# **PLANNING CHECKLISTS**

**Regardless of which program you select, studying abroad is an unforgettable adventure.** Before traveling to another country, do more than prepare your passport and pack your suitcase. When it comes to planning a study abroad trip, timing is everything.

Pay close attention to dates and deadlines, especially when:

* Applying to programs
* Securing financial aid and financing
* Ordering your passport, visa, and/or residence permits (Research if you need a passport, visa, or residence permit before going abroad.)
* Completing all medical requirements (Arrange vaccines, prescriptions, and medical and dental check-ups before departing for study abroad.)

**Additional considerations include planning for any dietary restrictions.** Plan to bring protein powder, vitamins, and other dietary supplements, and inform others if you have dietary restrictions.

**Finally, plan and create a list of emergency contacts.** This will help ensure you can be contacted in case of an emergency while abroad, as well as ensure you can contact others to receive care.

The following chronological checklist helps you organize the steps to prepare for your trip, from one year before departure to your arrival date. Use this guide to avoid unnecessary stress and plan a hiccup-free departure!

ONE YEAR BEFORE DEPARTURE

**Apply for a passport.** A year before departure may seem early, but the passport application process can take several months. COE will need your passport when it comes time to make travel arrangements. To obtain a visa, you must have a passport that is valid for six months after the date you plan to return to your home country. Even if you have a valid passport, you may need to renew it. You must have a valid passport for six months after the date you plan to return to your home country.

*Passport Checklist*

Find everything you need to know regarding what qualifies as evidence of U.S. citizenship and personal identification and what size and quality photos you need at travel.state.gov.

According to the U.S. Department of State, here are six suggested steps.

STEP 1: Complete and Submit Form DS-11: Application for A U.S. Passport. You can get the form online, but you must present it in person.

STEP 2: Submit evidence of U.S. citizenship to include previously issued, undamaged U.S. passport, certified birth certificate, consular report of birth abroad, naturalization certificate, certificate of citizenship

STEP 3: Present Identification at the Time of Application Previously issued, undamaged U.S. passport, Naturalization Certificate, Valid Driver's License, Current Government ID (city, state or federal), Current Military ID (military and dependents)

STEP 4: Submit a Photocopy of the Identification

STEP 5: Pay the Applicable Fee

STEP 6: Provide a Passport Photo

EIGHT TO TEN MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

Pay close attention to application deadlines, as they may arrive earlier than expected.

**Apply for scholarships/financial aid and build a BUDGET for your trip**. Studying abroad can be expensive if you consider non-program paid dining, travel, and more. Financial aid may be needed to cover these costs. Deadlines to apply for scholarships and funding vary and require early applications.

SIX MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

**Start the visa application process**. The process of applying for a student visa is different for each country. If you're a U.S. student, consult the website of your destination country to determine what that country requires for a student visa. A short term abroad may not require a student visa, only a passport. Check with the program coordinator.

**Get student health insurance.** Your visa may require you to prove that you have coverage for unexpected medical bills you might incur while studying abroad. Check to see if your primary or school-sponsored insurance or program-sponsored insurance offers coverage abroad and if it is suited to your needs and budget. Being prepared is essential.

It may be beneficial to consider an international student health plan to cover eligible costs related to injury and illness, mental health disorders, outpatient prescription drugs, and more.

**Schedule a physical with your doctor.** Your visa may require a physical, but even if not, this doctor's appointment is an excellent opportunity to get any necessary vaccines, obtain prescriptions for enough medication, and address any other health needs to last your entire trip.

FIVE MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

**Confirm housing.** COE encourages you to work through trusted sources to identify your housing. For example, a trusted program partner, a trusted relative, or a trusted community member. COE study abroad housing is included in the program. Your roommate(s) will be assigned.

THREE MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

**Consider your preferred payment methods abroad and develop a weekly budget.** Plan to have some U.S. dollars on hand and consider exchange rates and fees. Exchange rates to change U.S. dollars to the host country's currency can fluctuate daily.

**Be conscientious about credit card charges that fluctuate daily with currency exchange rates and include international fees.** ATMs also have withdrawal and foreign transaction fees. Remember that you must report currency and monetary instruments of over $10,000 when traveling internationally. For more information, click here - <https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-195?language=en_US>

**As a U.S. student, you can register your trip with the local U.S. Embassy and use the free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (**[**STEP**](https://step.state.gov/)**) to maximize safety and security.** Registered travelers receive alerts about safety conditions in their destination country, including emergencies, weather, civil unrest, and more.

TWO MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE

If you are taking medication for a health-related problem, ensure that your medicine is legal in your study abroad country by checking with the embassy or high commission in your study abroad country. Be sure to have an advance supply and carry your prescription with you.

**Ensure that your passport is in your hands or on the way.** You can often check the status of your passport online.

**Identify methods of communication.** Look into an international phone plan or WhatsApp.

Confirm your transportation. Check with COE program leads regarding airport expectations and meet up upon arrival. Review airport maps to ensure that you have an idea of where you are meeting them. Confirm your return flight.

**Continue to research your study abroad country.** Educate yourself on customs, transportation, sites of interest, religion, and the cost of everyday items. Read news about current events in your host country. Prepare to dress according to the region, weather, and country's cultural norms. Do your research! If the locals dress modestly, don't show up in leggings and a crop top. Be strategic about what you bring with you abroad and leave some extra space in your bag for all the cool, new souvenirs you'll bring back home.

**Ask critical questions of anyone who has been to that location.** For example, ask how to locate the nearest medical facility in an emergency.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

**If you have not received your passport two weeks before departure, please check with your TRIO director and congressional representative to facilitate an investigation into the process.** Your Member of Congress can contact the appropriate government agency, such as the U.S. Department of State, on your behalf to inquire about the status of your passport application. Representatives can seek expedited processing or provide additional information that might help expedite the process.

ONE WEEK BEFORE DEPARTURE

**Make a backup electronic and/or paper copy of all important documents, including your I.D., passport, visa, acceptance letters, insurance coverage, prescriptions, and credit cards.** Print a copy and email it to yourself or create a folder on an online platform that you can access quickly.

**Create an "important phone numbers and addresses" document to take with you on your trip.**

Plan to communicate with friends and family abroad via Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, or Facebook Messenger.

**Decide whether to have your mail held or forwarded.** If traveling during an upcoming election, check with your Secretary of State to ensure you can vote while abroad.

**Inform your bank, cell phone provider, and credit card companies that you'll be out of the country.** Make sure you know the applicable international fees.

**Confirm airline and arrival arrangements twice.** Make sure you know your airline luggage restrictions.

**Focus on getting rest, eating healthily, drinking plenty of water, building up your immune system for the anticipated travel, and preparing yourself mentally.** You may go through several ups and downs, but this is normal. Get excited about your time abroad, which will surely be a wonderful lifetime experience.

**Prepare a packing checklist.**

Remember the essentials: passport, prescription medicines with prescription labels, local currencies, travel-sized toiletries, power adapters, and face masks. It's essential to bring and secure photocopies of your passport and visa in case the originals get stolen.

When packing your carry-on luggage, include important documents, medications, one set of undergarments, a shirt, pants, socks, and a sweater or sweatshirt. DO NOT PACK razors, pocket knives, or scissors in your carry-on luggage.

**Pack light!** Opt for a sturdy backpack instead of large suitcases. You will have to carry your luggage; in many cases, the buses or trains cannot accommodate extra luggage. An overhead roller suitcase is useful for putting the backpack on as well.

**Eliminate items that are not essential.** Don't take anything you would hate to lose. Leave all unnecessary credit cards, expensive jewelry, or irreplaceable family objects at home! Leave room in your bags for items acquired abroad.

* COE Keith Sherin Global Leaders Study Abroad participants developed a packing list to assure other TRIO students are prepared for their study abroad program experience. [Get the list here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xzB8XRC0bLnj10cVsjSGZVirF4uz25o7/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=117048782447573322747&rtpof=true&sd=true).

**Review your packing list and purchase any last-minute items.** Many travelers have suggested packing light and purchasing "extras" upon arrival. After packing, walk in and out of the house three times with all your luggage to ensure you can handle your luggage on your own (if you cannot control the weight, you may have packed too much.)

**Remember that large or heavy bags may be subject to additional baggage fees.** Additionally, many public transportation methods cannot accommodate two large bags.