

**CUSTOMIZED FACULTY-LED**



# **Pre-Departure Student Handbook**

**AIFSabroad.com**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome. . . . .	3
Quick List: Before You Go . . . . .	4
AIDE While Abroad . . . . .	5
Bringing Your Whole Self Abroad. . . . .	5
Safety Guidelines . . . . .	6
Pre-Departure Resources . . . . .	8
Medical Insurance Coverage . . . . .	9
Culture Shock. . . . .	10
Mental Health and Practicing Wellness Abroad. . . . .	12
Staying In Touch While Abroad. . . . .	12
Money Matters . . . . .	14
What to Bring . . . . .	16
Student Conduct/Standards of Behavior . . . . .	18
Carbon Offset/Green Initiative . . . . .	19
Emergency Contact Information. . . . .	19





We are so excited to be facilitating this life-changing experience for you and want to make sure that you have all the resources necessary to be successful while abroad. This handbook will give you a framework and should start you on the path to asking the right questions to make sure you are prepared.

In the lead up to your departure please continue to utilize your assigned US program contact as your “go to” source of information. They are in continual contact with both your home educational institution and overseas staff for your program.

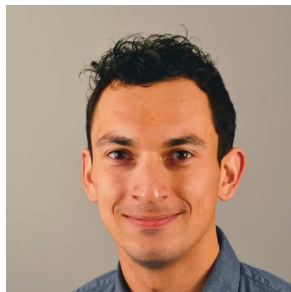
Not sure who your assigned US program contact is? It will be AIFS Abroad staff members Andrew, Angela, or Karen, pictured below.

When you log-in to your AIFS Abroad portal, you will see one of their pictures and their contact details. They will be more than happy to assist you with any questions you may have leading up to departure! Our US Director, Karena (also pictured below) is excited for you to experience studying abroad and is available to assist home educational intuitional staff and participants as needed.

There will also be an AIFS Abroad overseas contact email address where you can send your program, housing, or location specific questions.



**Karena**  
US Director



**Andrew**  
US Program Contact



**Angela**  
US Program Contact



**Karen**  
US Program Contact

# QUICK LIST: BEFORE YOU GO

## TO DO NOW

- ▶ Read all the information and documents on your AIFS Abroad student portal: [AIFSabroad.com/login](https://www.aifsabroad.com/login)
- ▶ Double check to ensure your passport is signed and valid for at least 6-months after the end date of your program. If you don't have a passport, your passport is expired, or is soon to expire, apply for one **now**
- ▶ Review and start completing the to do list items in your AIFS portal
- ▶ Read some student blogs and posts about the place you are visiting: [blog.AIFSabroad.com](https://blog.aifsabroad.com)
- ▶ **Consider purchasing CFAR/IFAR insurance coverage within 21 days of your deposit.** Participants may purchase additional **trip cancellation or interruption** insurance which allows them to protect their study abroad program. This policy includes options to **cancel for any reason (CFAR)** and **interrupt for any reason (IFAR)**. Details of the Worldwide Trip Protector Plans with Travel Insured International (TII) is underwritten by the United States Fire Insurance Company, rated A (Excellent) by A.M. Information on these options is available on the Travel Insured International website — [www.travelinsured.com](https://www.travelinsured.com) – or by phone at 855-611-0918. **The policy is time sensitive and must be purchased within 21 days after the deposit is paid**
- ▶ Review AIFS Abroad Cancellation and Refund Policies in the Program Information sheet on your AIFS Abroad portal
- ▶ Check with your physician regarding medication you may be on and how to travel with or obtain overseas enough for your time abroad

## TO DO 1 MONTH PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- ▶ Visit the U.S. Department of State's website for students going abroad: [travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html)
- ▶ Buy a useful guidebook and learn about your host city and country
- ▶ Contact your cell phone provider for information about using your cell phone abroad

## TO DO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- ▶ Download the CISI mobile app at: [www.culturalinsurance.com/students/technology.asp](https://www.culturalinsurance.com/students/technology.asp)
- ▶ Sign up for The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). It is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens/nationals who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. It will allow you to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate: <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- ▶ Start planning what to pack & consult your airline's baggage allowance guidelines
- ▶ Share the AIFS Abroad emergency contact details and program itinerary with your family/support network
- ▶ Notify your bank/credit card company if you are planning to use your card abroad

## TO DO 1 WEEK PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- ▶ Check updated host country entry requirements and items related to health and safety
- ▶ Keep an eye on your email for AIFS Abroad updates and check on your AIFS Abroad student portal for updated information
- ▶ Review flight itinerary and check for flight updates



# BRINGING YOUR WHOLE SELF ABROAD

At AIFS Abroad, we support students of all backgrounds, inclusive of race, ethnicity, religion, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, financial means, veteran status, and gender identity. You will be experiencing a new culture, which may have different attitudes towards diversity and aspects of your identity than what you are used to on your home campus and in your local community. It may be more open; it may be less. It is important to be open to and respectful of the culture and its people of your host country as well as the cultures you may experience while traveling. This includes the locals you will meet, other international students, your homestay family and/or roommates, and participants within your AIFS Abroad program. We have created [General Social Identity Resources](#) and [Site-Specific Identity Based Resources](#) to help you navigate your international experience. We welcome you to review them when planning your study abroad program. We invite you to make use of these resources and suggestions throughout your study abroad journey.

Our staff abroad will do their best to help you understand the cultural norms and provide resources and information whenever possible. They will provide you with more information on many of these topics during orientation and throughout the program. If you are unsure how to navigate an aspect of the host culture, have any concerns, or need anything while abroad please ask staff abroad to help provide guidance and assistance. They are there to help throughout your study abroad journey and will do everything they can to ensure that you have a positive and safe experience. Please keep in mind that available resources and accommodation will vary, depending on the location. Please notify AIFS Abroad staff immediately of any incidents that make you uncomfortable or make you feel unsafe. If there is something you would like to report anonymously, please use [reporting@aifs.com](mailto:reporting@aifs.com).



## AIDE WHILE ABROAD

AIFS Abroad is committed to **Access, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (AIDE)**. Our programming is developed with this in mind. As a student on one of our programs you will have access to various AIDE resources on our website and in the student portal throughout your global experience with us. The AIFS Abroad website contains a wealth of information and resources to help you prepare for your time abroad including presentations from AIFS Abroad staff and alumni, information and suggestions to help you think about how your individual social identity and experience will impact your study abroad journey and how to plan for this and research your program.

We welcome you to learn more about AIFS Abroad's AIDE work and resources as you embark on your study abroad experience at [AIFSabroad.com/aide](https://aifstabroad.com/aide).





## SAFETY GUIDELINES

While a study abroad experience is usually an extremely safe one, it is important to remember basic safety precautions that anyone should take when in an unfamiliar environment.

### THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ▶ Always check for the latest security alerts for any country you are studying in or plan to visit.
- ▶ Know where the nearest police station and hospital are and keep emergency numbers handy.
- ▶ Leave a copy of your itinerary, passport, visa (if applicable), and this handbook with someone at home. Make sure they have your new cell number if you change it while abroad.
- ▶ Carry a photocopy of your passport and take special care to keep the original in a safe place.
- ▶ Keep personal identification with you at all times with the address and telephone number of your school, the AIFS Abroad study center (if applicable), and the International Emergency Number. Store these numbers in your phone and memorize the address of your accommodation.
- ▶ Be careful with your personal belongings, particularly in bars and cafes, street markets, and train or bus stations. Never hang your backpack or purse on the back of a chair in public places; keep it in your lap or on the floor between your feet. Don't carry large sums of cash.
- ▶ If you choose to drink alcohol, do so responsibly. Mature and sensible behavior should prevail in all circumstances. Alcohol can impair your judgment—you cannot be alert if you have been drinking. Never leave your drink unattended – if you feel someone may have tampered with your drink, do not drink it.

- ▶ Stay away from drugs. Little can be done to help you if you are caught with illegal drugs. It is your responsibility to know the drug laws of the countries you plan to visit. "I didn't know" will not get you out of jail.
- ▶ Be cautious when meeting new people. Don't give out your address, number, AIFS Abroad Study Center address to people you meet. If you want to give out contact information, give them your cell number only once you know them very well.
- ▶ Avoid any disturbances and demonstrations and avoid discussing politics in public.
- ▶ Recognize and avoid high risk areas. Onsite staff will advise you about any.
- ▶ Be vigilant. Report suspicious activity or unknown individuals "hanging around" in your building. Be careful of who has access to your home. Visitors should be screened and are not allowed to stay overnight, even family members from the U.S.
- ▶ Never accept a package/bag from someone you do not know well and never agree to watch someone else's belongings in stations, airports, or other public places.
- ▶ Look out for each other! Use the buddy system and make sure you don't leave your friends alone in situations that may be unsafe, particularly at night.
- ▶ If you go out on your own let someone know where you are going and when you are likely to be back.
- ▶ Avoid traveling late at night. If you can, sit near the driver or conductor. Avoid empty compartments and upstairs on buses.
- ▶ Check the taxi is the one you booked. Do not use unlicensed taxis.
- ▶ If you go anywhere overnight, let on-site staff, your homestay parents, apartment sharers etc. know where you are going and when you expect to return. Leave a number where you can be reached if possible.
- ▶ We strongly advise that you travel on AIFS Abroad excursions versus setting up your own excursions. These are arranged with providers that we are confident meet the required standards of safety and reliability and you

will be accompanied by AIFS Abroad staff or representatives. If you do choose to travel independently, it is your responsibility to review and evaluate any tour company, transportation provider and any accommodation you choose to use. AIFS Abroad does not endorse any tour operators or travel service providers.

- ▶ Observe your accommodation rules. They are designed to protect the security of all residents.

## ACTIONS TO TAKE IF...

- ▶ In the event of any emergency, including terrorist activity, onsite staff to let them know your whereabouts and for advice on how to proceed. You should also contact any friends or family who may be concerned to reassure them of your safety. If necessary, you can also contact the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy for urgent advice. To, In the event of any emergency, including terrorist activity, let onsite staff know your whereabouts and for advice on how to proceed. You should also contact any friends or family who may be concerned to reassure them of your safety. If necessary, you can also contact the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy for urgent advice.
- ▶ If your property is lost or stolen, contact the appropriate local authorities and file a claim with CISI Insurance. Please review the CISI Insurance policy regarding personal property loss, including the deductible and maximum allowable financial coverage.
- ▶ Please contact onsite staff or email [reporting@aifs.com](mailto:reporting@aifs.com) if you see or are a victim of harassment, discrimination or experience a situation you are not comfortable with.
- ▶ **In the event of any serious incident or if you need support in any situation, please contact onsite staff immediately so that they can assist you. The emergency contact details are included in your site-specific program handbook.**

While a study abroad experience is usually an extremely safe one, it is important to remember basic safety precautions that anyone should take when in an unfamiliar environment.





# PRE-DEPARTURE RESOURCES

The AIFS Abroad student portal houses many documents/resources that are critical for you to review to maximize your experience and ensure smooth pre-departure processing. Of note are the resources listed below.

## 1. AIFS ABROAD PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET

One pre-departure resource you can access in your AIFS portal is your program's Information Sheet. The Information Sheet contains program details such as transportation, housing, meals, excursions, and more.

## 2. SITE SPECIFIC HANDBOOK

In addition to this AIFS Abroad general handbook you will find a site-specific handbook on the portal in the weeks before departure which will give you detailed information on your program and the AIFS Abroad support services available to you when abroad. Please take the time to read this information and research your host country/city as this will give you the best experience possible.

## 3. USEFUL WEBSITE RESOURCES

- ▶ U.S. Department of State website with up-to-the-minute information about security: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
- ▶ Details of U.S. Embassies, Consulates and Diplomatic Missions and their emergency services: [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov)

## 4. BLOGS

Students and AIFS Abroad team members have chronicled their travels, what's helpful to know and how to prepare for an amazing international experience. Take some time and review our blogs: [blog.aifsabroad.com](http://blog.aifsabroad.com).



# MEDICAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

All students have AIFS Abroad Travel & Medical insurance which provides extensive coverage for you while you're on our program. This includes 24-hour emergency telephone assistance service. Multilingual help and advice will be provided in the event of any emergency.

If you require medical attention while abroad the AIFS Abroad staff may refer you to a local physician. They will also provide you with the necessary documentation and help you with filing claims. Please note that you will be expected to pay up front for all medical expenses and to file an insurance claim for reimbursement. Save any doctors' bills and receipts if you seek treatment.

Always remember to inform the staff first about your illness/injury and they will assist you in determining what documentation you will need to back up your claim and what paperwork will need to be filled out.

For details see the AIFS Abroad Group Insurance Plan brochure. It is available online through your AIFS Abroad portal: [AIFSabroad.com/login](https://www.aifsabroad.com/login)

You will receive an insurance card via email prior to the program starting. Once you receive your insurance card login to [www.mycisi.com](http://www.mycisi.com) and download the Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) mobile app at: <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/students/technology.asp>

It provides information about your insurance plan and helps with any security and medical issues. You can access your travel insurance documents, view country-specific travel alerts, personal security assistance information, search medical providers worldwide and much more. In the event of an emergency check-in using the app so we know you are safe or if you need assistance.



## OPTIONAL TRIP INTERRUPTION OR CANCELLATION INSURANCE (CFAR/IFAR)

**Consider purchasing CFAR/IFAR insurance coverage within 21 days of your deposit.**

Participants may purchase additional **trip cancellation or interruption** insurance which allows them to protect their study abroad program. This policy includes options to **cancel for any reason (CFAR)** and **interrupt for any reason (IFAR)**. Details of the Worldwide Trip Protector Plans with Travel Insured International (TII) is underwritten by the United States Fire Insurance Company, rated A (Excellent) by A.M. Information on these options is available on the Travel Insured International website – [www.travelinsured.com](http://www.travelinsured.com) – or by phone at 855-611-0918. **The policy is time sensitive and must be purchased within 21 days after the deposit is paid.**

# CULTURE SHOCK

Studying abroad can be a wonderfully exciting, rewarding, culturally enlightening and expanding experience. However, it can, at times, also be a stressful experience.

You will encounter many new and sometimes confusing situations while studying abroad. Culture shock is a type of stress that results from trying to cope with these situations, using a different language and following different customs. Culture shock can be defined as a clash between our own views of the world (which are determined by our home culture) and our new cultural environment. It can feel like you have a lack of control and that you are helpless in this new culture. Almost every traveler who spends an extended period away from home experiences culture shock to some degree. You are outside your comfort zone and as a result, you may feel frustrated, depressed or even sick.

Culture shock is also often described as an adjustment cycle. Initially you feel really excited and optimistic about going to study abroad and can't wait to get to the country you will be calling home. This is the high point of the cycle, or what is often referred to as the 'honeymoon stage.' Then you may hit the second phase or the low point of the cycle, 'the crisis stage' where you may see all the differences and may begin to miss the support system and familiarity of home.

Culture shock is about the struggle to become culturally competent in a different culture. It is perfectly natural, and it can help you to learn and grow from the experience. As it is a developmental process, how long it takes and how you work through it depends on what resources you have available. Some individuals will seem to have no problems adjusting while for others it can be a real struggle.



There is a similar adjustment required when returning home, referred to as reverse culture shock or re-entry shock. It relates to the process of readjusting and reassimilating into one's home culture after living in another culture. Expect to take time to adjust to home life again when you get back.

Most of the stress-causing differences between home and the host culture will be obvious to you right away: disruption of your normal daily routine, the distance between you and family and friends, new food, different language, the climate, etc. Other differences between your culture and the host culture are not so obvious but can also cause stress. This can include how people make decisions and resolve problems, interaction with your professors, how recreational time is spent, customer service and business practices, and the type of body language people use. Getting used to all this can cause a considerable amount of anxiety.

If you go abroad expecting everything to be a certain way, you will be disappointed. Keep an open mind and expect the unexpected. Everything about your daily routine is about to change, from the pace of life to the foods you eat. Be flexible and open to new things. Remember that one of the main reasons for study abroad for most students is to integrate into the culture. You can't integrate if you expect everything to be like it is at home.





Since everyone handles things differently, there is no “formula” for dealing with culture shock. The way you deal with it will be different from others, but there are things that you can do that will make the adjustment easier. It does help to know that it happens to everyone in one way or another.

Knowing that you may experience culture shock at some point during your stay abroad, you can take some positive steps to prepare yourself:

- ▶ Accept the differences. To acclimate, you are going to have to find a way to live with the things that you are not in 100% agreement with about the new culture. This goes for the host country’s attitude towards punctuality and customer service, the food, etc. These are some of the things that make up the culture and they are not going to change because you don’t like them.

- ▶ Be patient. You are not going to get used to living abroad in a couple of days or even a couple of weeks. Adjustment takes time.
- ▶ Keep an open mind. Relax and accept things as they are. You might end up appreciating the host culture’s way of doing things or at least develop an appreciation for how things are done at home.
- ▶ Pay attention to cultural differences. Social customs vary widely from one culture to another and there is no way to “fit in” until you learn what is (and is not) appropriate behavior. You will learn this by paying attention to the actions of those around you.
- ▶ Make good use of your free time. Maybe you were used to a rigid schedule at home, and you are having a hard time adjusting to a different pace of life. Remember to take time for self-care and mental health. Also try and see as much of the city and country as you can, meet new people, and try new things. This is a unique opportunity and we hope you make the most of it!
- ▶ Get some exercise. Especially if you are used to exercising at home, keep it up while you are abroad. Exercise will help you battle culture shock in a constructive way. You can go for a run, find a local exercise class, or join a gym.



# MENTAL HEALTH & PRACTICING WELLNESS ABROAD

One of the best things you can do before departure is enter the experience knowing that your time abroad will be different than on your home campus. The resources, community, and support available to you abroad will be different than your home campus as well. With that in mind, here are some ways you can take care of yourself and manage your mental health while abroad:

- ▶ Let overseas staff know if you are experiencing challenges. Being able to speak to someone about your experience can often be helpful. They can provide tips and resources for navigating this new environment.
- ▶ Keep a journal about your time abroad. Being able to write down how you are feeling can be helpful for processing your experience and providing clarity for navigating challenging situations.
- ▶ Notice if specific locations or situations increase your stress and anxiety. Once you have identified triggers, do your best to avoid or prepare for them.
- ▶ Practice self-care. Being in an unfamiliar environment can be equal parts exciting and exhausting. Make sure you take moments to be alone as needed and know your limits for socializing and engaging in energy-draining activities.

**Please note: Some medications may be illegal and/or unavailable in the country you are studying so you will not be able to enter with or purchase them there. If you encounter issues with this, please contact your assigned US program contact immediately.**

- ▶ Exercise and/or get outside. Fresh air can do wonders for positively altering your mood and help you find and appreciate new places in your host community.
- ▶ Remember that your time abroad is limited; try to be present in the experience. Make a list of any foods, activities and locations you want to experience while abroad and focus on working your way through that list.

For additional resources, we invite you to review our Mental Health and Wellness Resource page on our website: [AIFSabroad.com/student-resources/mental-health-abroad](https://aifsabroad.com/student-resources/mental-health-abroad)

## STAYING IN TOUCH ABROAD

### CELL PHONES

If you are planning on bringing your phone, please remember these points:

- ▶ Make sure it is insured.
- ▶ Check with your cell phone provider to the prices for calls, texts and data while traveling internationally including deciding about a roaming package, and getting a SIM card to use in your existing phone
- ▶ Know how to turn off data roaming on your phone to use it with free Wi-Fi when available.



- ▶ Some students purchase an inexpensive cell phone once they are abroad. Most work on a pay-as-you-go basis with pre-paid minutes and this may be the cheapest way to make local calls while abroad. The AIFS Abroad overseas staff will be able to advise you.

## FREE WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH

- ▶ There are lots of free ways of connecting with friends and family and many free apps available that allow you to message, call or video call friends and family back home and friends and staff on campus. Some examples are Skype, Viber, and WhatsApp. Just be sure to research options before you go abroad.
- ▶ We advise that you download WhatsApp and any other app you plan to use before you leave the U.S. so they are ready to use when you arrive.

## INTERNET AND COMPUTERS

- ▶ Many places will have wireless internet access free of charge but remember it can be slower and less reliable than in the U.S. Any illegal streaming and downloading will not be tolerated.
- ▶ It is important for students to bring a laptop, tablet or Smartphone as they will be useful for studying as well as good for communicating with staff, other students and family back home. You are responsible for your own devices and their safekeeping. For this reason, it is always a good idea to check the program insurance policy regarding the personal effects coverage and the related limits to make sure you have enough coverage for any personal property such as laptops.
- ▶ Internet availability, signal strength and accessibility will vary greatly abroad.

## SENDING AND RECEIVING LETTERS / PACKAGES

Please remember that regular mail to or from the U.S. can take a long time to reach its destination. If you are not participating in a semester-long program, we strongly advise you not to have anything mailed from the US if you can avoid it.

Due to customs regulations, you are likely to have to pay a customs tax if you are sent a parcel while abroad. Once students are abroad, they are surprised to discover the paperwork, faxes, phone calls and the cost necessary to clear the packages sent to them and the delay entailed. Many documents including original invoices for the items shipped may be required by customs. Unfortunately, AIFS Abroad staff cannot do anything to help you with these procedures and cannot predict the cost of the custom fees.

If people from home want to send you a care package they must declare the contents as “used goods for personal use only.” They cannot send something new and declare it as used goods as customs often open packages to check the contents. Please try to deter people at home from sending you packages incorrectly labeled as used goods as they will be held up at customs, require time-consuming paperwork to get released and are often heavily taxed and therefore costly to recover. We cannot stress this advice enough.

If you must send or receive important items, FedEx or UPS should be used as they are safer and quicker and can be tracked.

Please do not ask anyone to send prescription drugs, vitamins, contact lenses, cosmetics, electrical goods and food or anything that could be mistaken for these items. Due to customs restrictions, these items cannot be shipped overseas.

In general, we advise you not to ask people to send mail to you especially near the end of the program or if you are on one of our shorter programs. AIFS Abroad and AIFS overseas staff are not responsible for returning any mail and packages that arrive after you depart the program.

# MONEY MATTERS

We recommend that you carry at least two forms of payment, a debit card for withdrawing cash and a credit card for emergency back-up.

## ATM/DEBIT CARDS

In almost all cases your U.S. debit cards can access money from the ATMs of most banks abroad but remember that you need a PIN to use the card. If you fail to have this number for your card you won't be able to use it. Make sure you contact your bank prior to departure to get your four-digit PIN. Also, without warning they may fail to work so they should not be relied on as the sole means of acquiring money. Students should contact their banks about withdrawing foreign currencies from their U.S. accounts. If you make an ATM withdrawal overseas it is a good idea to check your statement online and see exactly how much it is costing you in U.S. dollars.

AIFS Abroad staff overseas will be able to provide you with reputable convenient ATM locations.

## CREDIT CARDS

It is strongly recommended that you get a credit card if you do not already have one. Make sure the card has a chip and not just a magnetic strip on the back. The most recognized cards are Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted. You can take a cash advance from your credit cards if you have a PIN, but in general, they should be used only in an emergency, as interest rates are very high. You can get the PIN by contacting your credit card company.

Please keep in mind that credit cards are not accepted everywhere, especially U.S. style cards where you have to sign for your purchase. Always check if a business accepts your credit card before making a purchase. Many places have a minimum if you are paying by card. Please also have photo ID requirements so you may be asked for it at the time of payment.

## BANKING

It is very important that you contact your bank and inform them when and where you will be overseas, otherwise they may block your account when they see purchases abroad and getting them unblocked can be frustrating and will take time. You will only be able to access money from your checking account so please make sure that you transfer funds into this account.

Please keep your cards extra safe while abroad. If they are lost it can be a complicated procedure to get them replaced. In most cases your bank will only send replacement cards to your American address, not your overseas address, so you could be left without cards for a while. If your bank account has an online banking capability, it's a good idea to sign up for that service, so that you can see any transaction fees your bank is charging, the rate of exchange and generally manage your money more effectively.

You will not be able to open bank accounts during your stay abroad.







## PRE-PAID TRAVEL CARDS

A very good back up to a regular bank account are pre-paid cards, e.g. [usa.visa.com](http://usa.visa.com), Cash Passport: [www.cashpassport.com](http://www.cashpassport.com), or FairFX: [www.fairfx.com](http://www.fairfx.com). They are available in the U.S. before departure and can be pre-loaded and re-loaded at any time. They work in the same way as regular debit cards by using a PIN for withdrawals and transactions. They are a secure way of using money overseas and in the event that the pre-paid card is lost or stolen it can be replaced quickly. These have replaced paper travelers' checks which are no longer commonly used.

## WIRING MONEY

The fastest way to get money transferred to you while you are abroad is through Money Gram: [www.moneygram.com](http://www.moneygram.com) or Western Union-Money in Minutes: [www.westernunion.com](http://www.westernunion.com). This can be done at any Western Union or Money Gram office or online with a credit or debit card. Please bear in mind that it is expensive to send money this way, so it should only really be used in emergency situations. However, there is no charge to receive funds; all you need is some ID and the reference number (given to the sender of the money) to pick up the money anywhere in the world. The AIFS Abroad overseas staff will be able to give you the address of the nearest Money Gram or Western Union office should you need it.

## TIPPING

You will find that there are very different cultural differences to tipping depending on the country you visit. This will be discussed during your program orientation when you arrive.







## WHAT TO BRING

### PACK LIGHTLY!

Bring as little as you possibly can. Try not to bring more than one suitcase and one weekend bag. If you bring heavy luggage you will regret it. For the first few days, you will have to carry everything you pack through airports, on buses, up flights of stairs, etc. **Do not pack more than you can easily carry.** We cannot stress this enough. Please also consider that you will have limited storage space for your luggage in your accommodation.

AIFS Abroad strongly suggests that students leave any valuables and large sums of cash at home. Students are responsible for their personal belongings for the duration of their program. You can pack whatever type of clothing you feel most comfortable in, just be practical. Stick with basics that can be paired together to create several outfits.

Luggage sometimes gets delayed or lost so as a precaution, AIFS Abroad recommends that you pack a carry-on bag with anything you might need in case your luggage is lost e.g. a change of clothes, medicines, basic toiletries.

### BAGGAGE/LUGGAGE ALLOWANCES

International airline carriers expect passengers to adhere to their baggage allowance for trans-Atlantic flights. Airlines often charge a penalty fee for overweight or excess baggage. The fees vary from airline to airline, and in some cases, airlines will refuse to take excess pieces or overweight luggage. Please contact your airline directly for information regarding luggage restrictions and baggage allowances. As baggage allowance policies are set by the airlines and not by AIFS Abroad, AIFS Abroad accepts no responsibility for changes in airline luggage policy and does not pay for extra/overweight baggage fees under any circumstances.

Most intercontinental airlines also allow one standard size carry-on and one small accessory which can be a small purse, laptop bag or camera bag.

Remember that:

- ▶ Baggage allowances vary and can be more restrictive depending on the airline and destinations. Please check with your airline to determine your baggage allowances.
- ▶ Please check with your airline about the amounts of liquids (for example toiletries) allowed in carry-on luggage. Amounts that exceed the limit may be packed in checked luggage.
- ▶ Airline carriers can alter baggage allowance policies without notice



- ▶ Overweight baggage fees are determined by the airline and are solely your responsibility
- ▶ Baggage insurance is included as part of your AIFS Abroad Insurance policy. Some exclusions apply. Refer to the CISI insurance policy on your AIFS Abroad student portal for further details.

## MEDICATION AND VACCINATIONS

Students on a full semester program are required to have their physician complete and sign a Medical Exam form. This form is available on your AIFS Abroad student portal.

Make sure your childhood immunizations (measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria-tetanus, etc.) are up to date. Check the CDC website for more information about recommended vaccinations: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>.

While AIFS Abroad no longer requires a COVID vaccination for participation in our programs, it is recommended. Participants should be aware of the risks associated with participating in programs, including the risk of contracting COVID-19. All participants should agree to take all necessary precautions and follow prescribed protocols and guidance from relevant authorities, including adhering to travel notices and warnings from the U.S. Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you take prescription medications on a regular basis you should remember to:

- ▶ Carry a note from your doctor stating your medical condition, the purpose of the medication, dosage information and the brand and generic names of the medication. This is especially necessary if you will be carrying insulin, syringes, or narcotics.
- ▶ Keep all medications in their original containers with your name clearly printed on the labels.
- ▶ Pack all prescription medication in your carry-on luggage in case your packed luggage is lost or delayed during the flight.

**Please note: Some medications may be illegal and/or unavailable in the country you are studying so you will not be able to enter with or**

**purchase them there. If you encounter issues with this, please contact your assigned US program contact immediately.**

Do not ask anyone to send you prescription drugs, vitamins, contact lenses and cosmetics. Due to customs restrictions, medication cannot be shipped overseas.

## TOILETRIES

You will be able to buy all your health and beauty aids abroad, you just might not find your favorite brands. Bring the basics you use every day in travel-sized containers.

Prepare a medical kit with your favorite over-the-counter pain reliever, cold medication, vitamins, etc., which also may not be available abroad. For contact lens users, bring a supply of all the necessary solutions for the duration of the program. They cost several times more than what you pay for them in the U.S.

## LOST OR DELAYED LUGGAGE

If your luggage has been lost or delayed, do not leave the baggage reclaim area without filing a lost luggage report with the airline. Make sure you are given a reference and contact number for your claim.

When filling in a claim form in the baggage arrival you should give the address of the AIFS Abroad study center unless you are advised differently closer to departure. The luggage will then be delivered there.

AIFS Abroad recommends that you pack a carry-on bag with anything you might need for the first day in case your luggage is delayed.

Since staff are not allowed into baggage claims and customs, and airlines will not confirm the names of passengers on planes, it is impossible for staff to know if a scheduled student missed their flight or is just waiting to file a lost baggage claim. Therefore, please be sure that another member in the group informs

AIFS Abroad staff of the names of any student still waiting in the baggage hall.

# STUDENT CONDUCT/STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

As part of the AIFS Abroad enrollment process, all students sign an Agreement and Release form and Code of Conduct form in which they agree to abide by the rules of the program. According to AIFS Abroad policy, during the orientation meeting upon arrival, students must sign a Program Participation Agreement in which AIFS Abroad points out the rules of behavior as described below. If these rules are not followed the student will be asked to leave the program without the possibility of refund.

## INCIDENT REPORTING

AIFS Abroad is committed to maintaining a positive and inclusive environment. Remarks and actions that negatively impact members of our community are not acceptable.

Every program participant signs the AIFS Abroad Code of Conduct stating that they understand if they participate in discrimination or harassment toward participants and/ or members of staff, they are in violation of the AIFS Abroad Code of Conduct, and this action is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Discrimination and harassment include, but are not limited to, derogatory comments or actions based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex (including gender identity, gender presentation, and pregnancy), national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or parental status; unwanted advances, disorderly conduct, physical abuse, verbal abuse, microaggressions, threats, verbal or nonverbal intimidation, intentional or unintentional bullying, bias, stalking, exclusion, or coercion.

Any participant found to have engaged in discrimination or harassment (virtually or in-person) will be subject to AIFS Abroad-imposed discipline and/or legal action. Consequences imposed on any participant found to have engaged in discrimination or harassment may include, but

are not limited to, a written or verbal apology, facilitated conversations, counseling, disciplinary probation, and/or dismissal from the program. If a participant is dismissed from the program, there will be no refund of program fees.

If you have experienced / witnessed harassment or discrimination while abroad, you are encouraged to report the incident to AIFS Abroad onsite staff (in-person, or through email, phone call, text, or WhatsApp message). If you don't feel comfortable reporting to staff on-site—or if the incident involves onsite staff, email [reporting@aifs.com](mailto:reporting@aifs.com) with details on the incident and the individual(s) involved. Visit [AIFSabroad.com/aide](https://aifsabroad.com/aide) to learn more about our incident reporting process and see our definitions of harassment and discrimination.

## HOUSING WHILE ABROAD

The AIFS Abroad housing policy is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of all students and create a comfortable environment for everyone. You will have your own key to your residence hall, apartment, or homestay. Individual bedroom doors in homestays and apartments do not usually have locks. Typically, housing will be single gender and allocated based on gender identity and according to the preferences specified by each student. While AIFS Abroad will endeavor to accommodate student requests, all housing is allocated subject to availability.

Some U.S. universities stipulate that their students must be housed in single-gender accommodation thus students should check with the policy of their home university before completing this AIFS Abroad housing form.

## DAMAGES

All students will be billed for any damages or other charges incurred during the program.



# EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

AIFS Abroad is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the duration of your program in the U.S. and overseas. Students abroad should ALWAYS contact the AIFS Abroad overseas team first in the case of an emergency. Details on how to contact your overseas team will be provided to you prior to departure. The US emergency number listed below should be used for emergencies that arise during travel to and/or from your study abroad destination or if you or your family/support network cannot reach the overseas team.

## U.S. Emergency Numbers:

1-800-727-2437 from U.S.

1-203-399-5000 from outside the U.S. Make sure you dial your host country's exit code when calling.

## MEDICAL OR SECURITY RELATED EMERGENCY

In cases of medical or security related emergency students should contact our 24-7 emergency assistance provider, On Call International (Team Assist) and have their policy number ready to be provided. Your policy number can be found in your CISI insurance informational brochure.

On Call International Phone: 877-714 8179 (calling toll-free from within the US)

1-603-952 2660 (calling from outside of the U.S)  
Make sure you dial your host country's exit code when calling.

E-mail: [mail@oncallinternational.com](mailto:mail@oncallinternational.com)

Always remember to inform the staff first about your sickness and to collect the insurance form from staff before going to the doctor.

U.S. Embassy Details of U.S. Embassies, Consulates and Diplomatic Missions and their emergency services:

[www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov)



## CARBON OFFSET/ GREEN INITIATIVE

In response to the overwhelming global climate crisis, AIFS Abroad is pleased to make Sustainability a key priority. We understand that the only way to effectively combat this crisis and mitigate the effects of climate change is to drastically reduce our environmental impact. Therefore, AIFS Abroad has committed to reaching carbon neutrality by the year 2025.

What does this mean for you as a participant on an AIFS Abroad program? We've been moving to putting documents on your student portal rather than mailing them to you. We've reduced the amount of paper you're sending us.

We also hope that when you're on the ground you'll continue to use recyclable bags when shopping, taking public transport rather than individual car trips, and learn from green practices that your host country may have implemented that you can take back to your local community. Please work with AIFS Abroad overseas staff on initiatives.



**American Institute For Foreign Study**

1 High Ridge Park  
Stamford, CT 06905  
Phone: 800.727.2437  
AIFSabroad.com

