

What you need to know about

STUDENT PREPARATION & SUPPORT

A) Pre-travel Orientation

In order for participants to be prepared for travel, a mandatory study abroad orientation must be held well ahead of departure. The ISS/SA Office will work with you to prepare this orientation. Information will include the following topics and generally takes 75 minutes:

- Contact Information (while abroad)
- Packing Information (including medications, appropriate clothing, etc)
- Study abroad Health Insurance Coverage and Health information tools
- Behavioral expectations – Student Conduct policies
- Health & Safety risks
- Culture Shock and Cultural differences
- Registration with US State Department “Smart Traveler Enrollment Program”

B) Onsite Orientation

An onsite orientation familiarizes students with the conditions of their study abroad site. Will your onsite orientation include:

- Neighborhood tour with clear information on how to return to lodging?
- Information on what to do in an emergency? Group meeting spot?
- Instruction on how to use local resources (transportation, food availability)
- Information on how to contact coordinators?
- Identification of local informational sources (concierge, teachers, guides, police)
- Reminder of local threats ? (i.e. Crime, Unsafe water, Tourist targets)
- Reminder of legal differences and how to stay free from arrest?
- Reminder of cultural appropriateness ?
- Reminder of conduct policies & consequences?
- Clear information on upcoming schedule?

C) Maintaining Good Communication & Rapport

Cell phones are now a necessity for group travel. Coordinators should be equipped to connect with students, local resources and Parkside. If Coordinators do not have a cell phone that is functional while abroad, a low cost phone (with international service) may be purchased upon arrival (contact information disseminated to the ISS/SA Office). Cell phone usage and expenditures will be paid by the project budget.

If even a small or remote incident occurs during the program, please ask students to contact their families. “Perceived emergencies” like an earthquake tremor, a regional bus accident or a political demonstration may not be remarked upon by students but could raise considerable stress for family members.

As students adjust to the pressures of group travel, cultural differences, and being away from home resources, it is important to establish a communication structure and rapport in which students feel comfortable approaching with issues and concerns. This sounds easier than it is. With the intense daily academic and logistical demands of the program, coordinators (who are usually in students’ company all day) can easily overlook this need. Consider instituting a “touch base” meeting each day, or having an “open chair” policy at your breakfast table. This strategy can prevent small issues from escalating. Post program student evaluations have indicated that this is a need that needs to be addressed.