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FOREWARD

Congratulations! By choosing to go on an off-campus program you have shown an interest in enhancing your liberal arts education and broadening your personal horizons through a greater knowledge of the world and its people.

As an Albion College student, you are always expected to follow the highest standards of integrity in your studies and in your personal conduct. This is even more important for the student who is participating in an off-campus study program.

You will be an ambassador for your home college and for your country. Your conduct will most likely be the determining factor of whether a particular program will be continued for those coming after you.

Therefore, common sense, good manners and an exceedingly large amount of tolerance and open mindedness are prerequisites for every student who wishes to study off campus.

Further, Albion College expects all off-campus participants to abide by all the rules and regulations set forth by the individual program director, university, or housing facility. Failure to comply could result in dismissal from the program/university or eviction from your housing.

This booklet intends to provide you with some important information that will make your sojourn abroad easier and more enjoyable. While this guide cannot possibly cover everything you need to know about studying abroad, we hope you will find it useful.

Albion College Center for International Education
306 Vulgamore Hall
611 E. Porter St.
Albion, MI 49224

Telephone: 517-629-0932
Fax: 517-629-0617
E-mail: cie@albion.edu

BEFORE YOU GO

At the general orientation for all students going on off-campus programs, you will receive information about things to do on campus before you leave so that your return here after your program will be as painless as possible. Here is a checklist of things to be done at Albion before you leave.

Have you:

- Arranged with Residential Life for your residence hall room on return?
- Told the Registrar which courses off campus will be for grades and which for CR/NCR (if you know this information already)?
- Arranged your financial aid, including mailing of loan or scholarship checks while off campus? Or, do you need a durable power of attorney for your loan check?
- Taken care of forwarding your mail, i.e., told family, friends, magazine subscription services, etc., that you'll be off campus?
- Communicate the best way to stay in touch. Meaning people will continue to try to use your cell number if you don't give alternate instructions.
- Arranged with Campus Safety for a parking space after you come back?

Soon after you are accepted into your program you will receive specific orientation information (by e-mail and/or snail mail) that will tell you about travel, arrival dates, program orientation, and life at that particular program site. Understandably, you are anxious to know all this right away, but at the time of our Albion orientation we may not know much of that yet. Be patient; it will arrive.

To get the most out of your experience abroad, it is highly recommended that you think of how you can integrate what you learn back into your academic program here. Can you do some research overseas that can be useful for papers you'll need to do when you return? Can you arrange to take courses when you return that will enhance knowledge gained abroad or that will offer you opportunities to write about what you have learned? Think about all this now, before you go. While you are on your program you may learn many things that you can integrate into your academic program at Albion.

As you go through all the preparations to go abroad, you will experience many different emotions. Students typically are very excited about traveling and are looking forward to the trip, which is to be expected. However, you may be surprised to hear that many students become anxious, especially in the last days before leaving. This anxiety could be about leaving home and missing family and friends. However, studies have shown that

there could be many other things that worry students, especially about the place where they are going. For example, students may have concerns about housing, course work, food, climate, language, health, having sufficient money, interacting with new people, unfamiliar currency, adjusting to new customs, extra-curricular travel while abroad, and local transportation. Add these to the concerns in recent years about terrorism and travel safety, and it is no wonder that students can get anxious. While we do not want to alarm you unduly, we want to tell you of how others have felt before they go abroad and let you know that you may experience these feelings as well.

What can you do to make your departure as painless as possible? Simply being aware of the possibility of anxiety can help to relieve it somewhat: it's a normal feeling, one that many have experienced, and you'll get over it in time. Studies have also shown that preparing well for the experience—reading all you can about the city and the country where you are going, working hard at your language skills, taking care of all the details about leaving the Albion campus, packing, etc.—is the best way to clear your mind of the “cobwebs of doubt” and make you feel more relaxed.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you get ready for this experience that many have called “the best part of my education at Albion College.”

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

A **passport** is a travel identification document issued by your country of citizenship. You need a passport to travel anywhere outside the United States. Start the passport application process as soon as you have decided to study abroad. The U.S. Department of State website, www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html, is an excellent source of information.

You will need two identical, color photos that are 2 x 2 inches in size. Passport photos are different from ID photos and must meet certain government specifications. Some post offices and some stores, such as Walgreens, do passport photos.

Travel tip: Take two passport photos with you in case your passport is lost or stolen.

You can pick up a passport application at a major post office or county clerk's office or download the form from the Department of State website given above. Note that first-time passport applicants, plus certain others, must apply in person. In addition to the completed application, you will need the following items when you apply for a passport:

1. Proof of U.S. Citizenship: either a previously issued passport, a certified copy of your birth certificate, or naturalization papers.
2. Present identification document: a driver's license, etc., and a photocopy of the ID document.
3. Check or money order made payable to “Department of State.”

4. Two identical passport photos.

If you have a valid passport, make sure it is valid for six months after your return to the U.S. If your passport will expire before then, you need to obtain a new passport. If you obtained your current passport before the age of 16, you cannot renew it by mail and you must reapply in person. Note: The new wallet-sized passport card cannot be used for international air travel.

Travel tip: Make two copies of the ID section of your passport, one to put safely away in your luggage and another to leave with someone at home, in case yours is lost or stolen overseas.

Some countries require that persons remaining within their borders for a longer period of time obtain a **visa**. The visa is issued by the consulate of the country one wishes to enter. Items needed for visa applications vary from consulate to consulate. Generally the applicant must present:

- A valid passport,
- Two passport photos,
- A letter from Albion College stating that the student has been accepted into the program in the respective country,
- An original letter of acceptance from your program,
- Proof of insurance,
- Proof of adequate finances for your stay, and
- Proof you will leave the country at the end of your stay. (A copy of your flight itinerary showing your return flight is usually sufficient for this last item.)

There usually is a visa fee. Several countries require an in-person interview at their consulate. Some require background checks, others involve a multi-step process. Some visas must be shown in order to board your flight from the U.S., others are acquired in-country. Do not postpone handling your visa application. Your study abroad program is the best source for visa information. However, you can contact the CIE if you need additional assistance.

NOTE: If you ever need to mail passports and other important documents, do it by registered mail. This is the safest and most reliable method of mailing.

HEALTH PREPARATIONS

Be sure to visit Albion's Health Services this semester. They will check your immunization records and advise you about what shots you may need. Some common preventive procedures include a tetanus booster, an MMR booster, a TB test and hepatitis shots. Please remember that study abroad can be stressful both physically and mentally. A healthy mind and body are necessary for a successful study abroad experience. If you

are experiencing any physical or emotional problems, it is essential you address them before leaving for your program.

- If you have not been feeling good, make an appointment with your doctor for a checkup.
- If you anticipate any dental work, get it done before departure.
- If you need an eye exam and new contacts or lenses, see your eye doctor.
- If you wear glasses, take along an extra pair and the prescription.
- If you are experiencing emotional problems, seek professional advice. Leaving the country will not make your problems go away—if anything, it will make them worse. On the other hand, if you are simply nervous about experiencing a different culture, don't worry. As we said earlier, you are not alone. Stop by our office to talk about your concerns.
- If you are having any physical or mental health problems, it is in your best interest to disclose them to your program. Your program will take the necessary steps to make sure the services you may need will be in place.
- International health regulations stipulate that vaccination against smallpox, cholera and yellow fever may be required as a condition for entry into the country. You may also want to be immunized against typhoid since the incidences of typhoid are also on the rise.

Generally, you will not need vaccinations for Western Europe, but since requirements change, it is best to check with Student Health Services, which has information on what shots are required for various countries. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has a hotline, 800-232-4636, and a website, www.cdc.gov, for determining if special vaccines are needed to visit a country or if there are dangerous disease outbreaks in that country. Also, the CDC has a special webpage, www.cdc.gov/travel, to further research health and safety tips for students studying abroad.

If you are traveling to Central or South America, Asia, Africa, the South Pacific or rural Mexico, ask your doctor to check the CDC's "Weekly Morbidity and Mortality Report" for information on communicable disease conditions. Regardless of requirements, it is a good idea to see Health Services or your own doctor to discuss what types of immunization you should have before leaving home. Remember, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Additional suggestions:

- Bring any prescriptions you may need written in generic terms.
- Take enough prescription medicine to last your entire stay abroad. Have your prescribed medicines clearly labeled in their original containers and carry the prescription to verify their content and legitimacy. (There have been reports of travelers who have been detained at borders because they did not comply with these requirements.)
- Pack a small first aid kit, with items such as Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, painkiller, antidiarrheal medicine, sunburn ointment, sunblock, etc.
- Know your blood type
- If you have an ongoing medical condition that requires monitoring and care, such as allergies or diabetes, you must take precautions to manage your illness overseas. Bring a supply of sterile syringes. Take a letter from your physician explaining your illness and authorizing the use of syringes. Check with the embassy or consulate of countries you intend to visit about restrictions on bringing in syringes.
- Take medical records, dental records, EKGs, and x-rays if you have any condition where these records might be needed.
- Accidents and illnesses are, of course, a possibility. Students are advised to ask their program advisor for names and addresses of qualified physicians soon after their arrival.

INSURANCE

Albion College provides foreign travel accident and sickness and emergency travel assistance services for students studying in international locations. The foreign travel coverage includes accidental death and dismemberment, emergency injury or sickness, emergency medical evacuation, emergency family travel, and repatriation, and is supplemental to the student's insurance no deductible applies for services. Emergency travel assistance services include direction, via an international phone line, to appropriate medical facilities, assistance with lost tickets and documents, etc.

Go to www.eiia.org/internationaltravel for your ID card and coverage details. Make sure you printout and carry the wallet card with you at all times. Please note that the wallet card is not a credit card or medical insurance card.

Make sure that you have an adequate major medical health insurance policy that will provide coverage while you are off campus. If your insurance is through a managed health care system (HMO or PPO), carefully check the requirements and eligibility rules

for care outside your area, especially abroad. You will want to ask your insurance company at least the following questions:

- How do I pay for medical expenses, prescription drugs, hospitalization, etc., overseas?
- If I do have a medical problem while abroad, how do I reach the company? (800 numbers do not work from overseas.)
- May I have an insurance card and claim forms to carry with me?
- How will my medical expenses be handled since I will be out of my managed care territory? (If you are in a managed care program.)
- What are the applicable deductibles?
- What are the applicable co-pays?
- What are the exclusions?

NOTE: Some countries, including Australia and Italy, require all foreign students (that's you) to purchase a national health plan policy. Generally, your program will pay this insurance premium as part of your program fees. However, it is best to ask your program for more details about insurance coverage/requirements. Sometimes this depends on the length of your stay and/or country.

EXCLUSIONS: Skydiving/parachuting, hang gliding, bungee jumping, mountain climbing, pot-holing, zip-lining, and motorcycle riding are not covered by Albion's foreign travel insurance.

Please see the EIIA International Travel Program Insurance flyer about automobile liability.

PRE-DEPARTURE TRAVEL HINTS

There are various ways of arranging travel to the country of your destination. You can make your own arrangements, work through a travel agent, or go with a group. If this is your first trip abroad, it may be a good idea to travel in a group—either with other Albion students who are going to the same destination or with a group flight arranged by the program you will be attending. If you book travel online, please read all information carefully and remember that the cheapest flights may not be the most convenient or wisest investment of your money. Always check international flight luggage restrictions and fees and be aware that there may be different luggage restrictions for in-country flights. Familiarize yourself with policies regarding liquids and carryon luggage.

While traveling in Europe, you will find that trains are dependable, efficient, and convenient. The European rail network is as extensive and accessible as the U.S. highway system.

If you are planning to tour several countries and explore a number of different cities, look into the various types of rail passes. Any travel agent can advise and give you details on the **Eurailpass, Eurail Youthpass, Britrail** and other travel passes. Note: These passes must be bought in the U.S. before you leave. Online purchase is also available.

Please note that sleeping cars are usually expensive, must be reserved in advance, and are not often used by traveling students. If you travel at night, be cautious about falling asleep. Sleeping passengers on overnight trains can be easy targets for thieves.

If you travel by day, don't hesitate to take along your own sandwiches, a bottle of lemonade, etc. Many people do this, as eating in the dining cars is expensive.

Most trains in Europe and in some Latin American countries have first and second class carriages and smoking and nonsmoking compartments. Most express trains have restaurant or buffet cars.

For information concerning train schedules, contact the information desk in the train station. There you will be told exactly when and where you have to change, how long you have to wait for your connections, whether your train runs on Sundays or holidays, and any available price reductions.

If you have time to spare before your train leaves and want to have a look around, you can leave your luggage in the station. Most stations have lockers.

Taxis are relatively expensive abroad. Of course, you will need one if you have heavy luggage. You will get a taxi at the rack outside the train station and there are taxi racks at various points in the cities. You can also order a taxi by phone. The driver's meter will show what you have to pay at the end of the trip. Generally the driver will expect a tip (about 10% of the fare).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT I.D. CARD

You may want to consider purchasing an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). It is widely recognized as proof that the bearer is a bonafide full-time student. The ISIC card is very useful for discount prices into entertainment events, museums, and for lodging. It also includes very limited accident and health insurance, medical evacuation, and repatriation benefits. You can purchase it online at <http://www.myisic.com>.

LUGGAGE AND WHAT TO BRING

The wise traveler brings only the amount of baggage he/she can carry alone. Sending luggage ahead is expensive, awkward and unnecessary. With careful planning you can eliminate nonessentials and make your travel and arrival much easier.

When beginning to pack, consider the following:

1. Each piece of luggage should be small enough to go up narrow stairways. In total, you should not bring more luggage than you can comfortably haul for three city blocks or up two flights of stairs.
2. Duffel bags are less expensive, not easily damaged and easy to store in your room. Buy a padlock for it. However, do not try to send a padlocked bag through airport security unless you use a TSA approved lock. Other locks will likely be cut off by the next time you see it.
3. Consider that you will be traveling on trains where your luggage has to fit the luggage rack, and must be shifted around (by you). A large enough bag to hold items for two-week vacation, but light enough to be carried, is essential.
4. Put labels inside all of your luggage and also on the outside. Glue labels on securely and use wire for tags; otherwise they come off in transit and then luggage cannot be forwarded.

Consult with those who have been there before you and find out what kinds of clothing are most advisable to bring. The program evaluation notebooks in the CIE Office are a good source for up-to-date information on what to pack and what to leave behind.

Consider these points. Heating in most countries is not the same as what you are used to in the U.S., so you will need warmer indoor clothing than you might wear at home. You probably will not need a heavy winter coat, but you will need layers of different weight clothing. Dry cleaning is expensive in most countries, so you should consider the practicality of wash-and-wear items. Usually, your regular campus attire is acceptable abroad also. However, some returnees say that normal dress at some programs is more up-scale than on the Albion campus. Remember also that you will be doing more walking and therefore will need comfortable, sturdy shoes that resist surfaces such as cobblestones.

Electrical appliances are best left at home, primarily because the voltage in foreign countries is different from ours and landlords/landladies frown on the steady use of electrical current. Also, on some programs you will be charged for electrical consumption.

Other useful items to pack include:

- Journal (see below)
- Small first-aid kit (see “Health Preparations”)
- Anti-diarrheal medication (avoid raw food and drink bottled water when you first arrive)
- Good language dictionary
- Camera (carry it yourself)
- Towels and face cloths
- Zip closure bags to protect bottles and tubes from leaks (also required for liquids in carryon luggage)
- Money belt/holster (for security in an insecure world)
- Small flashlight
- Costume jewelry (if you must decorate yourself)
- Batteries
- Sunscreen with a high SPF (this is very important for the southern hemisphere)
- Sunglasses
- Gloves, scarf
- Bathrobe and flip-flops for community showers and youth hostels
- Fold-up umbrella
- Photos or photo album to share
- Contact lens solution
- Your preferred over the counter medications (in original containers)
- Prescription medicines and prescriptions
- Your preferred toiletries (including dental floss)
- Bicycle lock and chain (for chaining your backpack or suitcase to the overhead baggage rail on trains and buses when traveling overnight)

When you have everything assembled, lay it all out and see if it will fit into your luggage. If it does not fit, start over. You will be sorry if you bring too much. Pack only essentials, but do not count on having things sent later. Check with your air carrier or travel agent on the size of luggage you are allowed on the airline(s).

Should you ship things ahead? Maybe, if you have the time to wait for them. Items shipped from the U.S. can take anywhere from several weeks to several months to arrive overseas. If you ship, you may want to do it the opposite way—from overseas back to your home—for such items as heavy winter clothes or books.

COMMUNICATION

Telephoning Overseas: Many students now purchase cell phones (“mobiles”) overseas. Cell phones are convenient, easy to use, and often less expensive than other ways to telephone overseas.

Also, a cell phone gives you instant access to your program and vice versa in case of emergency. Check with your program coordinator for more information. Often cell phones are provided and/or required.

If you need additional information about phoning to and from overseas, consult an alum of your program, travel books, your program coordinator, or the CIE office. You can also contact your telephone service provider for information about international calling plans and rates.

Skype: Many students and parents have found that Skype is a quick, easy, and inexpensive way to keep in touch while abroad. This free software program enables users to make on-line video and voice calls or call U.S. landlines or cell phones. Talk with your family and friends about using Skype while you're away. You may want to experiment with it before you leave the U.S.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Due to fluctuations in the exchange rate, it is important to understand the mechanics of carrying and exchanging money overseas.

An **ATM card** is very useful and many travelers consider the ATM to be the best method of obtaining funds. Generally, the service fee is low and you get the best exchange rate for the day.

In many countries you can use a **VISA** or **MasterCard credit card**. Cards must have the microchip for most places in Europe. Check to see what service charge your credit card company will add to your purchase price abroad. It is important to discuss money questions with other students who have participated in the program before you. If you plan to stay for more than one semester, you might consider establishing an account with a local bank. Your study abroad program will advise you on this.

Travel tip: Be sure your personal identification number (PIN) for any credit cards or ATM cards will work abroad. Also, notify your bank and credit card company that you will be abroad and the specific countries you will visit.

If you are wondering when and where to **exchange dollars for foreign currency**, you can check with your local bank. Some local banks either sell or can obtain foreign currency for you. They also will advise you on how to take money with you and how to send money to a foreign country. You may want to consider having at least a small amount of the foreign currency on you when you arrive to cover arrival expenses, especially if you will arrive during a weekend. On the other hand, most airports have currency exchanges or ATMs where you can handle an initial money exchange. The exchange charge or service fee for the transaction may be a little higher than at a foreign bank, but it may be more convenient than acquiring foreign currency in the U.S. You will need to have your passport with you each time you exchange currency.

Travel tip: Try to get rid of your excess currency, especially coins, before leaving a country. Exception: You can use Euros in the 19 Eurozone countries of the European Union.

Students going abroad may want to consider carrying some **travelers' checks** because they are easy to redeem within 24 hours if your other sources of money are lost or stolen. American Express Checks are the most popular simply because they have the largest number of offices throughout the world. Thomas Cook, Bank of America, First National, Citibank, and Barclay's are also reliable and acceptable.

In an emergency, Western Union is still one of the quickest, though most expensive, ways of **sending money abroad**. You can also have your parents or local bank forward money to a nearby American Express Office. Local banks also send bank drafts in dollars overseas. This method is a good and inexpensive way of sending money abroad when the time factor is not crucial.

AFTER YOU ARRIVE

JOURNALING

Keeping a journal is a consistent, systematic way to record your experiences abroad. A journal is not just a list of things you did and places you went. It is a way to reflect every day on what is happening to you. Since you clearly cannot write about everything you see and do, you may want to pre-select your topics. Professor Nancy Nicodemus from Hope College, in her booklet "The Travel Journal: An Assessment Tool for Overseas Study," suggests that you select categories or create chapters for your journal. For example, you can divide your journal into different chapters: descriptive (art/architecture, food/drink, people, etc.), narrative (stories), and expository (assumptions, realizations, quotations, questions, etc.). She also advises that you:

"Buy a sturdy, handy sized, hardcover journal, one you can comfortably carry with you...Put your name, address, telephone and passport numbers inside the front cover. Decorate the cover with stickers as you travel, making the outside as well as the inside distinctively yours. Then,

- *Carry it with you everywhere*
- *Make a concerted effort to write in it daily*
- *Give date and setting for each entry*
- *Remember to brainstorm, recreate with specifics, and reflect in each entry*
- *Enjoy it, both while you're creating it and forever after."*

If you are on an **internship program**, you will want to keep a reflective journal of your internship experience. Each day you will note what you did at work and what you learned, and then reflect on what it means. After your internship, you will have your journal entries to measure your progress and use when you apply and interview for future jobs.

Remember, if you want to earn **Global Studies Credit** for your international off-campus experience you need to do two things: (1) Keep a journal about your experiences. This can be observations about cultural differences and similarities, things that were confusing until you figured out the appropriate cultural lens for understanding what was happening, interesting places or people that you met--basically reflections about negotiating a different cultural personally, academically, socially, and work-wise (if you're doing an internship). (2) When you return from your program, hand the journal in to the CIE Office for review and verification with the Registrar's Office. Journals, which must be submitted by mid-term of the semester following your off-campus experience, will be returned to you.

YOUTH HOSTELS

Youth Hostels are inexpensive accommodations in many European countries. They are reasonable in price, but on occasion they may be inconvenient because of their locations, strict curfews or other rules and regulations they may enforce.

If you are considering youth hostels, you should visit www.hostelworld.com, which lists currently operating youth hostels in various countries, along with information as to their size, what kinds of accommodations are offered, whether meals are served, closing times, and much more. Be aware, however, that you must be a member of the Youth Hostel organizations and in possession of an "International Youth Hostel Pass" to be admitted to any youth hostel abroad. It is highly advisable to purchase the pass while in the U.S. Many hostels exist that do not require this; however, discounts are often offered.

EMBASSY AND ABROAD

If your passport is lost or stolen, notify local authorities and the American Embassy or Consulate at once! After an investigation to verify your identification, the embassy or consulate will issue you a three-month temporary passport.

Some students, particularly those who enroll directly in an overseas university, should register their presence in the country of study with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. **Travel registration** is a free, confidential service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. You can register online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. This information will enable the U.S. Department of State to assist you in case of an emergency or contact you during a crisis situation. This travel registration system is also known as STEP, the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. It may only be used by U.S. citizens.

IMPORTANT LEGAL MATTERS

You are a guest of the country where you are studying or traveling. You must obey all the laws and regulations of that country. The State Department cautions, "While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes

differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.” If you are arrested and/or detained abroad, a consular official can visit you and inform you of your legal rights and provide you with a list of reliable local attorneys and physicians. At your request and expense, s/he can notify your family or friends of your plight. If regular mail channels are not satisfactory, s/he can forward personal letters to and from arrested citizens. The consular official can arrange supplementary purchases of food and clothing (using your funds), schedule appointments with doctors and dentists, and obtain permission for visits from friends and family.

However, government funds cannot be used to pay for supplementary purchases or legal and medical fees. If you are broke as well as detained, the official can contact your family, local benevolent organizations (if any) or organizations in the U.S. to request emergency funds. Finally the consular official tries to ensure equal treatment under national laws during all phases of the legal procedures against you.

In case of illness or accident, embassy or consulate people can make sure you are in an approved hospital, check on fairness in billing procedures and explain payment options to you. For small problems, the embassies provide lists of English-speaking doctors.

If you are broke, notify the nearest American embassy or consulate. Depending on your family’s ability to get you out of trouble and the status of department funds, you may receive a repatriation loan. Students who are planning to stay abroad for a semester or a full year are well advised to learn soon after their arrival where the closest American embassy or consulate is located and to register with that embassy or consulate.

TRAVEL SECURITY

In recent years, increased targeting by political terrorists of airlines and of Americans overseas has naturally raised concerns among all of us about travel security. Travel security involves more than simple awareness of terrorism. The great media attention to sensational terrorist incidents has directed our concern away from the more likely event to happen to the traveler: ordinary criminal activity. While the odds are greatly in your favor of having a trouble-free sojourn, you should nonetheless take precautions to avoid any problems related to crime, accidents or terrorism. Some precautions include:

- Carry your money in a safe place, in an inside harness or money belt. Savvy travelers carry money in two or three locations on their persons, with a “dummy” wallet with some cash for the street mugger.
- When walking, always try to walk with someone else. If you are walking alone, be aware of your surroundings and avoid isolated routes. Never walk alone at night, especially in large cities or in isolated areas, such as along the beach.

- Avoid putting things in your back pocket or in the outside pocket of your backpack. Carry your backpack in front of you in crowded places.
- If you find yourself feeling “crowded” in a market, tourist area, metro, etc., move away from the crowd. Someone may be trying to slit open your backpack or pick your pocket.
- Always keep an eye, and/or your hands, on your purse/bag/wallet, especially in crowded public areas (public transportation, crowded sidewalks and shopping areas, metro stations).
- Do not carry your bag on your shoulder next to the curb and do not hang a purse or bag on the back of a chair in a café or restaurant. Thieves, including those on mopeds, find these items easy targets.
- Know as much as you can about the places you’ll be traveling to, including specific criminal potential or political unrest. Check the State Department Travel Advisories on the web.
- Leave valuables at home; wear costume jewelry, or none at all; don’t take anything you would hate to lose.
- Put your name and address inside each piece of luggage. DO NOT use locks when sending checked bags through airport security unless you use TSA approved locks. Lock important items in a suitcase in your room or use the hotel safe.
- Make two copies of passport identification pages, travel tickets, credit cards, ATM card, and traveler’s check numbers; keep one copy with you in a safe place in your luggage, and leave the other with your parents at home.
- Arrange for appropriate insurance coverage, making sure the coverage extends to all the countries you plan to visit, and to lost or stolen items as well as to health and accidents.

Now let’s turn to precautions to take while you are traveling. The first would be to attend the on-site orientation done by the personnel at your particular off-campus program. Pay close attention to their advice: they are the ones with the best information about local conditions. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Keep in touch with your on-site program coordinator/resident director/liaison throughout your stay there. **Let him or her know your travel plans for break times; ask advice about travel to those places.**

Some tips on traveling safely:

- Blend into the local population as much as possible. If you are in a country where English is not the primary language, speak the local language as much as you can in public.
- Travel with someone else you know.
- **LEAVE A DETAILED TRAVEL PLAN WITH YOUR PROGRAM.** This plan should include destinations and contact numbers where you can be reached 24/7.
- Stay informed. Read a newspaper, check the Department of State web site (www.state.gov), watch TV, listen to the radio.
- Keep a low profile.
- Be aware of your surroundings: don't walk alone into dark city streets late at night; try not to appear too much the tourist (struggling with maps, looking confused and awkward) and thus become a tempting target for pickpockets or thieves. We've said this before, right?
- Avoid obvious terrorist targets and places where Americans and Westerners are known to congregate. Examples include McDonald's, Hard Rock Café, Planet Hollywood, etc. Be especially careful to avoid political demonstrations that could become anti-American in character.
- Do not wear clothing that easily identifies you as American: you may want to leave your Albion College T-shirt and your Detroit Red Wings sweats at home.
- If you travel with other Americans, move quietly and respectfully within the culture. In other words, avoid the stereotype of the band of loud Americans. Be quiet in public places, particularly on public transportation.
- Stand close to the ATM machines or telephones when punching in your PIN or calling card number. Thieves work with binoculars.
- When you go out, carry at least enough money for transportation and a phone call. Carry a pre-paid phone card or cell phone with you.
- Try to arrange direct flights when you travel by air to minimize your time in airports. When you go to the airport, arrive early to avoid long check-in lines; move immediately through security areas. Cooperate fully with officials at security checkpoints and don't make jokes. Do not agree to watch anyone's luggage as they go away. Report suspicious behavior and unattended baggage or parcels.

If some incident does occur in your location, please call your parents as soon as possible to reassure them about how you are doing. You can be sure they will be very concerned and would appreciate your contacting them.

During the Gulf War, it was reported on a couple of other American university campuses that “reporters” would contact a student to ask where the student was going abroad, what he/she was going to do, whether other students were going also, and what their names and addresses were. It is always prudent to ask for full identification from any reporter, and perhaps even request a return call to give you time to contact the news organization for ID verification. In any event, never give out information to a reporter about any other students who may also be going overseas—instead, refer the reporter to the CIE here.

Again, we would like to stress that the odds greatly favor your having a safe and trouble free trip. However, past terrorist events reinforce the need to stay informed about world events, travel “smart,” and not take any chances. It is also a time for us to be culturally sensitive because we are guests in the countries where we study, live, and travel.

AVOIDING THE “I FEEL SO COMFORTABLE SYNDROME”

During the first weeks at your program site, you will be super careful about safety and security issues. You will remember what you heard from us and you will absorb all the precautions outlined by your program. However, after a few weeks when you know your way around, you will start to feel very much at ease in your new surroundings. Feeling comfortable and at home in your new home is great but do not lose your watchfulness and common sense carefulness. You will become vulnerable once you stop paying close attention to your actions and surroundings.

A WORD ABOUT DRUGS

Doing drugs abroad is an incredible gamble with high stakes, bad odds, and frequent double dealings. Local pushers, often in the service of the police or customs officials, increase their profits by informing on unsuspecting buyers. Carefully organized busts in private residences and public facilities occur legally without search warrants and are alarmingly common in many countries. According to the State Department, “Persons caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country are subject to the drug laws of that country, not those of the U.S.; as always, ignorance of the law is no excuse. In many countries, the burden of proof is on the accused to show that he or she is innocent of the charges.”

Most nations make little or no distinction between hard and soft drugs when pronouncing sentences, nor do they necessarily take into consideration the quantity. Crossing the border is the worst time to be caught with even the smallest quantities of any type of drug. A small amount, obviously intended for personal use, can be as dangerous at borders as a large quantity destined for sale. For those determined to use drugs despite the ongoing crackdown overseas, these are the kinds of hardships usually encountered

Pretrial detention:

- In Mexico it is six to twelve months
- In Spain and in Italy it is usually a year
- Means imprisonment before conviction.

Therefore, the best advice concerning the use of drugs while abroad is: **DON'T!**

ALCOHOL

As you are aware, alcohol is readily available in other countries and the drinking age often is much lower than in the U.S. In other countries people often enjoy alcoholic drinks and cultivate an appreciation of fine beers, wines, and spirits. However, these same people do not go out and get drunk in public. They may spend an entire evening in a pub, bar, disco, or café with one drink. Some American students may be tempted to take advantage of the easy access to alcohol and consume too much. How to say this diplomatically? ... **DON'T GET DRUNK.** At the very least, you will look like a fool. You may endanger your life and the life of your companions because you will not be familiar with your surroundings. Some places have very strict laws about having alcohol in public view. Be wary of law changes!

STDs, HIV, AIDS

STDs, HIV, AIDS are world-wide health issues. When you leave the U.S., you will not be leaving these serious health problems behind. Use common sense and take appropriate precautions. If you are sexually active, bring reliable contraceptives with you.

ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT

On Being a Student Abroad

You are a guest student at the university or program where you are studying. As a visiting international student, you are obliged to follow the rules, regulations, and procedures of the place where you are studying. The institution or program has the right to treat you as they would any other student. This means, for example, if a student is evicted from a university residence for breaking the institution's rules, there is nothing Albion can do to reverse that decision. We cannot tell another institution how to manage its program any more than a foreign program can tell Albion College how to run its affairs.

Your adjustment to the very different **academic environment** you may experience overseas could be the hardest part of your adjustment to life abroad. No matter which country you are going to, and no matter the setting for your study, it will likely be far different from what you are used to at Albion College.

Classes will be different, professors will be different, expectations for your study and success in your classes will be different. This is exactly why you wanted to go abroad to study in the first place, but coping with a different education system can be trying at times.

In many countries overseas,

- Professors of great academic renown will lecture to large groups of students, perhaps straight from a textbook that he or she has written.
- The professor may not ask for or even allow questions from the students.
- There may be no office hours for the professor.
- The responsibility for learning the material rests solely with the learner. The professor will not tell you what to do when.
- You will have the following resources: class lectures, tutorials or labs, and a substantial reading list; sometimes these readings are presented to you in a reading “brick” of photocopied articles (“brick” because it is as thick as a good-sized brick and will easily prop open a large, heavy door). What you will hear in lectures are names of authors, scholars, and the titles of their books and articles. After class it is assumed you will read what they said about the subject addressed in that particular lecture or class period. It is your synthesis of this material that will be tested during exams.
- There may be only one assessment of your performance in the course and it may come only at the end of the term, sometimes revealed to you only after you have left and come back to Albion.
- Part of all of your assessment may be papers. You may be asked to write a paper on a specific topic. You may not redefine the topic or select a different topic. You are expected to produce an intellectually thoughtful essay, in depth. ***Check with host country students, your professor or tutor, and the international office for guidance.***
- You may have fewer assignments during the semester, but these assignments may count heavily for your final grade.
- The final exam may count up to 100% of your grade.
- You may not request a different exam date or time. The exam system does not allow for any variation or negotiation in the exam schedule.

- It may appear to you that students from the host country do not study very hard. This is an illusion. Students are studying and reading when you do not see them. Also, they know how to survive in their educational system in ways you cannot understand in your time abroad.
- Grading scales can be lower than you have come to expect and you may not get the A's you think you are due (see section below on grading).
- Bureaucracy and red tape can be utterly bewildering, and it may be hard to get anything done; secretaries can be unsmiling and unhelpful.

Throughout all this, you may truly come to feel that you have left the “Albion cocoon” where you have come to take for granted that you get prompt, courteous service. Many off-campus returnees have remarked on this--and it is a truism of American higher education--that the student is placed first here. Overseas, the student is rarely placed first.

What can you do? As we have mentioned often in this booklet, **BE PREPARED**. Talk to alums of the program, the faculty advisor, the director of the CIE. Read the evaluations written by former students. Learn what to expect on your particular program. Then, when you are overseas and experiencing an especially distressful situation, don't hesitate to contact the program director or coordinator and talk it over. Perhaps nothing can be done, but it's good to talk it over with someone who is knowledgeable and sympathetic.

Grades

Some students returning after studying at a foreign university are shocked to find they received lower grades from their foreign universities than they were accustomed to receiving at Albion. These students sometimes feel unfairly treated by the foreign institution, Albion, or both. Very often a foreign institution and an American institution have very different ways of judging students' work; neither system is “bad,” but the two systems also are not interchangeable.

Here are some important points you may find helpful:

- As a student on an off-campus program, you may choose to take some or all of your classes on a C/NC basis. However, C/NC requests must be submitted in writing to the Albion Registrar's Office no later than two weeks after your program's first day of classes.
- A few Albion academic departments may allow C/NC courses to count toward the major; most do not. Check with your major/minor departments.
- When you apply for graduate school, the graduate school will ask for original transcripts from every institution you attended, including the foreign university where you studied abroad. Thus, the grades you achieve abroad will appear on your graduate school application.

- Graduate schools see transcripts from foreign universities all the time. Graduate schools are often accustomed to the different grading systems around the world and how they do not match the American system.
- The way of looking at grades at institutions abroad is entirely different from the American system. In other cultures, a “Pass” indicates the student has achieved enough knowledge to advance to the next level. It does not have the American connotation of “just squeaking by.”
- *Thus, a 50% can be a very acceptable grade in other countries.*
- On the other hand, there is often a Bell curve distribution of grades. Very few students receive the top grades. For example, the French system uses a 1-20 grading system and the accepted grading logic is that “only God gets a 20.”
- It is possible to do well in a foreign institution. This may take hard work, determination, and persistence. You may need to approach your professor and tell him or her that you are an American student, working on an American system. You can ask the professor what kind of work merits a top grade. You also can ask your tutors and other students from the host country how to achieve good grade at your foreign university. *Determined Albion students often do very well abroad. They can and do achieve 4.0 and 3.7 grades from foreign universities.*

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Students going abroad can naturally expect that there will be a period of not only mental, but also physical adjustment to changed climate, food, different living habits and perhaps fewer material comforts than at home. Your reaction to this adjustment is what is commonly called “culture shock.” Studies have shown that all voyagers who spend more than a few weeks abroad will experience some form of culture shock. Culture shock is simply the normal feeling of disorientation due to trying to cope with a completely different environment from which one is accustomed.

Most reactions to culture shock are quite mild, and you might not even notice you are going through it. Loss of sleep, loss of appetite, homesickness, and irritability at really minor hassles are a few of the possible symptoms of culture shock. But, in some people the reactions of culture shock can be quite strong, resulting sometimes in distressing hassles with host families or friends overseas, or even early termination of the program.

The best advice here is MODERATION—especially while you are en route and trying different foods for the first time. Valuable advice is available from those who have returned from your particular program. It is your responsibility to contact at least one of these returnees to get firsthand information.

The old adage, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” is still valid. Watch for cues from your surroundings to help you over the first few weeks of feeling strange and unsure. Don’t be afraid to ask those around you. Good manners and thoughtfulness are not confined to a new culture. If you are polite and sensitive to cultural norms and you use common sense, you will encounter few social mishaps or embarrassing moments.

All students should read extensively about their new country in advance. You will be a far more welcome guest abroad and far more comfortable in the host country if you are knowledgeable about the history, geography, political system, and culture of your host country. Equally important, you should become knowledgeable about the history, geography, political system, and culture of the United States. You will be asked often about the U.S. and will feel uncomfortable if you are not knowledgeable.

The better prepared you are the more able you will be to assimilate new experiences into a framework of understanding, thus optimizing learning experiences, achieving a deeper sensitivity to the new country, and reducing the effects of culture shock.

Some points of common courtesy to bear in mind include the following: in many countries loud noise in the evenings is not only inconsiderate, it may be against the law. Keep your music turned down low after 10 o’clock, and if you are having friends over, avoid loud conversation that can be heard beyond your room.

The cost of electricity (and other utilities) is far higher in most foreign countries than what it is at home. Acquire the habit of turning out lights when leaving a room, and limit the use of electrical appliances. Often there is only a limited amount of hot water available in some households; ask what days you may take your showers or baths and take them quickly.

Local phone calls cost extra in most countries. Ask to use the phone and make arrangements to pay for each call. Close doors behind you! The American custom of leaving doors open is not popular elsewhere. If you want to bring home a friend, ask your landlord/landlady or host family first. Don’t just bring an uninvited guest to dinner. And when in doubt – ask! You will find that people do not mind at all being asked about their customs and social rules. Above all, do not compare “back home” with your new environment. You are not “back home” and therefore things naturally will seem strange to you.

You will find that especially in Europe people will take time before they invite you to their homes. The fact that you are not swamped with social invitations of all kinds soon after your arrival does not reflect on you. When you are asked to come for dinner or even for “coffee” (which usually takes place around 4:00 p.m.), it is customary to bring a small present. A bouquet of flowers (remove the wrapper before handing them over) or a small box of candy is acceptable.

Friendships often take time to develop in most countries. To an American, Europeans may seem withdrawn to the point of coolness. It takes longer to get to know a person

well. However, don't wait for people to come to you--if you like someone, why not take the initiative yourself? They often will be grateful to you.

Most Europeans may not be very hospitable at Christmas. This is regarded as a family occasion, and is spent strictly within the close family. People of Latin American and Central American countries are more outgoing and friendly; they are generally described as "warmer." Be prepared that Latin Americans are more "physical," i.e., you can expect a good deal more touching and hugging than what you may be used to, such as hands on shoulder or arm, etc. You will notice that people hug each other much more freely than we are used to.

It cannot be stressed often enough that those who have participated in our program before you are your best source of information about "do's and don'ts" in general; they can also give you some idea on how to deal with the inevitable culture shock that you must cope with, no matter how well prepared you are. Studying and traveling abroad can turn out to be a series of bewildering incidents, or it can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. No matter how much you have read or how many people you have talked to, you are bound to run into unfamiliar, and sometimes disturbing, behavior and customs.

Knowledgeable student travelers advise handling the proverbial culture shock with preparation, moderation, adaptability, a sense of humor and a lot of common sense.

REENTRY

Practically every Albion off-campus returnee has said it, and studies have backed them up, that coming back home can be the most difficult part of your adjustment in the entire study abroad experience. Some studies suggest that those students who have adjusted the best overseas may be the ones with the most stressful readjustment to life back home.

How can this be? After all, you're coming home to the place where you grew up and your family is, the campus where you've spent your academic life, where your friends are, where everything you know is. How can it be hard coming back home?

In most cases, it's because you will have changed tremendously during your study abroad experience but your friends and family, while they may have changed, haven't gone through what you've experienced. You'll want to talk about the wonderful food you had in France and they'll want to go to Charlie's for pizza. You'll launch into a description of the cultural events you went to in London and they'll watch TV. You'll talk a lot about the sites of Rome and they'll yawn. And so frustration sets in. On top of that, you'll be readjusting to the campus routine you left, life in your dorm, Baldwin food, and maybe finding yourself getting irritable at small things, just as when you first went overseas.

At this point, even before you go overseas, it may seem like a long time ahead to be thinking about this, but forewarned is forearmed. Be prepared for a certain amount of frustration on returning to home life and to the college routine. The CIE will help with a reentry dinner and orientation, opportunities to chat about your experiences, and

invitations to participate in the orientations of those coming after your experience overseas. In other words, there will be ways for you to relive your experiences and relate them to others. However, much of the readjustment obviously will come from you.

USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

There are many, many, many books available on traveling abroad. Any decent bookstore will have dozens of them, ranging from travel on the cheap to going luxuriously. Some titles you may want to consider include:

- Insight Guides. Easy to read, some photos, great articles on places to go and things to see. www.insighttravelguides.com
- Let's Go guides. Harvard University students. For Europe, some individual countries. Excellent information on student budget travel. **Most books available in our office.**
- Fodor's Guides/Fodor's Budget Guides. For Europe, Latin America, Asia, etc. www.fodors.com
- Lonely Planet guides. Available for most countries. www.lonelyplanet.com
- Hostelling International. For Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific. www.hiusa.org

IMPORTANT WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT

To be an informed student abroad and traveler, you will want to check the following web sources:

Travel information, consular information sheets, travel warnings and alerts:

U.S. Department of State Country Specific Information
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html>

U. S. Department of State for Students Abroad
<https://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>

Health issues and immunizations:

Centers for Disease Control
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

World Health Organization
<http://www.who.int>

Internet Communication Service
<https://www.skype.com>

A FINAL WORD—AND A CALL FOR YOUR HELP

Congratulations once again on your acceptance to an off-campus program. You are about to embark on a great experience—many have called it a “great adventure”—and with the proper preparation and attitude, you will confront and overcome all challenges you will face on this adventure. In so doing, you will find that you will grow and develop as an educated and responsible person of the global community.

We hope this booklet will prove useful to you in facing these challenges off campus. While we have tried to include all we could think of that you might face, you should know that this is truly an impossible task. No book could ever encapsulate any and all experiences, both positive and negative, that a person could have on off-campus programs around the world. In that spirit, we’d like to ask your help. Jot down your suggestions for inclusion in future issues of *Going Abroad from Albion*. Let us know what you experienced and what future students of Albion should know before they go abroad.

Bon voyage and have a great off-campus experience!

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

1. Passport. Copies of ID pages for you and your parents, two extra passport photos.
2. Immigration/border letter (“To Whom It May Concern”) from the CIE. Copies for you and your parents.
3. Acceptance letter from program/university (not all programs send this). Copies for you and your parents.
4. Visas (if required).
5. Airline tickets. Copies of airline ticket for you and your parents.
6. Money: cash, and/or traveler’s checks and/or credit card, and/or ATM card.
7. 6 ID photos for various uses overseas (depending upon suggestions from your program).
8. Luggage (see page 10)
9. Medical and health insurance information, medical and health insurance card, claim forms, EIIA travel insurance card.
10. Health precautions: prescriptions for medicine, over the counter drugs, eyeglasses/contact lenses, allergy tags, etc.
11. Materials from your off-campus program: brochure, orientation papers, contact information, etc.
12. Arrangements for receiving money from home.
13. Arrangements for contacting you on program if necessary.
14. Journal.