and organizations or ask ISA if it’s possible to add a volunteer or internship placement to their program.

**“How will you measure these goals?”**

For example, they can take a language placement exam before and after the program, keep a journal or document their cultural experiences, update their résumé and record volunteer hours and accomplishments.

**“What do you anticipate being your biggest challenge during your time abroad?”**

“There is nothing like living and learning in a different country. Your horizons are broadened in a way that is unparalleled.”

**Brandon T.,**  
Roosevelt University

### HEALTH & SAFETY:

**“Have you looked on a map to familiarize yourself with the city, office, school, etc?”** Students will be notified of their housing address 2-4 weeks prior to departure and can plug this address into the map to begin exploring their new neighborhood abroad.

**OO** **“Are you planning to continue any medication while you are abroad?”**

**OO** **“Is the medication legal/recognized in the host country? Can you get your medications there or will you be required to bring enough for the entire duration of your program?”**

**“How do you plan to prepare yourself for a safety incident?”** Refer to the Anticipating and Responding to Problems Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

**“Do you know the local laws?”** This is a great opportunity for your student to do some independent research to better familiarize themselves with their host country. For example, pepper spray is banned in some countries.

**OO** **“How do you plan to avoid unwanted attention or unsafe situations?”** For example, they should try to blend in and look like a local, avoid public gatherings and protests, travel in small groups, etc.

**OO** **“How do you plan to stay safe while pursuing travels independent of ISA?”** For example, they should carry a local map and language dictionary, know where the U.S. Embassy and police stations are located, and be up-to-date on current events.

**OO** **“How do you plan to stay up-to-date with current events in neighboring countries as well as world news?”** Check the U.S. Department of State Website for current travel warnings as well as global news media for world updates.

**“If your purse or wallet is lost or stolen, what will you do?”** Refer to the Anticipating and Responding to Problems Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

MORE “TALKING POINTS” ON FOLLOWING PAGE >

## PRE-DEPARTURE TALKING POINTS *CONTINUED*

### ACADEMICS & CAMPUS LIFE:

**“Have you communicated with your home university about how your international credits will transfer back and affect your home institution GPA? Does your home university academic department hold any grade/course requirements that you must fulfill while abroad?”** Refer to the Anticipating and Responding to Problems Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

**“Does your home university and/or academic department require additional paperwork or documentation to evaluate courses taken and credits earned abroad?”** Refer to the Anticipating and Responding to Problems Abroad section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

**“Have you made any necessary arrangements for your return to your home university?”** For example, they will want to secure housing accommodations, course registration, tuition payments, financial aid applications, transcript processing, graduation requirements, etc.

### FINANCES:

**oo** **“How are you saving money for your time abroad and how much money do you plan to spend weekly?”** Visit the Additional Estimated Expenses page on the ISA Website.

**“Are you accustomed to having an income? If so, how will this affect your spending habits while abroad?”** Your student will likely not be receiving an income while abroad. With this in mind, your student may have to adjust their daily spending habits to ensure they are more financially prepared to meet their personal goals and expectations throughout the duration of their program.

**oo v** **“Are you budgeting for extra/optional weekend trips?”**

**oo** **“Do you plan to use a credit and/or debit card while abroad? If yes, will you use your credit/debit cards on a daily basis or for emergencies only?”** Have your student notify their bank and credit card companies of their travel plans in order to avoid holds being placed on their accounts or cards being cancelled.

**oo** **“What is the local currency, exchange rate and most common form of payment in your host country?”**

**oo** **“Do you plan to acquire host country currency prior to going abroad? How much money (U.S. Dollars and host country currency) do you plan to travel with?”** Large banks will exchange or order foreign currency with proper notice, and currency exchange offices located at international airports can also exchange most major currencies.

"I wanted to thank you for the wonderful experience my daughter had in Barcelona. It was a dream trip for her. Thanks for all your help with the paperwork and working with us on the finances."

**Thomas O.,**  
Parent of UCLA  
Student

"My son is studying in Málaga, Spain, and having the time of his life. ISA is an amazing program and we are so grateful for all the help and arrangements made on his behalf."

**Allison M.,**  
Parent of University  
of Utah Student

"Make the most of every situation no matter how tired you may seem at times. Time flies and it's not very likely you'll be able to experience anything like this again."

**Hayley B.,**  
Pittsburg State  
University

# packing

## V PACKING LISTS

Below is a helpful list of packing recommendations based on previous student experiences and suggestions.

### TRAVEL & IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

- Passport (& visa if applicable) – make copies in case it is lost or stolen
- Host University/ISA enrollment letters or other necessary documentation (if applicable)
- ISA Final Packet documents
- Smaller bag/backpack for short weekend trips
- Credit/debit card(s) with microchip
- Foreign currency
- Flight information (including return flight details if already confirmed)
- Personal identification (including driver's license) – make copies in case it is lost or stolen
- Emergency contact information
- Money belt (to hold passport, cash, credit/debit card(s), ID and any other important documents)
- Luggage locks (TSA approved)/luggage tags
- Reusable water bottle (make sure it is empty prior to passing through airport security)
- Converters and adapters for electronics
- Travel alarm clock
- Small flashlight
- Guide books and maps
- English/foreign language dictionary (if applicable)
- Gift for homestay (if applicable) – suggestions include something from your hometown such as locally-made candy, a coffee table book, or houseware gift
- Pictures of family and friends to show hosts and new friends

### CLOTHING

- Clothes appropriate for climate/country (i.e. raincoat/umbrella/rain boots, winter jacket/gloves, etc.)
- Swimwear
- Comfortable footwear
- Wristwatch
- Tennis shoes
- Hat
- Scarf/shawl
- House shoes/slippers

### ENTERTAINMENT

- Travel games/playing cards
- iPod/MP3 player
- Laptop (optional) and sturdy, nondescript carrying case
- Reading materials
- Travel journal
- Notepad and pen
- Camera, lenses, memory card, film, batteries/charger and camera case

### 10 TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN PACKING CLOTHING:

- Your student will have access to laundry facilities while abroad so it is not necessary to pack for their entire term abroad.
- Layers!
- Coordinate colors/styles to mix and match outfits – neutrals are always a good choice.
- Pack clothes that will not need to be ironed.
- Comfortable walking shoes that coordinate with multiple outfits - break in shoes before travel.
- Note that some countries or specific sites (i.e. cathedrals) may require a more modest dress code.
- Consider pants with buttoned/zippered pockets. Although not as theft-proof as a money belt, these can deter pickpockets.
- Be sure to take into account what the weather will be like for the entire duration of the program, especially noting any seasonal changes if spending a semester/year abroad.
- Your student should familiarize themselves with the clothing styles and trends that they will see in their new host culture.
- Shop while abroad! Your student can pick up local and trendy clothing among the stores popular in their host country. This is a great way to both blend in as a local and save space in their suitcase.

MORE "PACKING LISTS" ON FOLLOWING PAGE >

## **V** PACKING LISTS *CONTINUED*

### HEALTH & TOILETRIES

Please note that most common toiletries can be bought on site, but your student may wish to bring along their own if they prefer specific product brands. Keep in mind that buying these items once on site is a great way to save space in their suitcase!

- Personal prescriptions (with a doctor's letter) – bring enough for the ENTIRE program!
- Vitamins
- Over-the-counter medicines
- Hand sanitizer and towelettes
- Bug spray and insect repellent
- Sunblock and sunburn relief
- Vision care
- Comb/brush
- Toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss
- Hair dryer, curling iron and hair straightener – consider buying on site because of electrical outlet and wattage differences
- Deodorant
- Perfume/Cologne/Body spray
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Body and face soap
- Razors and shaving cream
- Hair-care products
- Skin-care lotion/cream
- Make-up/lip balm
- Personal hygiene items
- Travel-size bottles
- Travel-size Febreze and Tide-To-Go pens
- Sewing/repair kit
- Zip-close plastic bags (quart and snack size)
- Tissues
- Laundry soap (if applicable)

### EXTRA SPACE? (OPTIONAL ITEMS)

- Empty duffel bag to carry souvenirs back to the U.S. (this could also double as your student's weekend travel bag)
- Travel neck pillow
- Eye shade and ear plugs
- Snacks

### WEEKEND TRIP / EXCURSION PACKING LIST

- Smaller bag – we recommend a backpack that can be easily toted around cities while site-seeing. This bag should be small enough to meet airline carry-on size and weight requirements
- Locks – For lockers while staying in hostels and/or for luggage while traveling (TSA approved)
- Money belt
- Appropriate currency
- Credit/debit card(s)
- Passport and other personal identification
- Necessary tickets, copies of travel reservations, confirmation numbers, etc.
- ISA wallet-sized emergency card (will receive on site during the Bridging Cultures Program)
- Travel guides, resources and maps
- Appropriate electrical adapters and converters
- Cell phone – your student should be careful of cell phone usage while traveling as out-of-network rates can be very expensive!!
- Small flashlight
- Travel alarm clock
- Wristwatch
- iPod/MP3 player
- Camera and charger/batteries
- Travel journal
- Reading materials
- Snacks
- Reusable water bottle
- Necessary medication for duration of trip
- Toiletries
- Personal bath towel & washcloth
- Flip-flops for hostel showers\*
- Appropriate clothing (outerwear, bathing suits, etc.) – while traveling, remember that dark colors hide dirt
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Umbrella
- **...And an open mind in hopes your student will experience as much as possible during their travels!!**

Booking a hostel? Keep in mind it's important to confirm what's included as many hostels require guests to provide their own bedding, towels, toilet paper, etc.

# visiting your student

## HELPFUL TIPS FOR VISITING YOUR STUDENT

Please note that ISA does not make any travel arrangements for families who are visiting their students abroad. The following is merely a suggested list of resources for you to utilize in the event you plan a trip to visit your student.

### HOW TO BEGIN PLANNING

Have your student help plan your visit! If possible, wait to make arrangements until they have arrived on site. At that time they will have already gone through the planning of their own trip abroad, and once they are living in their new host city, they will be able to provide you with personal recommendations.

### WHEN TO VISIT

Work around your student's class schedule (he/she is studying abroad). They will get their confirmed academic schedule and excursion dates once they arrive on site. We recommend planning a visit around a long break or at the end of the program. We do not recommend visiting at the beginning of your student's program as it is important for them to be able to take this first step on their own. The beginning of your student's program is quite busy with ISA Bridging Cultures Program activities, excursions, making new friends and many other new experiences.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Due to liability reasons, ISA arranged housing is for ISA students only. Family and friends visiting students abroad will therefore need to arrange for their own accommodations. Your student and their ISA resident staff can offer hotel recommendations, however, there are also numerous online booking resources that you should explore (i.e. booking.com, hotels.com).

### TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation (taxi, train, subway, bus, etc.) is often much more prevalent in other countries, and is used regularly for travel within and between cities. While rental cars are often an available option, they are usually not the most efficient means of seeing your student's host country. If you do choose to rent a car abroad, be sure to contact your insurance company regarding necessary or recommended coverage. An international driver's license may be required.

### SIGHT-SEEING

We encourage you to let your student be your personal tour guide; they will want to show off their new host city and what they have learned since being abroad! It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with your destination's culture and customs (tipping, etiquette, taboo topics, current events, etc). Lastly, please note that ISA organized excursions are arranged for ISA students only.

**REMINDER:** During your visit, try to balance seeing local sites with taking some time to relax and soak up all that is around you. Keep in mind, something as simple as spending an afternoon at a local café with

your student can give you great insight into the local culture.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

*Be sure to obtain any necessary vaccinations for the country or areas you may visit:* [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx#B](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.aspx#B)

*Check for any applicable U.S. State Department Travel Warnings and/or Alerts:* [travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html)

It is also a good idea to register yourself with the U.S. Embassy in the country you will be visiting.

### BANKING

Consider bringing a money belt with you to protect your valuables (cash, credit/debit cards, passport, etc.) from pickpockets as you travel. Be sure to notify your bank(s) before you travel abroad as some banks may put a hold on your account(s) if they suspect fraudulent activity. Decide if you will obtain some local currency in cash by exchanging ahead of time (at a local bank or international airport) or if you will obtain currency once you arrive.

Please note that although credit cards are becoming increasingly more common, many restaurants, stores, etc. in other countries may only accept cash as a means of payment. MasterCard and Visa are usually the most welcomed credit card types abroad. You may also want to ask your bank or credit card company about any international exchange and/or transaction fees.

### PACKING LIST FOR FAMILY VISITING STUDENTS

In addition to the items listed below, we also suggest you reference the Packing Lists section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide.

- Passport
- Tourist Visa (if applicable)
- Your own traveler's phrase book or language dictionary for translation assistance (if applicable)
- A care package for your student, possibly with items they may miss from home (i.e. peanut butter, specific toiletry brands, etc.)
- Consider bringing an extra suitcase or saving space in your suitcase to bring back items that your student either no longer needs (i.e. winter clothes if you visit halfway through the spring semester) or did not find necessary once they arrived
- Check weather forecasts prior to your visit to pack accordingly

## RE-ENTRY SUPPORT: RESPONDING TO REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK AND MAXIMIZING YOUR STUDENT'S STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

As referenced in the Culture Shock 101 section of this ISA Family Orientation Guide, reverse culture shock is a very normal and common process that occurs when students return home from abroad. The impact of reverse culture shock is not necessarily related to the length of time spent abroad or the destination. When students return to the U.S., their emotions and reactions will vary and may include one or more of the following:

- **V** Feelings of restlessness, boredom, depression, uncertainty, confusion, or isolation
- Reverse homesickness: Missing the people, places, attitudes or lifestyles of their host country
- Changes in career, academic and social goals and priorities
- Negativity or intolerance towards their home culture including common behaviors, attitudes and customs
- Frustrations with common work, social and academic practices on-campus
- Difficulty relating to and communicating with friends who haven't shared the same experience

When your student returns from abroad, it is helpful for them to find outlets to cope with the challenges of reverse culture shock. There are many ways for them to stay connected with the time they spent abroad, enabling them to build upon their international experience. The following suggestions/activities are ways for your student to overcome the challenges associated with reverse culture shock, while also incorporating their international experience into their future academic, personal and professional goals. A large investment of both time and money has been made to enable your student to experience this unique opportunity and we encourage them to maximize this investment. Just because your student has returned from abroad, doesn't mean the study abroad experience, and benefits gained from it, have ended... it's really just the beginning.

### WAYS TO BUILD UPON ACADEMIC GOALS:

- Add a minor or concentration to their academic degree using the credits they earned while abroad.
- Use their international experience to apply for grants and scholarships for which they may now be eligible.
- Study abroad again! ISA Repeat Student Grant may be applicable.
- Continue your education by completing a master's degree abroad through an ISA Degrees Abroad program.
- Volunteer or intern internationally with ISA Internships & Service-Learning.
- Give presentations about their experience (i.e. to classmates, student organizations, fraternities/sororities, faculty members, local schools, church groups, after-school programs, community based organizations, etc.).
- Join or start a student club or organization (language clubs, international student club, study abroad returnee organization).
- Include their international experience on graduate school applications.

**REMINDER:** There are many offices and resources available on your student's home university campus to further assist with maximizing the study abroad experience. Upon return, encourage your student to reach out to the study abroad and international offices, writing center, financial aid office, career center, community outreach office, academic advisor, language lab and faculty members. These resources are at your student's finger tips!

### WAYS TO BUILD UPON PERSONAL GOALS:

- Subscribe to international publications (Glimpse, online host country/city newspaper, National Geographic, NAFA, the Economist, BBC news feeds, etc.)
- Practice language skills (volunteer with community organizations as a translator or language tutor).
- Skype, Facebook and exchange letters, postcards or emails with friends, families and staff from their time abroad.
- Join ISA Facebook pages.
- Follow [ISA Twitter](#).
- Review our [blogs](#) or write their own.

### WAYS TO BUILD UPON PROFESSIONAL GOALS:

- Become an ISA Global Ambassador (on-campus internship).
- Volunteer with their Study Abroad Office on-campus.
- Integrate their international experience into their résumé and LinkedIn profile and focus on how they are going to highlight their experience in job interviews (include specifics such as personal growth, managing group dynamics, problem solving, crisis management, etc.).
- Seek out international organizations, restaurants, events and festivals in their community (a great way to network and survey job opportunities).

# thank you

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

We hope that you have found this ISA Family Orientation Guide helpful in giving you a glimpse into your student's study abroad experience and helping them prepare for their time abroad. We are always looking to improve our materials as a way to better assist and inform our students and their families. Therefore, we welcome your comments and feedback. Please e-mail [isa@studiesabroad.com](mailto:isa@studiesabroad.com) to provide any feedback on your experience with this ISA Family Orientation Guide and with ISA in general. We'd like to hear what you found particularly helpful as well as areas we can improve upon.

We thank you wholeheartedly for the support you provide your student. Our hope is that you will reference this guide throughout your student's study abroad experience as we expect you will find certain sections to be more applicable at particular points along the way.

Once your student's program has come to an end, don't forget that the learning has just begun! Encourage them to incorporate their international experience into their daily life and to look into future opportunities abroad. Have them call the ISA office to explore options for going abroad again – we would love to have them on a future program!

*Globally Yours,*



"I am not the same having seen the moon shine on the other side of the world."

**Mary Anne  
Radmacher**  
Hershey

### SUBMIT A TESTIMONIAL!

If you are a family member of a current or past ISA student and would like to submit a testimonial for use in our materials, please e-mail [isa@studiesabroad.com](mailto:isa@studiesabroad.com). By submitting an e-mail testimonial, you are granting us your permission to use your comments in any ISA publication.