

FSU INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

MAPPING YOUR IDENTITIES



Identity Development Abroad

College provides students the freedom to explore and form their social identities through new experiences. Traveling also gives individuals the opportunity to view their identities from a new perspective. The decision to study abroad comes with a wide variety of emotions as you navigate this life-changing experience. Study abroad can be a driving force for personal growth, change, and discovery.

This guide is designed with your wellness and safety in mind. Let it help you start the process of self-reflection before going abroad and encourage you to become a better ally to your fellow students. Each section highlights various identities and reflection questions to consider before setting out on your adventure abroad! This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a starting point as you begin your identity exploration. There may be multiple identities you relate to and the lenses through which you view and experience them may vary. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact International Programs.



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Not every section in this guide may be part of your identity but reading it entirely will help you understand others on your program and be better allies for them.

FSU is committed to values of diversity and inclusion. However, keep in mind your host culture may not share the same values.

The key to success abroad is respect, both for your cohort and the host culture.



WELLNESS

Student wellness is paramount to a successful study abroad experience. As you explore your identities abroad, it is important to consider your overall wellness throughout the process. Preparation, research, and self-care are at the heart of having a great experience abroad. While on the program, keep an open mind, withhold judgment, try new things, and explore who you are. After all, self-discovery is one of the greatest benefits of study abroad!

On the next couple of pages, you'll find some wellness reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad.



WELLNESS

Overall Wellness

- ▶ How do you plan to remain physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy while abroad?
- ▶ Are you aware of the resources available to you at FSU in Tallahassee and abroad regarding personal health?
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with the international health insurance included in your program fee and what it covers.
- ▶ Consider how your involvement(s) at home may change while you are abroad (e.g., work, community involvement, clubs and organizations, academic commitments, etc.).

Physical & Sexual Wellness

- ▶ Are you currently being treated for serious injury or disease? What will care for this look like abroad?
- ▶ What does sexual health mean to you?
- ▶ What does sexual safety mean to you?
- ▶ Consider participating in on-campus workshops focused on relationship safety, such as Green Dot.

Mental Wellness

- ▶ What strategies can you develop to manage the stressors of a new environment?
- ▶ What do you need to successfully manage your mental health abroad? What steps will you take to address these needs?
- ▶ Will you want to consult with a mental health professional while abroad?

Emotional & Social Wellness

- ▶ What are you most looking forward to during this experience?
- ▶ What experiences might challenge you while you are abroad?
- ▶ What are you expecting to learn during this trip and how might traveling change you?
- ▶ How do you plan to engage with other students and locals while abroad?
- ▶ What do you need to feel prepared for this experience?



WELLNESS

Medication & Diet

- ▶ How likely are you to encounter allergies in your study abroad location? What steps will you take to minimize the risk and/or plan for treatment?
- ▶ Have you considered how dietary restrictions can be accommodated abroad? Will your main source of nutrition be available abroad?
- ▶ Will your medications (prescription or otherwise) be available abroad or do you need to bring them with you? Will you be able to replenish prescription medication while traveling?
- ▶ Do you have medications you need to collect before going abroad? Do you need a larger quantity prescription than usual to accommodate how long you will be abroad?
- ▶ Are there legal restrictions in your host country for any medications you are taking?

Financial Considerations

- ▶ How do you plan to maintain financial wellness abroad?
- ▶ How much money will you budget for recreation?
- ▶ Have you found a way to manage your budget?
- ▶ Are you aware of the currency exchange rates between your host country and the US?

The background is a solid yellow color. On the left, there is a large, dark green, irregular shape. In the center, there are three red, elongated, rounded shapes arranged in a slightly curved line. On the right, there is a smaller dark green shape and a light blue circle. The word 'ABILITY' is written in a bold, dark green, sans-serif font on the left side of the page.

ABILITY

While accessibility can look different abroad, International Programs wants to provide you with resources to help you have an enriching experience during your program. Understanding differences in accessibility resources and being prepared before you go abroad can help promote a smooth travel experience.



ABILITY

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ If you have not registered with the FSU Office of Accessibility Services be sure to do so if you would like to receive accommodations (e.g., extra test time). On the application, indicate you will be studying abroad.
- ▶ If you are registered with the FSU Office of Accessibility Services, be sure to connect with your accessibility specialist to discuss how accommodations might apply while you are abroad.
- ▶ Have you communicated your accommodation needs to International Programs?
- ▶ What accommodations might you need while abroad (e.g., a refrigerator for medication, specific room needs, etc.)?
- ▶ What financial obligations related to your disability (that are not covered by the provided health insurance) do you need to prepare for (e.g., medication, equipment, doctor's visits and treatments, etc.)?
- ▶ If your disability is mental-health related, what are specific environments, events, or situations that might trigger the aspects of your disability?
- ▶ How could your study abroad program and its facilities, potential excursions, classes, etc. impact your experience?

- ▶ Are you willing to disclose your disability to others? If so, how will you disclose your disability and to whom?
- ▶ What are the cultural attitudes toward visible and invisible disabilities in your host country?
- ▶ How accessible are places in your host country (consider unpaved roads, availability of elevators and ramps, etc.)?
- ▶ How will you respond if people give you unsolicited help?
- ▶ Consider how smaller class sizes and interactive learning experiences might be beneficial to your learning style.

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ How can your disability both inform and enrich your experience while abroad?
- ▶ How can you share your perspective of what you are learning and experiencing with your peers and others?



FIRST- GENERATION STUDENTS

Being the first person in your family to go to college can come with unique concerns as you navigate the experience. With the abundance of information that comes with starting college, studying abroad might not be at the forefront of your mind. However, deciding to go abroad can open doors to a variety of incredible experiences that can benefit you during college and beyond!



FIRST- GENERATION STUDENTS

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ Consider the resources available to guide you through the study abroad process, (i.e., the IP website, deadline information, academic and financial advising, social media guides, etc.).
- ▶ How can you explain the personal value of studying abroad to your family?
- ▶ If your family has concerns about study abroad, be sure to contact IP to speak with someone about it.
- ▶ How long are you willing to be away from family and friends?
- ▶ How far away do you feel comfortable being from family and friends?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Do you plan to stay in communication with your family and friends while abroad? If so, how will you maintain communication?
- ▶ Do you plan to find a community with shared values and interests? If so, how?
- ▶ How can you navigate feelings of nervousness or homesickness that may arise as a result of being abroad?



LGBTQIA+ & GENDER IDENTITY

As you prepare to go abroad, think about your LGBTQIA+ identity within a global context – including cultural attitudes and perceptions. Research and reflect before going abroad and think about other social identities you may have that could affect your experience overseas.

International Programs has students, staff, and faculty who identify as LGBTQIA+ and many allies who are an important part of our IP family. Many IP staff members around the globe have participated in the Allies & Safe Zones trainings and are an available resource to you.



LGBTQIA+ & GENDER IDENTITY

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ How does your study abroad location view the LGBTQIA+ community?
- ▶ Research your host country and its cultural practices, beliefs, and laws.
- ▶ Participate in FSU Allies & Safe Zones workshops.
- ▶ Speak with a trusted mentor or campus resource (e.g., Pride Student Union) about your thoughts on going abroad.
- ▶ How could your gender expression or sexual orientation impact your study abroad experience?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Is there a local LGBTQIA+ community you can connect with or resources for you while abroad?
- ▶ Do you plan to stay in touch with your support system? If so, how will you do that?
- ▶ If possible, what can you do to create bonds of trust among your cohort and create a support system while abroad (e.g., sharing and honoring pronouns)?



LANGUAGE, HERITAGE, & NATIONALITY CONSIDERATIONS

Perhaps the most impactful part of studying abroad is being immersed in another culture. In preparing to experience the culture of your host country, ponder how your own heritage, nationality, language skills, and citizenship might affect your travels abroad.



LANGUAGE, HERITAGE, & NATIONALITY

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ Understand that if you are of the same nationality of the host country but were raised elsewhere, you may be identified as someone who is not native to the country.
- ▶ If you are a person who shares the heritage of your host country but were raised elsewhere, how will you be perceived while abroad?
- ▶ What does it mean to be bicultural?
- ▶ Are you used to being part of the cultural minority at home? If so, how might it feel to be a part of the majority abroad?
- ▶ How could your citizenship affect your visa status?
- ▶ What are the perceptions of your home country in your host country?
- ▶ Research the perception of English language use in your host country.
- ▶ Learn basic phrases in your host country's language before going abroad. Don't be afraid to make mistakes – they're a great way to learn!
- ▶ What resources are available to you if there is a language barrier? What steps will you take to overcome this language barrier?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Realize your potential advantage of speaking the host country's language compared to your peers who do not.
- ▶ If you are a person who shares the heritage of your host country, and it is your first time there, do not be discouraged if you are not adjusting as quickly as expected.
- ▶ If you are a person who shares the heritage of your host country, what aspects of the culture do you relate to?



RACE & ETHNICITY

International Programs believes each person's culture and background enrich experiences abroad. One of the best aspects of studying abroad is experiencing diversity in culture, ethnicity, and race in other countries. With that said, different countries have different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Before going abroad, research the diversity of the country, how certain groups of people are perceived, and what others who have gone before you have experienced.



RACE & ETHNICITY

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ How will your race and/or ethnicity be perceived while in your host country?
- ▶ Research your host country's cultural norms.
- ▶ Reach out to others about their experiences abroad regarding race and/or ethnicity.
- ▶ Have you explored resources on campus that can support your efforts in understanding your race and/or ethnicity in a global context (e.g., Center for Global Engagement, Student Government Agencies, etc.)?
- ▶ Consider the availability in your host country of products and services you utilize (e.g., hair care, skin care, etc.).
- ▶ Consider how people may react to how they perceive your identity.
- ▶ Will you be perceived as being the majority race/ethnicity in your host country?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ If you experience stares or discrimination in your host country, how will you react? Is it appropriate to respond openly to such gestures? If so, how can you do so respectfully?
- ▶ How can your racial and/or ethnic background inform and enrich your experience abroad?

RELIGION

An important part of being abroad is exploring what you believe and learning about what others believe and how they live their lives. Pondering the role religion may or may not play in your life is useful as you journey to a country where the minority and majority religions and laws regarding religion may be different than what you're used to.



RELIGION

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ Is religion a prevalent part of the culture in which you will be studying?
- ▶ How does your host country view certain religions? How does your host country view atheists/agnostics?
- ▶ Will you be part of the religious minority or majority in your host country?
- ▶ Recognize that access to places of worship may vary while abroad.
- ▶ Is it safe for you to wear religious clothing and/or symbols in your host country?
- ▶ How will you feel participating in academic and cultural excursions to places of worship? How can you be respectful of those places of worship?
- ▶ If you have religious dietary restrictions, how will they be accommodated in your host country?
- ▶ How will you communicate your religious needs to those you are living with?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Recognize that in some countries there is no separation between church and state.
- ▶ Be respectful of local laws regarding religion.



SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Study abroad is an important financial decision and hopefully these tips and reflection points will help you navigate the process of planning your finances before and during your time abroad. The key to successfully financing your trip abroad is research. Do your research on the many scholarships available to help fund study abroad, how your existing financial aid may apply, and what is included in your program fee. The world is within your reach, but it takes a bit of work to figure out how to make all the pieces come together. But don't worry, we're here to help get you there.



SOCIO- ECONOMIC

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ Consider meeting with International Programs' financial aid advisor before applying and/or before departure to plan how you can afford to go abroad.
- ▶ Can your financial aid be applied towards the cost of your program? If so, are there any eligibility requirements for financial aid?
- ▶ Be sure to research scholarship opportunities early in the process for options on how to fund your study abroad experience.
- ▶ When are scholarship deadlines? Do you need to plan ahead for letters of recommendation?
- ▶ What amenities are and are not included in your study abroad program?
- ▶ Could there be any additional or unexpected costs (e.g., extra baggage fees, clothing, personal travel, etc.)?
- ▶ What is the cost of living in your host country compared to home?
- ▶ Develop a budget before you go abroad of how much you will spend while there (e.g., food, transportation, cell phone, activities).
- ▶ How will you be respectful of other students who may have larger or smaller spending budgets than you?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Stick to your budget.
- ▶ How will you communicate your financial boundaries with your peers who may have different expectations than you?
- ▶ Are there any student discounts on dining, sight-seeing, etc.?
- ▶ Are there affordable sight-seeing activities available within your host country?



STUDENT ATHLETES

As a collegiate athlete, your sport can be demanding – but there is a whole world out there waiting to be explored! Studying abroad can be an opportunity to consider your identity outside of your sport. While your participation in your sport may not last a lifetime, memories and lessons learned while abroad certainly will!



STUDENT ATHLETES

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ Talk to your coach about going abroad.
- ▶ With your coach, come up with a communication and training plan that is reasonably attainable based on your program, courses and resources.
- ▶ Search for opportunities to continue training in your program location (i.e., available facilities, other athletic opportunities for cross-training, etc.).
- ▶ Is it possible to use your time abroad as a mental and physical break from your sport?
- ▶ Will your athletic aid apply to your program? What other scholarship opportunities or funding options exist?
- ▶ How will you balance your academics, training, and international experience?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Reflect on what is important to you outside of your sport.
- ▶ Enjoy the moment! If you can, try not to stress about training and competition. Think about how your mind and body might benefit from the rest.



VETERANS / MILITARY

As a veteran or military-connected student, you may have served or are currently serving in a country outside the United States. Reflecting on that experience can help prepare you for your academic endeavor in a foreign country.



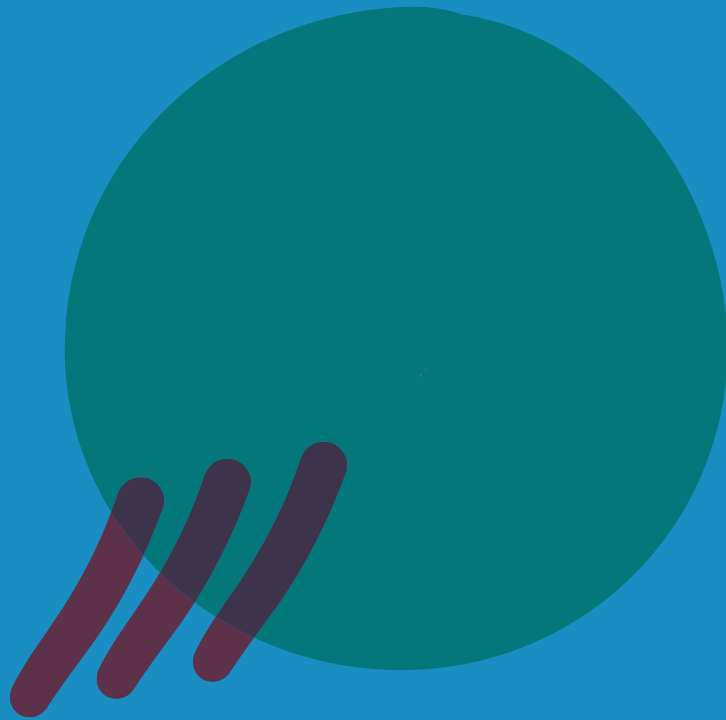
VETERANS / MILITARY

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ How do your veteran/military benefits apply to you while studying abroad (e.g., VA, DoD, etc.)?
- ▶ Will you need to list your military service on your visa application? If so, how might that affect your visa?
- ▶ As an active-military student, how do you obtain clearance before traveling out of the country?
- ▶ How will any security clearances you have be affected by you studying abroad?
- ▶ In addition to your military passport, will you also need and do you have a civilian passport?
- ▶ As part of your military service or training, will you need to maintain a fitness regimen while abroad? If so, will there be facilities for you to use?

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ How can your distinct perspectives and previous global endeavors contribute to particular experiences while studying abroad?
- ▶ How will your military service be received among locals in your host country?
- ▶ Has the US military been involved in prior action with or in your host country? If so, what is the perception of those actions among locals?



WOMXN

Studying abroad as a womxn can be liberating and exciting, but there are also unique considerations to traveling as a womxn. Prepare yourself by researching local laws and traditions regarding womxn in your host country. Be comfortable as yourself abroad while staying aware of your surroundings and thinking about how you could be perceived while traveling.



WOMXN

Reflection questions and tips to ponder before going abroad

- ▶ What are the social norms and practices related to gender in your host country?
- ▶ In your host country, traditionally, what role do womxn play?
- ▶ Are there traditional expectations surrounding dress in the location you are traveling to? Consider requirements for entering historic, government, and religious sites specifically.
- ▶ What strategies can you use to ensure your safety while abroad? Consider the buddy system, having a communication plan, etc.

Ideas for while you're abroad

- ▶ Going outside of your comfort zone can be a great learning experience, but how can you maintain your safety and mental health if an experience is more uncomfortable than you expected?
- ▶ How could your perspective as a womxn inform and enrich your experience abroad?

Resources

Allies & Safe Zones
Athletics Department
Center for Academic Retention & Enhancement (CARE)
Center for Health Advocacy & Wellness (CHAW)
Green Dot
Interfaith Council
International Programs Office
Office of Accessibility Services (OAS)
Office of Financial Aid
Student Government Association Agencies
Student Veterans Center
University Counseling Center

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References

Institutions

Arizona State University
Brown University
George Washington University
Middlebury
NC State University
University of Chicago
University of Kansas
University of Michigan

Organizations

Forum on Education Abroad
ISEP Study Abroad
Institute for Study Abroad
US State Department
US Transportation Security Administration
United Nations

Websites & Publications

Diversity Abroad
GoAbroad.com
I'm First: A Strive Initiative
Talking Religion: Religious Diversity in Study Abroad Advising by Timothy Lynn Elliott (BYU) and Lorien Romito (Babson College)



FSU International Programs | Diverse experiences worth celebrating