

HEALTH TIPS

Faculty-Led Group Study Abroad Kansas State University

HEALTH BASICS

Health issues and care need to be addressed prior to any faculty-led group study abroad program. All students need to prepare for their physical and mental health before and during an international experience. This should include a consultation with their health care providers.

Immunizations

The Study Abroad Program urges all students to consult with the Lafene Travel Clinic to determine whether immunizations are recommended or required for the countries they will visit. Ideally, students should visit the clinic well in advance of program departure in case a series of shots is required. A two-month minimum time frame is recommended. To schedule an appointment at Lafene Travel Clinic, call (785) 532-6544. The clinic is located at Kansas State University, 1105 Sunset Avenue, Manhattan, KS 66502. There is no charge for travel clinic visits. Charges do apply for medications purchased through the Lafene Pharmacy, for immunizations, and for physical exams. For more information, please visit: <http://www.k-state.edu/lafene/allertravel.htm>

Region-Specific Health Issues

Students should familiarize themselves with region-specific health issues in the host countries. Issues of concern may include: swine flu, cholera, diarrhea, diphtheria/tetanus, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS, malaria, polio, rabies, typhoid, tuberculosis, yellow fever, etc. Notices, precautions, and warnings of region-specific health issues are routinely updated on the following websites:

- U.S. Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int>
- Travel Health Online: <http://www.tripprep.com>

Medical Facilities

Medical treatment varies throughout the world due to cultural differences as well as medical training, supplies, and facilities. For country specific information on medical facilities, emergency services, etc., a good resource is <http://www.tripprep.com>

First Aid Kit

The most common health problems that students encounter are traveler's diarrhea, upper respiratory infections, and skin conditions. All students are advised to carry a small first aid kit appropriate for the destination and length of stay of their trip.

- **Suggested Items to Include in a First Aid Kit for Traveling**
 - Pain medicines such as aspirin, acetaminophen, naproxen and ibuprofen
 - Hand wipes and hand sanitizers
 - Scissors, tweezers, nail clippers, pocket knife, earplugs, and thermometer
 - Medicine for motion sickness such as dimenhydrinate and an anti-nausea drug like promethazine. Acetazolamide may help prevent altitude sickness
 - Anti-diarrhea medication
 - Antibiotic ointment, adhesive bandages, hydrocortisone cream, moleskin for blisters, sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 and lip balm
 - Decongestants and antihistamines for allergies. The kind that don't cause sleepiness are best for traveling
 - Antacids
 - Rubbing alcohol and hydrogen peroxide
 - Cough and cold medicines

Prescription Medications

If students are currently on medication they should:

- Fill prescriptions before leaving. Take double the amount of prescription medication to serve as an extra supply.
- All medications should be transported in their original, labeled container along with documentation of the prescription to avoid problems in Customs.
- Upon arrival at the destination, keep medications in two separate places.
- Prescription medicines are not always the same abroad as in the U.S. Do not plan on having U.S. prescriptions filled while abroad. If carrying a prescription, make sure it is up-to-date and have the physician write the drug's generic name, instructions, dosage, and reason for prescribing the drug.
- Keep prescription medications in a place where they cannot be easily lost or stolen.
- Check with a physician before departure for advice on how to adjust taking prescription medications in order to reduce the risk of overdosing or under-dosing (due to changes in multiple time zones).
- Check with the foreign embassy of the country you are visiting to make sure that none of the prescription medications are considered to be illegal narcotics in that country.
- Many insurance providers and prescription plans will allow the subscriber to refill his/her prescriptions for a greater than normal amount. For example, if your usual

refill gives you a 30 day supply of medication, you may be able instead to fill it with a 60 or 90 day supply if you can prove that you will be traveling for that period of time.

- Always keep prescription medications in your carry-on bags while in transit. Once at your destination, it is a good idea to keep a few pills with you on your person and then the remainder in a secured location back at the hotel. Should you lose or have your purse or bag stolen, you will still have a backup supply readily available.

Glasses and Contact Lenses

Participants who wear glasses and/or contact lenses should take along an extra pair of contacts and glasses, and a lens prescription.

Medic Alert

Participants with serious conditions (e.g. allergies, diabetes, epilepsy) should wear a Medic Alert emblem. For more information, visit the Medic Alert Foundation International website at: <http://www.medicalert.org/home/Homegradient.aspx>

Adjusting to Extreme Weather

If traveling in a hot climate, it is recommended that students:

- Wear light-colored, loose fitting, lightweight clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
- Wear wide-brimmed hat to protect from the sun.
- Wear sunscreen (SPF 15 or better) every day to prevent skin damage.
- Reduce alcohol intake and drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- Stay indoors during the hottest time of day.
- Wear mosquito repellent (DEET > 33%).
- Seek medical attention for heat rash, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

If traveling in an extremely cold climate, it is recommended that students:

- Dress in layers of loose, soft clothing for warmth and wear warm hat, gloves, and shoes.
- Include an outer layer of windbreaker-type material.
- Wear moisture-resistant covering as the outermost and innermost layers.
- Watch for symptoms of hypothermia: slurred speech, decreased awareness, shivering, irritability, or stumbling.
- Watch for symptoms of frostbite: pain, numbness, swelling, itching, and white, hard skin. Do not thaw a frozen body part unless it can be kept thawed.
- If you suspect frostbite or hypothermia, find warm shelter and medical attention.

Jet Lag

“Jet lag” is basically a sleep disturbance caused by traveling through different time zones. The most common symptoms include fatigue, irritability, and sometimes disorientation. Some ways to limit the effects of jet lag include:

- Get a good night’s sleep the first night after you arrive; eat a high carbohydrate meal or snack before bedtime; exercise; and take a hot bath.
- Get up early the first morning and at the same time every morning thereafter.
- Always try to get to sleep at your usual time (e.g., 11 p.m.) at your new destination.
- Avoid naps until you are fully adjusted to your new time zone.
- Modify your diet until adjusted: avoid caffeine; eat high-protein breakfasts and lunches; and eat high carbohydrate dinners.

Travelers’ Diarrhea

Probably the most common illness when abroad is traveler’s diarrhea. Symptoms can range from mild to very severe and can come on quickly. Some basic ways to avoid and treat traveler’s diarrhea:

- Don’t trust tap water. Drink bottled or canned water or beverages.
- Avoid putting ice in beverages. Place unopened bottle/can on ice to chill.
- Avoid dairy products that are not pasteurized.
- Avoid raw food washed in tap water.
- Peel fresh fruits before eating.
- Avoid raw foods and street-side snacks.
- Eat steaming-hot foods, cooked foods right off the fire, and dry foods such as bread.

Diarrhea Treatments

- Replace fluids to avoid dehydration and correct the body’s fluid imbalances.
- Add salt to the diet.
- Avoid dairy products as they inhibit the body’s absorption of salt.
- After 1-2 days, use medications such as Imodium or Kaopectate for 2-3 days to relieve abdominal cramps.
- Consult a physician if symptoms persist for more than a few days.
- Consult a physician immediately if diarrhea is accompanied by a high fever, shaking, chills, and/or blood in the stool.

Insect Bites

Insect bites are of concern, not only due to the discomfort, but also because of infectious diseases such as malaria that may be transmitted by mosquitoes. To minimize exposure in

countries where infectious diseases are transmitted by mosquitoes, students are advised to:

- Stay in well-screened areas and sleep under mosquito netting.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Use insect repellent containing 33% or more DEET (N-N diethyl-m-toulamide).
- Avoid using perfumes, scented soap, and after shave lotion.

Alcohol

- The drinking age may be lower in the country you are visiting, especially in Europe. However, being drunk is NOT part of the host culture. You are expected to drink responsibly and accordingly to host country laws should you choose to do so.
- You are responsible for abiding by the *K-State Student Code of Conduct*
- Some potential consequences of drinking too much include:
 - Accidents and injuries
 - Alcohol poisoning
 - Unprotected sex and sexual assault
 - Increased risk of becoming a victim of a crime (i.e. theft, assault, etc.)
- Remember that you are a representative of Kansas State University and an ambassador of your country.

Illegal Drugs

- Students are prohibited from taking illegal drugs during the program.
- You are not protected by American laws while studying abroad and are expected to uphold the laws of the host country you are visiting. For example, should the host country take legal action for illegal drug use or alcohol related criminal activity, there is little Kansas State University or even the United States embassy can do to intervene.
- More than 1/3 of U.S. citizens who are incarcerated abroad are held on drug charges. Some countries do not distinguish between possession and trafficking, and many have mandatory sentences – even for possession of a small amount of marijuana or cocaine.
- A number of Americans have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines that they purchased legally elsewhere. Other U.S. citizens have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS

Sexually transmitted diseases such as Chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, Hepatitis B, and herpes pose health risks in every country, as does the HIV virus.

Emergency Surgery

Because HIV and Hepatitis B can spread through contaminated needles and blood, medical evacuation should be carefully considered if a student requires surgery. In this case the Faculty Leader should make every effort to put the student directly in contact with his/her emergency contact(s) and his/her U.S. health care provider. It is ideal if the student's family and U.S. health care provider can discuss the situation directly with medical personnel in the host country to determine a treatment plan.

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

All students participating in faculty-led group study abroad programs are required to enroll in an international medical insurance policy. Students will automatically be enrolled in an international medical insurance policy by the Coordinator of Faculty Services. Generally, if students wish to travel independently before or after the official program travel dates, they have an option to extend their international health insurance policy. In most cases, they can do this directly by contacting the insurance provider, T.W. Lord and Associates at 1-800-633-2360.

T.W. Lord international medical insurance covers the following:

- Accidental Death and Dismemberment
- Medical Expenses Benefit
- Emergency Medical Evacuation
- Emergency Dental Expense Benefit
- Repatriation of Remains
- Family Assistance Benefit
- Bereavement Reunion Benefit
- Pre-Existing Condition Benefit
- Worldwide Travel Assistance

An informational brochure with full details of insurance coverage is available at:
<http://www.k-state.edu/studyabroad/resources/predeparture/healthandsafety.html>

In foreign countries, most doctors and hospitals do not recognize U.S. insurance for automatic billing. In most cases student participants will need to pay at the time of medical treatment and submit a claim for reimbursement. For this reason all students are instructed to carry emergency funding, preferably in the form of a credit or ATM card. Please remember to advise students to keep all medical receipts as these will be required for reimbursement from the insurance provider.