



Student Handbook

Tips for Making the Most of Your Experience of a Lifetime



www.isep.org

About ISEP

ISEP is a worldwide network for international education with over 300 member institutions in 50 countries around the world. As a nonprofit organization, ISEP has provided affordable exchange and study abroad opportunities to over 37,000 students since 1979.

ISEP members implement programs and designate staff to be local ISEP Coordinators. Your home ISEP Coordinator serves as your advisor and provides a pre-departure orientation. Your host ISEP Coordinator will be available to help with arrangements, provide on-site orientation upon arrival, and serve as your local resource.

The ISEP-Central Office, located in Arlington, VA, is staffed by a number of professionals with study abroad or other international experiences. ISEP-Central responsibilities include the following.

- » Coordinating exchange and study abroad programs with member institutions
- » Maintaining printed and online information about ISEP programs and facilitating student resources such as the ISEP Facebook Group and ISEP Ambassador volunteer program
- » Reviewing applications and making placements for over 3,400 students per year
- » Providing training for ISEP Coordinators at member universities and assisting them in resolving conflicts and emergencies with students
- » Reviewing student evaluations to monitor program quality

Dear Student,

Congratulations on choosing ISEP, a challenging and enriching immersion program for studying abroad!

As an ISEP participant, you are now part of a group of independent, mature, and resourceful students who strive not only to engage in classroom learning but also to discover other cultures, gain intercultural and interpersonal skills, and—for some—excel in a second language. At times you may be stretched past your comfort zone, but keep in mind that you are the creator of your own ISEP experience. Take advantage of the opportunities that await you with patience, creativity, and an open mind.

In the coming weeks, you will need to spend time preparing for this journey. The more you know about your program and host country, the easier it will be to adapt to the new culture and university. We hope this handbook, which we recommend bringing with you abroad, and the additional ISEP online resources will serve as a good starting point for your research.

**Best of luck as you begin your
EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME!**



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ISEP Benefits and Obligations

Essential Documents: IIS and PPAF

(Read these documents thoroughly)

Specific information about your ISEP benefits and obligations are detailed in your **IIS** (Institutional Information Sheet) and **PPAF** (Participant Placement Acceptance Form), which are given to you by your home ISEP Coordinator. Your IIS describes the benefits provided by your host institution, and your PPAF defines the conditions on which you have accepted your placement. These essential documents contain very important information, and you should keep them with you during your time abroad.

ISEP Program Options

ISEP offers two types of programs: **ISEP-Exchange** and **ISEP-Direct**. The benefits and obligations described in this section generally apply to both program types. However, some ISEP-Direct programs have variations in the benefit packages, such as opting out of meal plans. See your IIS and PPAF for the specifics of your benefits.

ISEP-Exchange programs are based on the exchange of benefits between institutions. As a participant, you pay a fee to your home institution based on the cost of regular tuition, fees, housing, and meals,

thus creating a “place” and set of benefits for an incoming international student. Each international student makes a similar arrangement at his or her home institution, creating a “place” and a set of benefits for you at your host institution.

ISEP-Direct programs all include tuition and administrative fees, but housing and meal benefits vary by program (check your host IIS and PPAF). As a participant, you pay a fee that covers the benefits of your ISEP-Direct program. Specifically, your host institution bills ISEP for provided benefits, then ISEP bills your home institution, which collects the fee.

ISEP Benefits: What’s Included

ENROLLMENT: As an ISEP student, you enroll in a full-time academic program at your host institution and are guaranteed a full course load as defined by the host institution. Access to all courses cannot



ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“It’s important to look at specific course descriptions, availability, and schedules and to have back-up options.”

be guaranteed as some may require prerequisites or be closed, limited to certain years, or unavailable due to scheduling conflicts between departments.

FEES: Mandatory registration fees—along with all other required fees, such as those covering student union membership,



athletic facility use, and social activities—are covered for ISEP students. Optional fees—those not required of all students—are not covered through ISEP. In addition, fees for cross-registration at another institution, regardless of whether it is an ISEP member, may not be covered.

ORIENTATION: Your ISEP program includes an orientation at your host institution before classes begin. Orientations vary between institutions and may be designed for all international students or specifically for ISEP students. Refer to your IIS for further information and plan to arrive on campus by the Official Date of Arrival indicated on the IIS.

HOUSING: Housing benefits apply to students on all ISEP-Exchange programs and to those on ISEP-Direct programs that include housing benefits. Housing, or a stipend covering the cost of housing, is available from your Official Date of Arrival (indicated on the IIS) to the last day of your placement period (Last Date of Benefits indicated on the IIS), including vacation and examination periods. The IIS provides specific details about your host housing arrangements, which may include student residences, apartments, or host families. In some cases, you may

be assigned interim housing when you arrive and have a specified period of time to make housing arrangements for the duration of your placement. Please note that changes in any housing arrangements can only be made with the approval of your host ISEP Coordinator.

MEALS: Meal benefits apply to ISEP-Exchange students and to those ISEP-Direct students who choose program packages that include meals. A minimum of 19 meals per week are provided during each semester. You may receive a cafeteria meal plan, meals provided by a host family, or a stipend. Stipends suffice for normal student fare, usually in the subsidized student cafeteria, and are not meant to cover restaurant costs or non-food expenses.

BENEFITS DURING VACATIONS: Housing is provided throughout your placement, including during vacations. However, your housing may change for that period of time. You may, for example, move to a room in a residence hall that stays open during vacations, live with a host family, or receive a temporary housing stipend.

Meals are provided during vacations that occur within each semester, but host institutions are not required by ISEP to



provide meals during vacations between semesters. Your host institution is not obliged to convert vacation benefits to a stipend should you decide to make other arrangements or travel.

The Southern Hemisphere academic calendar runs from February/March to December. For Southern Hemisphere sites, unless otherwise noted on the IIS, vacation benefits do not apply during the break between academic years (December–February/March). However, ISEP vacation benefits do apply during the recess between semesters (June–July).

Students from institutions on the Southern Hemisphere academic calendar who plan to study in Northern Hemisphere countries for an academic year should be aware that the Northern Hemisphere academic year typically runs from August/September to May/June. If your placement crosses different academic years, you will not receive vacation benefits during the summer vacation period (June–August).

EQUIVALENT VS. IDENTICAL BENEFITS:

As an ISEP student, you have the opportunity to enroll in classes; participate in the activities of your host institution; and receive housing, meals, and services. However, you will not necessarily receive identical housing,

meals, and services to those you leave behind at your home institution. Because higher education is funded differently throughout the world and exchange rates fluctuate, the monetary value of your exchange benefits may not be identical to the amount you paid your home institution. ISEP, in other words, is based on equivalent and not identical benefits.

In addition, because of social and political differences between countries, student services and other benefits differ greatly across institutions. Adapting to differences between your home and host institutions is part of the ISEP experience. As you settle into your host institution, avoid making quick judgments about arrangements that have been made for you. Take the time to find out what the typical accommodations are for local students. Also, try to get a sense of the customs and values of your host culture. Adjusting to host living patterns and standards may be one of the most difficult challenges you face as an ISEP student, but meeting this challenge will give you an insider's perspective on the culture.

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES: Your IIS may provide an estimate for the local cost of living for many of the expenses below; these expenses are not covered by your ISEP benefits.

- » Administrative study abroad fees charged by your home institution
- » Books and supplies
- » Laboratory or special course fees
- » Language courses and optional excursions not covered by benefits
- » Meals during the semester break for full-year students
- » Refundable housing and utility deposits
- » Optional fees for apartment services such as phone or internet
- » Housing accessories such as linens

- and kitchen supplies, if not provided
- » ISEP health insurance and health care services (insurance may cover services, but you may have to pay up front and be reimbursed)
 - » Travel (airfare plus train, bus, or cab fare for arrival and daily travel)
 - » Fees for passport, visas, and required immunizations
 - » Personal spending

the institution's support systems, and help you deal with problems throughout your stay. The name and contact information for your host ISEP Coordinator is noted on your IIS. Your host ISEP Coordinator is an employee of your host university with part of his or her duties designated for ISEP. Most coordinators work in the international office of the host institution; some are professors with a special interest in international student services.

Your ISEP Obligations

When you accepted your placement by signing the PPAF, you agreed to certain conditions defined in that document. Please familiarize yourself with those conditions. If ever you consider withdrawing from ISEP or returning before the end of your placement period, please review the PPAF and consider the consequences and implications. For additional information, refer to this section in the online version of the Student Handbook at www.isep.org under Placed Students.

If You Have Questions

The first person to talk to, particularly if you have major problems with your ISEP benefits, is your host ISEP Coordinator. He or she can give you the most immediate assistance relating to any difficulty at your host university.

If your host ISEP Coordinator cannot help you or does not refer you to somebody in the institution who can, you may email your home ISEP Coordinator for assistance and copy ISEP-Central at info@isep.org.

ISEP seeks to ensure that benefits and services (as outlined in the ISEP Terms of Participation for Institutional Members) are provided by member institutions. In cooperation with host ISEP Coordinators, ISEP will work to resolve any difficulties and discrepancies therein. However, ISEP's responsibility to students does not extend beyond such endeavors, and ISEP is not liable to any student for benefits not provided by the student's home or host institution.

Your Host ISEP Coordinator

Host ISEP Coordinators are the primary link between ISEP and host institutions. They make housing and meal arrangements prior to your arrival, arrange for orientation, connect you with



ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“You have to be proactive and assertive about figuring stuff out. If you have questions, you have to ASK.”

Before You Go

Passport

A valid passport is required for you to enter and leave your home and host countries. If you already have one, make sure it will not expire until 6 months after the end date of your program—in some cases this is a requirement. If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately and request the fastest service possible.

Keep a record of your passport number and make two photocopies of the identification page along with other essential ID cards or documents; carry one set abroad and leave one set securely at home. Having this information will expedite the replacement of your passport in the event that it gets lost or stolen.

US Citizens: See the US Department of State website (<http://travel.state.gov/>) for information about how to apply for a passport.

Visa/Residence Permit

Nearly every country in the world requires that foreign visitors obtain a visa before entering the country. A visa is often a stamp on a passport page that signifies an agreement on conditions of entry. In some cases, stays of more than 3 months require that you obtain a residence permit.

As a student, it is your responsibility to find out what documents you are required to submit to the embassy or consulate and to follow all necessary steps to obtain the appropriate visa or residence permit. Allow adequate time to obtain a visa to

travel abroad. Depending on your country of citizenship, you may need to allow a number of weeks or even months for your host embassy or consulate to process all the required documents. If you delay in submitting the necessary materials, ISEP can do little to assist in obtaining these documents. Therefore, please begin the process as soon as you know your ISEP placement site has been confirmed.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Contact ISEP alumni who have done your program before! They’ll have advice for you on how to prepare.”

Be sure you understand the type of visa you are receiving. The visa may require you to leave the country after a specified period of time or to maintain a full-time student status. It may also deny you permission to work for money. If you





violate the terms of the visa, you may be subject to legal action or deportation.

Check your online Country Handbook at www.isep.org under Placed Students for more specific information regarding visas and residence permits.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Knowing you have your documents in order takes a lot of stress out of traveling.”

ISEP STUDENTS GOING TO THE UNITED STATES: You should only enter the United States as a J-1 exchange visitor using the DS-2019 issued by ISEP. For visa purposes, ISEP students are sponsored by ISEP, NOT by their host institution. DO NOT enter as a tourist (with a B-2 visa or no visa), as an F-1 student, or as a J-1 exchange visitor under another program.

If you must enter the United States on any other J-1 visa (i.e., J-1 camp counselor or J-1 Summer Work and Travel [SWAT]) before beginning the ISEP program, be sure

your J-1 visa covers both programs. If you enter the United States on a visa other than ISEP’s J-1/DS-2019, you must leave the United States and re-enter on ISEP’s J-1 visa/DS-2019. If you have difficulty obtaining your visa, contact ISEP-Central before you depart for the United States.

ISEP STUDENTS GOING TO ALL OTHER HOST COUNTRIES: Visa and residence permit requirements vary widely among countries. For current and specific requirements, you should contact your host country’s embassy or consulate. US students should note that many foreign consulates in the United States have regional locations and require you to apply to a specific consulate in your jurisdiction. An in-person interview or application submission may be required.

Customs Regulations

Before you leave, become familiar with your home and host country’s customs regulations. For students entering the United States, visit the travel section of the US Customs and Border Protection website at www.cbp.gov.

ENTERING A FOREIGN COUNTRY:

Customs declaration forms are distributed on planes and should be prepared before you land for presentation to the immigration and customs inspectors. Regardless of whether you have anything to declare, you must at least fill out the identification section of the form.

Upon entering a foreign country, you must show your passport, turn in your customs declaration form, and pass through a baggage check. Customs regulations and procedures—as well as the purpose, nature, and thoroughness of the customs check—vary by country. If you are traveling with unusual items or large quantities of any kind of goods, check with the appropriate embassy before departure to find out if such articles are prohibited.

Preparing for Your Absence

POWER OF ATTORNEY: Depending on the laws in your home country, it may be necessary to designate an individual,

usually a parent, to take care of banking or financial aid matters on your behalf while you are abroad. Find out what the proper procedures are and make these arrangements before you depart.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“A little foresight goes a long way, especially if you’re leaving for a while.”

TAXES IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY: You may need to arrange to have tax forms sent to you or have taxes paid for you while you are abroad. Be sure to know what your tax responsibilities are and how to comply while you are away.

VOTING: If there are important elections scheduled while you will be abroad, find out if you can vote by absentee ballot and make the proper arrangements to do so.

Flights • Hotels & Hostels • Rail Passes • International Student ID Cards • and More!



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ON THE DEDICATED ISEP LINE**

Call 866.557.8529 or
http://www.isep.org/students/sponsor_sta.asp to book

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Travel

Group travel is not arranged by ISEP, but the ISEP Facebook group is a great avenue for connecting with other students and finding a travel buddy. Airfare discounts for ISEP students under 25 years of age are available from STA Travel. Students are responsible for securing travel to the host institution; this most likely includes airfare and in-country bus, train, or taxi transportation. Be sure that you have a well-established plan for your arrival. See your IIS for helpful details and inform your host ISEP Coordinator of your travel plans. Bring directions, a map, addresses, and local currency for in-country transportation costs.

INTERNATIONAL DRIVING PERMIT:

Although driving in another country can be extremely hazardous, if you choose to do so, check with the nearest embassy or consular office to see if there are any restrictions or requirements for obtaining an International Driving Permit.

EXTRA PHOTOGRAPHS: You should carry additional passport-sized photographs with you to use for identity cards, visa applications, or university registration. In

some places, such as Europe, it is easy to obtain these from photo vending machines in airports or train stations.

PACKING: See your online Country Handbook for suggestions on what to pack, and check current airline regulations for weight and security restrictions.

Keep in mind that you must carry your luggage through airports and on buses and trains, so don't bring more than is necessary. Remember that you can buy most things such as clothes and toiletries in other countries. However, you will want to bring a few unique items with you from your university, state, or country as gifts for new friends.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Don't pack as much as you think you need. You'll buy things abroad and come back with more than you expected.”

While You Are Abroad

Adjusting to Your Host Culture

The term culture refers to the values, beliefs, customs, and other forms of behavior shared by members of a social group over a period of time. Culture acts as a sort of filter through which we perceive reality. The way we communicate is conditioned by our culture. Understanding your culture and the way it affects your attitudes and behavior will help you get along with people abroad and allow you to appreciate their culture.

It will be helpful to prepare yourself for the questions you are likely to get about your home country by reading up on current issues, domestic affairs, international policies, and important public figures. You may also want to know what ideas about your home country are common in your host country. Additionally, learn as much as possible about the culture and social, economic, and political situation in your host country before you depart. When you get there, try to understand how the local culture influences the way people act.

Below are some helpful approaches that anthropologists use when they observe another culture.

- » Observe, listen, and describe rather than try to prove your preconceived notions.
- » Try to be objective, but recognize that the filter of your own culture will always affect what you see.

- » Be persistent in asking questions and learn to ask the kinds of questions that elicit answers. Listen actively to the answers you get. Ask for feedback if you are not sure you understand.
- » Try to maintain a certain detachment. Practice being a participant and an observer at the same time, taking part in an activity while you stand back from it to observe others and your own reactions.

Discrimination Issues Abroad

ISEP does not tolerate discrimination on the part of its member institutions or participants; however, racial, sexual, and religious prejudice does exist in many countries. When dealing with such issues, keep your own cultural assumptions in mind before jumping to conclusions. It is possible that actions

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“This program will challenge and stretch you. The cultural immersion and conversations will be a unique learning opportunity.”

or questions that upset you may simply reflect people’s curiosity about you. Also, remember that you have choices in how to deal with these issues. Should extreme incidents arise, speak to your host ISEP Coordinator. If this does not resolve the issue, contact ISEP-Central.

Coping with Culture Shock

You will experience a range of emotions during and after studying abroad. Keep in mind that initial disorientation is a normal part of adjusting to a new culture. This feeling will soon pass and you will begin to enjoy your new experiences.

While it may be disconcerting, culture shock can be a growth process that increases your understanding of your host culture and of yourself. One of the most effective strategies to mitigate culture shock is to prepare yourself. The more you know about what to expect, the more comfortable you will be. Research the local history, politics, cultural norms, etiquette, and education systems. Talk to other students who have been abroad and

to international students at your home university before you go.

There are also many positive steps you can take upon arrival to help overcome potential feelings of loneliness. Here are a few suggestions:

- » Start keeping a journal when you settle into your residence.
- » Make friends and share feelings with other foreign students or advisors.
- » Improve your language skills and learn about your new school and neighborhood.
- » Get involved in an enjoyable activity that helps you meet people.
- » Plan excursions and participate in sports and recreational activities.



SUPPORT SYSTEMS: Although it is possible that you will be the only ISEP student from your home institution in your chosen program of study, remember that you are not alone. Your host ISEP Coordinator can be an important resource when dealing with any issues that arise during your program. Your host institution may also organize clubs for foreign students or groups where you can meet people dealing with issues similar to your own. If not, build your own support group. Find at least one person—a fellow student, professor, or host parent—to talk to if difficulties arise.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“No matter what, you’ll come out of this experience with more knowledge and a whole new perspective on the world.”

Staying in Touch with Home

Although it’s important to devote your time to seeking out new experiences and interactions, current technology also makes it easy to stay in touch with family and friends. Here are a few tips for communicating with them while you’re abroad:

- » Let your family know when you’ve arrived and inform them of all subsequent travel plans.
- » Use affordable methods of online communication such as Skype or instant messenger systems.
- » Contact your family if you know of an event in your host country that might cause them to worry (i.e., extreme weather conditions).
- » Notify your family when problems you have told them about have been resolved.
- » Do your best to try to solve problems on your own or with local help, as a minor difficulty may sound like a major crisis to someone at home.

2 Great ways

Save and stay in touch

Anywhere in the world!



Student Exchange International Cell Phone Service

Buy a pay as you go international cell phone service!

BUY A GLOBAL CELL PHONE
if you’re traveling worldwide

BUY A US CELL PHONE
if you’re coming to the USA




SIM Cards available for your own unlocked phone



Student Exchange Phonocard

The Global Phonocard with More!

JOIN NOW & receive bonus talk time

- SAVE UP TO 70% on calls home
- Free voicemail from family & friends
- Recharge anywhere, anytime

powered by 

TO JOIN & for more info visit www.isep.org/students/sponsor_ekit.asp

Tips for Cultural Immersion

Many study abroad participants see the sites and take photos but leave without a deeper knowledge of their host culture. On an ISEP program, you have the chance to create a different kind of experience. Here are a few suggestions to enhance the cultural element of your ISEP immersion:

- » Research the history and current events of your host country and city to better understand your new cultural environment.
- » Interact with diverse groups of local people, both young and old, to get a varied perspective on the culture.
- » Be prepared to engage with locals on a number of conversation topics, but be aware that certain topics may not be considered appropriate.
- » Develop positive, respectful relationships, being mindful of cultural differences and taboos. Remember that you are representing your nation, your university, and ISEP.
- » Practice your language skills without being afraid of making mistakes: they can be a great way to learn.
- » Take part in university or community groups such as language clubs, sports clubs, book clubs, churches, or cooking classes. Cooking is a great way to share in local traditions. (Consider bringing a recipe from home to share as well.)
- » Attend cultural events that are not typically for tourists. Ask your local friends what events are of interest and importance to them.
- » Avoid negative comparisons between your host and home countries. Food, religion, thought patterns, and social habits may seem strange, but keep an open mind and allow yourself time to understand them.



- » Consider keeping a journal so you can spend time reflecting on your daily encounters. This will help you deepen your understanding of your experiences and host culture.
- » Above all, remember that this is the experience of a lifetime! Have fun and enjoy your opportunity to be a participant and not a tourist.



ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Find a way to get off campus weekly through an internship or volunteer opportunity. Work on establishing this as soon as possible because it takes time, but it’s definitely worth it.”

Health and Safety

ISEP encourages students to be mature and responsible when managing their personal health and safety abroad. This section and the additional information in the online Student Handbook can provide you with resources. In the event of medical, safety, or crisis issues abroad, your first point of contact should always be your host ISEP Coordinator. Also, be sure that your legal guardians have contact details for both your home and host ISEP Coordinators.

Student Health Insurance Overview

ISEP has designed a comprehensive international health insurance program to meet your needs. Follow the directions that you receive with your ISEP acceptance packet to enroll online. You need to include proof of enrollment with the acceptance of your placement. All ISEP students and accompanying dependents are required to enroll in the ISEP insurance program (with some exceptions) as a condition of placement. This requirement will not be waived, even if you are covered under another policy. The basic reasons for this requirement are explained below.

- » The only way ISEP can ensure that all students are covered for the full study period abroad is by having them enroll in ISEP health insurance. It is impossible for ISEP to review individual health insurance policies and verify that each student is adequately covered.

- » The ISEP health insurance includes benefits that family health insurance may not, such as medical evacuation, repatriation, referral to physicians and hospitals abroad, and emergency assistance.
- » Proof of health insurance is required by consulates when applying for visas. Many consulates are familiar with ISEP's proof of enrollment and readily accept it as fulfillment of this requirement.

You must enroll and pay the premium for the full period of your placement—from the date of your departure to the date of your return, including periods of travel before or after your time at your host institution. If you fail to do so, ISEP will enroll and bill you for the premium plus a penalty fee. The ISEP student health insurance does not cover treatment received in your home country.

For more details on student health insurance, refer to the Health Insurance section of the ISEP website under Placed Students.

EXCEPTIONS TO ISEP HEALTH INSURANCE (NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE REQUIREMENT): ISEP students placed in certain countries are required to enroll in the host government-sponsored health insurance. In most of these cases, ISEP waives its health insurance requirement but strongly recommends that students enroll in an insurance plan that covers them until the national health insurance is activated. Additional coverage for medical evacuation and repatriation, as well as benefits while traveling outside of





the host country, is recommended. These benefits are all provided under the ISEP student health insurance policy, which you may purchase for periods of travel only or for your entire placement. For more information on national health insurance requirements, please refer to your IIS, online Country Handbook, or the Health Insurance section of the ISEP website under Placed Students.

Health Considerations

While abroad you may be exposed to unfamiliar climates, food, medicine, and health care systems. In many cases, common sense and a healthy respect for your own body (and its limitations) will help you avoid medical problems. A few preliminary precautions outlined in this section can also spare you much unpleasantness. (Additional information regarding medical emergencies abroad can be found in the Emergencies section of the online Student Handbook.)

ISEP MEDICAL FORM: All ISEP students are required to complete the ISEP Student Self-Assessment Medical Form enclosed

with your acceptance packet. A certain amount of stress due to culture shock or a change in living conditions is normal. In some cases, however, such stress may aggravate disabilities or illnesses that you have under control at home. This form will guide ISEP and your host ISEP Coordinator in making appropriate arrangements for you to receive the care and services that you need.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CHECKUPS:

Medical and dental checkups prior to your departure are essential. It is also a good idea to review your travel plans with your physician. Remember that only your physician knows your medical history and can advise you if a situation warrants more preventive guidelines than those outlined here. Frequently, health statements from your doctor are required to obtain a visa to enter your host country. Be sure to inform ISEP if your checkup raises any concerns not noted on your ISEP Medical Form.

SHOTS AND INOCULATIONS: Consult the Public Health Service in your area to find out about specific inoculations that you may be required to have before entering your host country or countries in which



you wish to travel. You may also consult the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) or the World Health Organization (www.who.int) for this information. Students going to Africa, Asia, and Latin America will likely need to receive several vaccinations before departing. (For specific information on these countries, see the Additional Health Information section of the online Student Handbook.) Below are general guidelines on inoculations for all students.

- » The polio, tetanus, and diphtheria boosters and a meningococcal vaccine are required for all students, particularly those living in student housing.
- » You should be immune to measles, mumps, and rubella through vaccine or physician-diagnosed cases of these diseases.
- » The hepatitis A vaccine is recommended.
- » Smallpox is considered to be eradicated by the World Health Organization. However, country regulations change frequently, so a vaccination may be needed.

Documentation of all inoculations should be taken abroad and may be required at your host university. Any inoculation

should be recorded with the officially approved stamp on the yellow form titled International Certificate of Vaccination as Approved by the World Health Organization. Forms or cards that are not properly stamped are not accepted by health authorities in many countries.

Since many inoculations require more than one visit to a clinic or cannot be taken together, you should plan appointments in advance. If you plan to travel outside your host country, check the health requirements for those additional countries.

What to Bring

MEDIC ALERT EMBLEM: If you have a specific medical problem, carry an internationally recognized medic alert emblem with you. For more information, visit www.medicalert.org.

MEDICAL RECORDS: Keep personal medical records with you in a secure and accessible place. Records should include ALL drugs you are taking, any chronic ailments, allergies, your immunization history, blood type, prior surgeries, eyeglass prescription, personal physician,

health insurance information, and your religion. Make a photocopy of these records to leave with someone at home in case your copy gets lost.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES: If you take prescription medicine, bring a supply that lasts your entire stay. Be sure to have written copies of your prescriptions in case a refill is needed. Your doctor may also recommend medications to bring if you are susceptible to a recurrence of an illness, infection, or allergy.

NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES: If you have any favorite over-the-counter remedies, you may want to bring a lasting supply. For customs purposes, take all medicines in their original containers.

SYRINGES: Because they can be construed as drug paraphernalia, bring a doctor's note if you need syringes (i.e., if you are diabetic or require medication by injection).

Staying Healthy Abroad

Some basic tips for all students appear below. However, if you are going to



Africa, Asia, or Latin America, check the Additional Health Information section of the online Student Handbook for more specific information.

- » Monitor your health. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to see everything and sampling all culinary delights. Moderation will pay off.
- » Eat a well-balanced diet and watch what you eat when traveling.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

"A good friend told me, 'Here is not There.' In other words, don't expect things to be the same as they were back home."

- » Check on the safety of water, meat, fresh fruit, and vegetables.
- » Take measures to prevent exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. Intimate contact can expose you to various bacteria or viruses, including AIDS and hepatitis B.
- » Know where to get treatment before a medical problem arises. Ask your host ISEP Coordinator for the name of a doctor and the locations of campus or community health care facilities.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS: Students with dietary restrictions may find it challenging to maintain their diet abroad. Here are some general tips:

- » Note any dietary restrictions or if you are a vegetarian on your ISEP Student Self-Assessment Medical Form. This information will guide ISEP and your host ISEP Coordinator in making appropriate arrangements.

- » You may wish to bring protein powder, vitamins, and other dietary supplements with you to ensure good nutrition while abroad.
- » Ask your host ISEP Coordinator or study abroad alumni for suggestions on maintaining your diet.
- » Food is an important part of any culture. Consider modifying your usual diet to better integrate into and explore the culture.
- » Be prepared to find a tactful way to deal with social situations in which you are offered specially prepared meals that may not fit your diet.

Personal Safety

You should take the same common sense safety precautions abroad that you would at home. Be aware of your surroundings, keep your valuables concealed, be prudent around strangers, and heed safety advice from your host ISEP Coordinator and local residents. Below are some general tips, but please refer to your online Country Handbook for more specific information.

MONEY AND VALUABLES: Students should take traveler's checks, cash, some host country currency (for use before finding somewhere to exchange money), and a debit or a credit card. ATMs are widely available in most large cities. When traveling to more remote areas, take local currency. Some debit and credit cards have an automatic restriction on international transactions. Check with your bank or credit card company before you depart.

- » Do not carry large amounts of cash with you; use a debit card and major credit cards instead.
- » Inform your bank or credit card company that you will be abroad so they do not block purchases.



- » Make photocopies of credit and debit cards along with other essential documents: take one set of copies abroad and leave one set with someone at home.
- » Do not rely on traveler's checks since not all businesses accept them. Use them as a supplement to cash, credit and debit cards.
- » Carefully guard your passport, visas, and other documents. Keep the originals secured in your room, and carry the photocopies with you, unless local law requires otherwise.
- » When traveling, utilize a money belt that can be worn underneath your clothing. Purses and bags can easily be cut or ripped from your shoulder by thieves, possibly causing injury in the process.

TIPS FOR SAFETY: Below are some general tips for staying safe when traveling or just going out on the town.

- » Make sure someone else always knows your itinerary.
- » Keep your eyes and hands on your bags at all times, especially when talking on the telephone or reading a sign or

train schedule. When you're distracted, you're an easy target for thieves.

- » Be mindful when handing your luggage to anyone. Thieves often pose as porters or drivers.
- » Plan your trip so that you don't arrive at an unknown town late at night without having made prior arrangements for accommodations.
- » When you stay at a hotel, make use of the provided safety deposit boxes. Leave your passport and money safely locked away.
- » If driving, keep doors locked and suitcases out of sight. Don't leave valuables in cars. Thieves target rental cars and vehicles with foreign license plates.
- » Avoid forming large groups of foreigners. But remember that there is added safety in numbers. Smaller groups attract less attention.
- » Don't go anywhere with strangers if you are alone.
- » Dress to blend in with the local population.

- » Find out which parts of town are considered risky by the locals and avoid those areas.
- » Always stay in well-lit and well-traveled places. Don't take short cuts through alleys or unsafe areas.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION: Attitudes toward alcohol consumption vary greatly from country to country. Whatever the local rules and customs, use moderation and good judgment; drinking may place you at risk because it reduces your awareness and ability to judge potential dangers. Excessive drinking has been identified as the single greatest risk factor for study abroad students.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Be prepared for challenges. Never forget why you decided to go abroad— that will help you get through the hard parts.”

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AVOIDING DANGER IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS:

- » Stay alert and trust your intuition when you feel you may be in danger. If you feel you may be getting into an uncomfortable situation, try to get to a safe place as soon as possible.
- » Learn the emergency number in your host country and use it when needed.
- » Don't be afraid to call attention to yourself or ask for assistance if you're in trouble. When calling for help, be specific about what you need.
- » Be aware of the effects of alcohol and drugs. These effects include impaired judgment and increased violent behavior.
- » Never leave your drink unattended.
- » Know your own limits and be supportive of other people's limits.
- » Do not go off alone with someone you don't know well or who makes you feel uncomfortable. Suggest staying with a group or going to a public place. Don't leave friends alone at parties, bars, or clubs.
- » Always bring money for taxi fare to a safe place. Change for a phone call in case of an emergency can be helpful as well.
- » Be aware that signals may not be interpreted clearly across cultures. If someone is pressuring you to have sex when you don't want to, say NO clearly. Be direct and assertive.

SELF-DEFENSE TIPS:

- » Always keep windows and doors locked, not propped open. At night, make sure your drapes, shades, or blinds are closed.
- » Make sure you can hear what's happening around you, especially if you are on the phone or wearing headphones.

- » Don't let strangers into your room or apartment. Never give them your home address on the phone or over the internet. If you observe a suspicious person, notify the police immediately.
- » Use a steady, confident pace when walking, and always be aware of your surroundings.
- » Wear comfortable shoes. Don't overload yourself with books or bags.
- » Carry your keys in your hand so you can get into your home quickly.

MORE SAFETY AND TRAVEL TIPS: U.S. students can check www.travel.state.gov for more information regarding various regions; planning your trip; how to register at the US Embassy; and tips for travel, health, safety, and living abroad.



ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Before you go abroad, make sure you read and learn about the country. It's very important to be aware of the social norms.”





Help From Your Consul

The consular officers at the embassy or consulate in your host country are there to advise and help you, especially if you are in serious trouble. Duty officers are on-call around the clock. They cannot serve as attorneys or give legal advice, but they can help you find adequate legal representation. See your online Country Handbook for embassy and consulate contact information.

- » If your passport is lost or stolen, report the loss to the local police and go to your nearest embassy or consulate on the next business day to apply for a new one. If you have a police report, photos, and proof of identification (or someone who can identify you), bring them with you.
- » If you need emergency medical care, the consular officer will help you get in touch with a doctor or clinic.
- » If you are arrested, ask permission to notify the consular officer at your nearest embassy or consulate. If you are turned down, keep asking politely but

persistently. The consular officer will visit you, advise you of your rights according to local laws, and contact your family and friends if you ask them to.

- » If you become destitute abroad, the consulate will help you get in touch with your family, friends, or bank so you can arrange to have funds sent to you.

ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Just be alert and prepared to deal with whatever comes your way. In the end, all the excitement and challenges will add up to an amazing experience you’ll be proud to look back on.”



Legal Requirements Abroad

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. There are no exceptions, so use common sense. Develop a cultural and political awareness of your area to avoid inadvertent misunderstandings and political difficulties.

When you enter some countries and when you register at hotels, you may be asked to fill out a police information card listing your name, passport number, destination,

local address, and reason for traveling. In some countries, you may be asked to leave your passport at the hotel reception desk overnight so it can be checked by local police officials. These are normal procedures required by local law.

Be aware that many countries have laws under which you can be held “guilty by association.” It is wise to avoid others who are in possession of illegal goods of any sort. Below are some useful pointers to avoid legal trouble.

- » Deal only with authorized outlets when you exchange money. Do not exchange money on the black market.
- » Avoid areas of unrest and disturbance, such as protests or riots.
- » Do not deliver packages for anyone unless you are certain they do not contain drugs or other prohibited items.
- » Become familiar with local regulations before you sell personal items such as clothing, cameras, and jewelry.
- » Don't assume that what is legal in your home country is also legal in other countries. Adhere to local laws strictly. The penalties you risk are severe.

DRUG ARRESTS: Drug laws vary by country and may be more severe abroad than in your home country. If you are



caught with illicit soft or hard drugs, local laws apply. Often, the penalties in other countries for possession are the same as for trafficking. Below are some other factors to keep in mind.

- » Some countries do not accept bail and may not provide a jury trial.
- » Pretrial detention, often in solitary confinement, may last for months.
- » Prison may lack even minimal comforts (i.e., bed, toilet, washbasin).
- » Prison diets are often inadequate.
- » If convicted, you could face a sentence of 2–10 years or death in some countries.

Put simply, it is a wise choice not to get involved with drugs while abroad. The apparent availability of drugs in some countries is illusory; often the dealer from whom you buy them will turn you in and be paid by the police for his or her services.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Some countries impose strict requirements about what may not be photographed (i.e., police stations and military posts). Taking a picture of a harbor or government office may seem harmless

to you, but it might be construed as a threat to the country’s national security. Before you take out your camera, check for any signs prohibiting photographs or ask an official if it’s okay.

Crisis Awareness

If a crisis occurs in a country you’re visiting, contact your family and the ISEP coordinator to reassure them of your safety. Keep abreast of the situation by monitoring your embassy’s website and listening to global news. Contact your embassy or consulate if you need help.

NOTE FOR US CITIZENS: The US State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs’s website, www.travel.state.gov, provides important information on crisis awareness and the services provided to US citizens abroad. Be sure to register with the nearest embassy or consulate when you arrive abroad.

THE PERFECT TRAVEL COMPANION

The ISEP Card is accepted as an identity card for students, youth (12-26 years) and faculty members around the world.

IT ALSO PROVIDES YOU MASSIVE DISCOUNTS ON:

- Airfares
- Accommodations
- Transportation
- Attractions
- Shopping & Services

PLUS:

- Worldwide medical benefits
- Airline/agency bankruptcy protection
- 24 hr worldwide emergency assistance

WWW.ISEP.ORG/STUDENTS/SPONSOR ISEP.ASP

Your Return

Planning Ahead

Before leaving your home institution, remember to plan ahead for your return by noting the following semester's financial aid and pre-registration guidelines. You may also want to make housing arrangements for your return.

Before leaving your host institution, make sure to give your host ISEP Coordinator a list of courses for which you expect to receive grades, fill out all necessary forms to receive a transcript, and pay any outstanding bills or debts at your host institution.

TRANSCRIPTS: Your host institution will send your transcript to ISEP by the date indicated on the IIS. ISEP will forward the transcript to your home ISEP Coordinator, who will facilitate the transfer of credits. If there are any problems, you and your home Coordinator can contact ISEP-Central and your host university to resolve them. If you will need additional transcripts, please order these before your departure.

PHOTO ESSAY CONTEST: The ISEP Photo Essay Contest is a great way to reflect on your ISEP experience and share your stories with friends and future students. Students may submit essays, photo essays, poetry, stories, or digital videos. For guidelines, see the online Student Handbook. All entries are posted on the ISEP website. The winner receives a cash prize.

ISEP STUDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION: It is very important to complete an evaluation of your ISEP experience. The form can be found in the online Student

Handbook. The evaluation is the only way ISEP can learn about your experience and review and improve the program for future participants.

ISEP AMBASSADOR PROGRAM: If you enjoyed your ISEP experience, volunteer to become an ISEP Ambassador. As an Ambassador, you can help other students prepare to go abroad and welcome international ISEP students to your campus. Email ambassadors@isep.org for more information.

Adjusting to Life at Home

Upon returning to your home country, you may feel slightly disoriented or out of place; it may be similar to what you felt when you arrived in your host country. This is called return shock or reverse culture shock. (For additional information on reverse culture shock, see the online Student Handbook.) These feelings are temporary and completely normal. But being aware of this phenomenon can help you deal with it proactively. The following are a few strategies to help you cope.





- » Take advantage of re-entry meetings offered by your home university.
- » Download music you've been listening to abroad and share it with people at home. Also, try cooking them your favorite dish from your host culture.
- » Consider integrating some host culture habits into your routine at home.
- » Become a mentor for foreign students on your campus, volunteer or work in your international studies or study abroad office. (The ISEP Ambassador program is a structured way to do this.)
- » Stay in touch with friends you made abroad. At the same time, it is important to strengthen old relationships and build new ones.
- » Submit an entry in the annual ISEP Photo Essay Contest to reflect on your experience. Your advice will also help future ISEP students!
- » Remember that the steps you took to adjust to your host culture will be useful for readjusting back to your home environment. Keep busy and set goals. Give yourself time to readjust and keep an open mind.
- » Consider ways to use what you've gained abroad by practicing your foreign language skills or planning for an international career.

Study Abroad on Your Résumé

Your international experience has given you an opportunity for personal development, along with the chance to cultivate your intercultural communication skills. These are valuable qualities for a potential employer. Make sure to include your ISEP experience on your résumé by adding the university where you studied to the education section. In the work experience section, incorporate any internship or volunteer experiences. Also, prepare some key stories for your interview to illustrate the intercultural competencies you gained abroad.

Graduate Programs Abroad

If you enjoyed your ISEP experience, consider attending graduate school at an ISEP member institution. You can apply for ISEP programs just as you did before and go abroad for part of your graduate degree. Check the Directory of Universities page on the ISEP website for graduate-level offerings, or see your home ISEP Coordinator.

Additional ISEP Resources

This handbook is only one of many guides to help you with your research as you prepare to go abroad. It is important that you also refer to the following resources for additional tools and information.

Resource Toolkit

Institutional Information Sheet (IIS):

This outline of your ISEP benefits included in your acceptance packet gives you the contact information for your host ISEP Coordinator, arrival instructions, and all the specifics pertaining to your host institution. Be sure to take it with you abroad and give a copy to your family.

Online Country Handbook: This resource provides vital information on daily life, travel, visas, education, and culture. A bibliography section offers links and suggested reading.

Online ISEP Student Handbook: The expanded version of this booklet includes links and additional information.

Online Photo Essays: Browse the experiences of other ISEP students to get a sense of what to expect and what may make your experience a success.

ISEP Facebook Group: Over 8,000 students contribute to discussions in our forum. Connect with other past and present ISEP students to find travel buddies, ask questions, get advice, and post photos.

Past ISEP Students and Ambassadors: Other students who have studied abroad

can be one of your greatest resources. ISEP Ambassadors are volunteers who are specifically chosen to help you, so find them on the Facebook group, or ask your home ISEP Coordinator for contact names and email addresses.

International ISEP Students at Your Home

Institution: There may be visiting ISEP students or other international students on your campus right now. Contact them to practice a language or just to become used to interacting with a different culture. They'll also be grateful for a local friend!

Pre-departure Orientation and Materials

from Your Home Institution: These vary by institution but can provide additional general guidance about study abroad.



ADVICE FROM ISEP ALUMNI:

“Take advantage of every moment—it sure does go by fast!”

Welcome Packet from Your Host

Institution: This will arrive after your acceptance. Be sure to read everything thoroughly and complete any necessary documents and forms.

ISEP SPONSOR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Information about ISEP's sponsors is included in this handbook as a benefit to them for their kind contributions to ISEP. ISEP does not specifically represent or endorse these products and services nor does it accept responsibility for the quality of any products, information, or other materials purchased or used as a result of access to them through ISEP.



Preparing to Go Abroad Checklist

LOGISTICS

- Make sure your passport is valid for 6 months past the end of your program.
- Make a photocopy of your passport to take with you; this can help you get a replacement if your passport is lost or stolen.
- Apply for a visa if needed. This can be a very lengthy process, so don't wait!
- Register at your home country's embassy so they know you're abroad. US students can do this online.
- Make two copies of all travel documents, ID cards, credit or debit cards, and other essential papers. Take one set with you, and keep one in a secure place at home.
- Share travel arrangements with your family, and make sure you know where to go once you arrive in your host country.
- Memorize the address and telephone number of your residence abroad.
- Exchange information with your home and host emergency contacts.
- If you have specific medical concerns, review the Health and Safety section of this handbook thoroughly. Bring an adequate supply of any prescription medicines along with a written copy of the prescription.
- Establish how you will pay your bills for school and personal affairs while you are away.
- Use the last page of this handbook to record important contact information.
- Buy an international calling card for emergencies. Research affordable services like Skype or cell phone options.
- Set up a power of attorney so a parent or relative can help with finances or emergencies.
- Make sure that your family or guardians are aware of your wishes in the case of serious injury or death.
- If applicable, register to obtain an absentee ballot so you can vote in your home country's elections while abroad.



ISEP SPECIFIC

- Read your host institution IIS carefully! Carry one copy abroad and leave one with someone at home.
- Enroll in required ISEP health insurance.
- Read your online Country Handbook to learn about your host education system and culture and to understand the visas you need to obtain. Links to other resources are provided there as well.
- Read this handbook and the information sent to you from your host institution thoroughly. There may be additional steps you need to follow such as completing housing or class registration forms.
- Check out the photos and essays from past students, and use the ISEP Facebook group to contact ISEP Ambassadors or alumni.

HOST COUNTRY

- Purchase a guidebook about your host country to read and bring with you. See the Resources section of your online Country Handbook for suggestions.
- Research the cost of living and quality of life in your host country.
- Find contact details for your home country's embassy in your host country.
- Research postal service options in your host country.
- Learn as much as you can about your host campus and neighborhood.

MENTAL PACKING

- Define and write down your goals for your ISEP experience.
- Familiarize yourself with the customs, social norms, and laws of your host country and other countries you will be visiting.
- Understand that you will be viewed as a representative of your home country, and prepare yourself accordingly. Be especially aware of current events and political news that people in your host country may want to ask you about.
- Plan strategies to cope with culture shock ahead of time. Have confidence that you will be able to adjust and adapt to the new culture, but remember that it takes time. Be patient with yourself and others during this process.
- Practice speaking, reading, and writing in your host country's language. Learn vocabulary that you will specifically need for a university setting.

Your Quick Fill-in ISEP Reference List

Host Residence Address Abroad:

Host ISEP Coordinator:

Name

Telephone

Email

Additional Host Contact:

Name

Telephone

Email

After-hours Host Emergency Contact:



Home ISEP Coordinator:

Name

Telephone

Email

Home Academic Advisor:

Name

Telephone

Email

Health Insurance Enrollment ID:

Contact the insurance administrator, **ASRM, LLC** for questions about medical benefits, coverage, and claims:

Website: www.helpwithmyplan.com
Email: iees@asrmlc.com
Toll-free in the USA: + (1) 844-898-8944
Overseas call collect: + (1) 856-380-1213

MEDEX Assistance Corporation for questions about assistance services, such as medical evacuation, repatriation, and medical referrals outside the USA:

ISEP ID: 319691
Web: www.medexassist.com
Email: operations@medexassist.com
Toll-free in the USA: + (1) 800-527-0218
Overseas call collect: + (1) 410-453-6330



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