

GOING ABROAD

QUICK TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME TRAVELERS



UCSC STUDY ABROAD



BOOKING AND PLANNING

Compare Airfares

You should always shop around to be sure you're getting the best rate on a flight. Travel search sites such as Expedia, Kayak, Skyscanner, etc., serve as good starting points when comparing airfare. However, as a student, you have access to even lower deals through student travel sites (keep in mind that for some of these sites, you may have to provide proof that you're a student). Student airfare websites for discounted travel include STA Travel and Student Universe, among others. For more information on student travel sites, visit:

<https://www.tripsavvy.com/student-airfare-finders-and-student-travel-agencies-3150448>

Also, flight tickets tend to be cheaper at the beginning of the week, so check on a Tuesday or Wednesday to be sure you're getting the best deal!

Make Sure Your Passport is Valid

Your passport must be valid and have at least six months remaining after your program end date. For more information on obtaining or renewing a passport, visit travel.state.gov

Research Vaccination Requirements

Some countries require proof of certain vaccinations (such as yellow fever). To find what, if any, vaccinations are required or recommended for your host country visit

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Contact Your Bank

Always be sure to contact your bank and credit card company BEFORE you leave. You must let them know the locations (your host country plus any other countries you will visit) and dates you will be gone to avoid interruptions in service. You should also inquire about international ATM fees and if your bank has a partnership with a bank in your host country to avoid hefty bank fees.

Access Money Abroad

There are a lot of options when it comes to taking money overseas, from cash to your everyday credit or debit card. While you can request foreign currency from your bank, it is a good idea to wait until you arrive in your host country to ensure you are getting a good exchange rate. Many travelers take a little bit of cash to exchange at the host country airport to have money on hand (for public transportation, a snack, etc.). However, you should primarily use a debit card to withdraw money as needed. It is often a good idea to take out the maximum amount that you can at the ATM, which you can stash and use over a period of time (ATM fees can add up very quickly).

You should also look into getting a credit card that has 0% foreign transaction fees. That way, you can use your credit card and not have to worry about acquiring added costs for everyday purchases.

LUGGAGE AND PACKING

For **INTERNATIONAL** flights, most airlines allow 1 free carry on luggage (that should not exceed 9" x 14" x 22" inches), 1 personal item (such as a purse, briefcase, laptop bag, or small backpack), and 1 checked bag up to 50 lbs (23 kg).



Carry-on luggage (such as your carry-on bag and personal item) is stored in the overhead bin of an airplane and under the seat in front of you. As such, there are certain restrictions you must be aware of (check your airline for more information).

Checked Luggage refers to bigger suitcases stored below the aircraft. Items such as clothing, liquids over 3.4 oz., books, footwear, etc. should be stored in your checked bag.

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN PACKING



PACK LIGHT - We cannot emphasize enough how important it is to pack light. Not only does it make your airplane and flight experience a lot less overwhelming but it also ensures that you're not stuck with pounds worth of unnecessary items. Remember—you can always purchase anything you've forgotten when you arrive in your host country!

Pack your Important Items and a Spare Outfit in your Carry On Bag - Unfortunately, checked luggage goes missing quite frequently. If this happens to you, it's best to be prepared. In your carry-on luggage, you should pack things such as your passport, important documents (e.g. your foreign address, program acceptance materials, in-country staff contact information, etc.), airline tickets, laptop, cell phone and charger, prescription medications (in original containers), a change of clothing, travel size toiletries (not to exceed 3.4 ounces that fit in a 1-quart sized resealable bag), a toothbrush and toothpaste, a pen/small notepad, camera, and headphones. That way, if your checked luggage does go missing, you have the most important items with you. Everything else can be replaced.

Pack an Adapter - Different countries around the world use different plugs and adapters. We recommend purchasing a worldwide adapter that can be used anywhere, which generally include a couple of USB ports for ultimate convenience. Remember, an adapter is simply an adapter, not a converter. If you want to bring your hair dryer, electric razor, etc., you may need a voltage converter. Be sure to check the voltage levels for outlets in your host country.

Make Photocopies of Important Documents - It's a good idea to have a photocopy of all important documents such as your passport, photo IDs (e.g., driver's license or state ID), school ID, credit cards, and debit cards. Keep these copies separate from your originals. Additionally, consider buying a money belt to prevent pickpocketing and theft while abroad.

DEPARTURE DAY



Arrive at the Airport Early

It's best to arrive at the airport at least three hours early for international flights. This will give you enough time to check in, go through security, purchase food, and use the toilet once or twice before boarding your flight.

Bring an Empty Drink Bottle and Snacks

Bring an empty drink bottle that you can fill up once through security. This will also help you avoid spending money on bottles of water during your study abroad program. TSA (short for Transportation Security Administration) also allows you to bring food. For more information on what foods you can bring through security, visit <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/food>

Don't Forget Headphones

Even if you don't plan on listening to music on your flight, you should pack a pair of good quality noise canceling headphones to have while abroad.

Attach Distinctive Features to your Luggage

If you're checking your luggage, it's a good idea to attach a little distinguishing feature to make it easier to spot on the conveyor belt. Something simple like a ribbon, a patch, or stickers works great. Attaching something distinctive to your luggage could also come in handy if it goes missing.

Pack a Travel Pillow

Even if you don't use them for their intended purpose, having a travel pillow close by will prove to be a great idea.

Take a Jacket or Hoodie on the Plane

Even if you're heading to the desert, you'll be thankful you have a jacket on the plane. Planes get cold, and the higher up you fly, the colder they get.

Going through Security

When going through the security line, be prepared to remove coats, shoes, belts, watches, and other metal objects. Also, be sure to place all carry-on items in bins provided, remove laptops and tablets from cases, take out carry-on liquids, and follow ALL instructions. Do NOT panic if you are selected for further screening, this is randomized and completely normal. Be aware that TSA has the right to ask you to open your bag for hand inspection. When you get through security, proceed DIRECTLY to your gate so that you know EXACTLY where your gate is located, and listen for boarding announcements, as they may start as early as an hour BEFORE departure.



BOARDING THE AIRPLANE

Below is a list of things to be aware of when boarding your aircraft:

Listen for announcements and follow them explicitly.

Flights will board by sections or seating rows as printed on your boarding pass.

If your flight is full, you may be asked to check your larger carry-on at the airplane door.

Once on the plane, stow your carry-on immediately and sit in your assigned seat.

Exit rows are usually larger but sometimes the seat doesn't recline or there is no proper tray table.

Turn your phone on airplane mode. Once you land in your host country, turn your data roaming OFF (unless you have an international data plan with your carrier).

USEFUL TRAVEL APPS

As a conclusion to our quick tips, below you will find a list of useful cell phone apps to use while abroad.



GateGuru - With GateGuru, you can look up any major airport in the world and view real-time departure, arrival, and gate details for all flights. You can see if a flight is delayed, has landed, is boarding, is on-time, or is canceled, etc. You can also look up the terminal you are in to see what restaurants, shops, bars, and other amenities are near you.



XE Currency - With XE Currency, you can choose any foreign currency you want, type in an amount, and it will give you the equivalent of that amount in any other currency that you need. It's better than a calculator because it already knows the actual exchange rate. It also updates the exchange rates every time you open the app with a Wi-Fi connection.



WhatsApp - WhatsApp is a free messenger app for smartphones. WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, images, audio, or video. The service is very similar to text messaging services, however, because WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, there is no associated cost! This is a great way to stay in touch with family and friends internationally.



Skype - While Skype is most often used to video call people around the world, you can also use it to make phone calls while overseas. All you need to do is put money on your Skype account. Ten dollars will last you a long time if you don't use it much, and it solves the issue of not being able to make calls overseas. As long as you have WiFi, you can make calls to any phone number with the Skype app, dialing just as you would normally. Note: This is for making outgoing calls only, not receiving incoming calls.



XOOM - Xoom is a PayPal service that provides worldwide money transfers. It allows users to send money and pay bills. Through Xoom, you can send money from a US bank account and pick it up in local currency at a designated pick up location in your host country.



TripAdvisor - The TripAdvisor app allows you to look up restaurants in your local area and check out other people's reviews. You can search categories like "cheap eats" or specific types of food like "pizza" and see how others have ranked the places around you. Restaurants ranked 1-5 in a geographic location are usually not to be missed while abroad!



Expensify - Expensify is an automated tool for expense report management. If you want to keep track of how much you are spending weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly for budgeting purposes, this is a great app. Moreover, you can generate reports on how much you spend on different categories such as food, entertainment, transportation, etc. Expensify also allows you to enter expenses in your local currency and automatically converts them into US dollars.