



A GUIDE TO STUDYING ABROAD: STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Student International Travel Requirements](#)

[Insurance](#)

[Laws, Rules & Regulations](#)

[Health Abroad](#)

[Mental Health Abroad](#)

[Accommodations Abroad](#)

[Safety Abroad](#)

STUDENT INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

COVID-19 Vaccine

CMU does not require that students demonstrate proof of COVID-19 vaccination to participate in an international program. However, students are strongly encouraged to be up-to-date with their vaccine and booster prior to departure, as per [Centers for Disease Control Guidance for International Travelers](#).

While CMU does not require proof of COVID-19 vaccination, students must be aware that some countries require that foreign visitors be vaccinated as a condition of entry. You may check your destination's entry requirements on the [U.S. Department of State website](#). Some study abroad host institutions/organizations may also have their own vaccination requirements. Students are responsible for researching and complying with vaccination requirements and the pre-departure testing requirements of their destination country and specific program abroad.

All students are responsible for remaining up-to-date about their host country's requirements. Be aware that COVID-19 vaccination and entry requirements could be changed by the host country and/or host institution/organization at any time and with little or no notice.

U.S. Department of State STEP Registration

CMU policy requires that all students, faculty, and staff register their international travel prior to departure in the U.S. Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). Through email, you will receive the latest safety and security information at your destination so you can make an informed decision about your health and safety. The information you provide will also enable the U.S. embassy or consulate to send alerts and know how to contact you in an emergency.

GeoBlue Insurance

CMU policy requires that all students approved to participate in international programs must enroll in the CMU group health, medical evacuation, and repatriation insurance through GeoBlue. OGE-Study abroad will enroll each student for the exact program dates approximately one to two months prior to the program start date; the cost is included in the program fee that will be billed to your CMU student account.

Important: GeoBlue will be the primary insurance policy only while abroad; Your U.S. insurance policy will be secondary. **DO NOT CANCEL OR REMOVE YOURSELF FROM YOUR U.S. INSURANCE POLICY!**

INSURANCE

GeoBlue Insurance Policy

GeoBlue insurance provides:

- Up to \$250,000 coverage per year
- Zero deductible
- Assistance to students to check requirements for entry into a country with controlled medications (most common are medications used for ADD/ADHD)
 - Some countries do not allow entry with specific controlled medications so it will be important to know this in advance to talk with your personal health care provider about an alternative plan.
- Emergency treatment for accidents, injuries, illnesses, etc.
- List of health care providers in-country
 - Network Providers may accept payment directly from GeoBlue.
 - Students may have to pay for services then submit bills to GeoBlue for reimbursement.
- Telemedicine app, Global TeleMD.
- Global Wellness Assist program that provides 24/7 access to free, confidential counseling services with licensed therapists
- Translation services, when needed

Additional benefits that **must be approved** at the time of need by GeoBlue:

- Emergency family travel
 - Reimbursement of airfare and accommodations for a family member to travel to the students place of hospital confinement that is for more than three days
- Medical evacuation: escort if student is unable to return on their own
- Security/natural disaster evacuation
- Repatriation of remains
- Accidental death/dismemberment

Once enrolled, each student will receive a confirmation email from GeoBlue and will have access to their own personal account on the geobluestudents.com website. Students may also download the GeoBlue app to access their accounts to:

- Review coverage provided; access the GeoBlue Handbook
- Download the insurance card
- View dashboard with country information
- Check list of GeoBlue network affiliated health care providers; find English-speaking providers
- Learn if a prescribed controlled substance may be legally brought into the country
- Know how to submit a claim online or through the app, as needed

Setting up Services in Advance

Students who know that they will need health services while abroad may begin the process prior to departure:

- ***Talk to your Study Abroad Advisor*** who can contact the host institutions to assist with the request or
- ***Check the GeoBlue website/app*** to identify health care providers onsite.

GeoBlue is also available to answer questions about coverage or access to health care in-country.

Travel Insurance

Many airlines and travel agencies offer travel insurance that provides reimbursements for airfare, lost baggage, and more. Be sure to read the policy carefully to know what is and is not covered.

Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) and Interruption for Any Reason (IFAR) Insurance

The travel insurance industry offers protection plans to allow cancellation or interruption of travel. There are several companies that offer insurance policies for interested travelers. Be sure to read the policy carefully to know what is and is not covered.

LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS

Local Epidemic or Pandemic Rules and Regulations

Every country and local government will have rules and regulations that must be followed. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing, mask rules—including types of masks—and lockdowns are set by local government. Some countries impose steep fines for not following the mandates. These mandates could change by the week or month so it is important to stay informed.

National and Local Laws Abroad

While you are abroad, you are subject to the laws of that country. You will find that many countries do not offer the same freedoms or rights that you are accustomed to in the United States. In some countries, there is mandatory jail time when arrested. The ability to post bail when arrested and right to a speedy trial is part of the U.S. judicial system and is not a worldwide practice. Be sure to take the time to learn and understand the local laws.

Alcohol Use

The consumption of alcohol abroad can result in serious health, safety, and legal risks. In many cultures, drinking to excess is culturally inappropriate and considered disrespectful. Students are subject to the rules and regulations of the host institution and the laws of the host country. Students also remain subject to the CMU Code of Conduct and the consequences for alcohol consumption.

Illegal Substance/Drug Use

DO NOT, under any circumstances, buy, sell or consume illegal drugs while you are abroad. Some countries have very strict laws governing drugs that may include long jail sentences, if convicted. Some countries even impose the death penalty for those convicted of serious drug charges.

Marijuana and CBD Products

Some U.S. states have made marijuana and CBD products legal in regulated quantities to individuals that are 21 years and older; some doctors may recommend use of these products to their patients. However, U.S. federal law prohibits the possession and use and, therefore, when traveling out-of-state and internationally, **DO NOT** carry or pack these because it is illegal. In addition to drug sniffing dogs, your luggage may be opened and checked at the airport prior to departure or upon arrival. Many countries have long mandatory jail time for possession of illegal substances.

CMU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Disciplinary Procedures

All CMU students who are approved to participate in an international program are subject to the CMU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Disciplinary Procedures while abroad. Please be sure to read the [CMU Code of Conduct](#).

Working Abroad Legally

Sometimes students are offered opportunities to work for pay in their host country during their term abroad. The chance to earn money may be very appealing but it is important to know that, in most countries including the United States, foreigners may not legally work for pay without requesting and obtaining permission from the proper government authorities. To be found working illegally could be cause for legal action and/or deportation. Be sure to talk to the onsite program staff about obtaining legal work permission before accepting any job in-country.

Arrest Abroad

If you are detained or arrested while abroad, seek legal counsel in-country immediately. Contact the local U.S. embassy or consulate and a consular officer will be able to visit you and provide you with the names of a local attorneys who can give legal advice and represent you. Contact the onsite program staff or faculty leader for support.

HEALTH ABROAD

Immunizations

It is recommended that all travelers be up-to-date on routine immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control provides an [Adult Immunization Schedule](#). CMU Health has a Travel Health Services clinic where students may obtain immunizations.

Prescription Medications

It is important to meet with your health care provider to prepare to go abroad.

- Request a prescription for any medications you take to cover your term abroad
- Carry a letter from your health care provider that states that the medication is prescribed for you
 - As you go through security at the airport (in the U.S. or abroad), you may be asked to show the letter.
- Talk to your U.S. health insurance company to ask for a “vacation override” or a “prescription override” to allow you to fill the prescription for the full time abroad
- If you are not able to obtain an “override”, contact GeoBlue to ask if the medication is available at your destination. Expect to need to make an appointment with a local health care provider once in-country to obtain a local prescription
- Carry a prescription from your doctor that includes the generic name of the medication, not just the brand name, in case that brand is not available
- Certain medications may be illegal to bring into some foreign countries. Talk to your health care provider or contact the Country’s Embassy/Consulate to ensure that it is legal to bring the prescribed medication into the country
 - You will be able to ask GeoBlue this question once enrolled in the insurance plan, to inquire about the availability of the medication in-country should you need refills there
 - If the medication is prohibited or not available, talk to your personal physician about an alternative medication to take while abroad
- Be sure to pack your medications in their original packaging and put them in your carry-on luggage with the letter and prescriptions.

Dietary Requirements

Students with dietary requirements or restrictions related to a medical condition should discuss their study abroad plans with their health care provider. There are no guarantees that dietary accommodations can be provided, but reasonable efforts will be made to honor a timely request or explain what cannot be accommodated onsite. Be sure to inform your study abroad advisor or faculty leader well in advance.

Sexual Health

Health care professionals recommend that anyone intending to be sexually active abroad bring birth control, condoms, etc. from the U.S. These items may not be readily available in

your host country. In certain countries, the quality of the items does not meet U.S. standards. Add this topic to the list of items to discuss with your health care provider prior to departure.

Jet Lag

Airplane travel can be exhausting, especially on a long flight. Jet lag is especially common when changing time zones. Some things that may help you to overcome jet lag quickly include:

- Rest before traveling
- Sleep as much as possible during your flight
- Drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated
- You will likely feel exhausted upon arrival, especially if there is a significant time difference. Take a short nap upon arrival or just stay awake until your usual bedtime to get adjusted to the new time zone as quickly as possible

Food and Water

As you travel to a new country, your body may need time to adjust to the new/different food and water too. Here are some tips:

- Until you know if drinking tap water is safe, drink bottled water and beverages, or drink water that has been boiled
- Don't use ice cubes! Ice cubes have not been boiled and may pose the same risks as tap water
- In many countries, food may be sold from roadside stands. It is not recommended that you buy food from these vendors since cooking and food temperatures may not meet safety standards and you may risk getting food poisoning
- Eat fruit that you peel yourself to avoid any bacteria that may be on the surface of the fruit (i.e., bananas, oranges)
- At restaurants, don't eat what is sitting on the table when you arrive (i.e., salsa, sauces). Bacteria can grow quickly at room temperature
- Pack your favorite remedies for upset stomach, diarrhea – they will come in handy when you need them!

FIRST AID KIT

Pack your favorite remedies for a headache, sinus congestion, upset stomach, etc. as well as band-aids and antiseptic. Should you need these upon arrival, it will be best to already have them on hand rather than have to find out where to buy them while feeling unwell. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) offers a list of items to consider packing.

MENTAL HEALTH

Pre-Departure

It is exciting to have the opportunity to live and study in a new country and culture. Expect that you will need some time to adjust before you acclimate and settle into a new routine. If you have pre-existing mental health issues, the adjustment could require some extra planning and support. Here are some recommendations:

- Create a plan with your current mental health care provider to manage your condition abroad
- The CMU Counseling Center can also provide this help. Be sure to schedule an appointment early in case there is a long wait time
- If you would like to set up counseling services abroad, talk to your study abroad advisor or contact GeoBlue. Your host institution may provide counseling services or may be able to recommend a local mental health care provider

While Abroad

Study abroad can present many new and exciting global learning experiences that you will value. However, at times, you may find yourself feeling stressed or anxious, or just homesick. This can be a time for self-care, and you can find resources on the [CMU Counseling Center](#) website to guide you.

For additional support, be sure to ask your onsite staff or faculty leader for assistance in finding a local mental health care provider. GeoBlue can also assist in finding a local provider.

Upon Return

You may discover that your study abroad experience was so meaningful to you and now you miss your home-away-from-home very much. It is quite normal to feel this way and you will find that you are readjusting to life back home. You may revisit the resources and support offered by the CMU Counseling Center.

ACCOMMODATIONS ABROAD

Requestion Accommodations

Students currently registered with CMU Disability Services who are eligible for on-campus accommodation may request accommodation abroad, if available. It is important to be aware that not all accommodations may be available in the host country. Students are encouraged to speak with their study abroad advisor to inquire about reasonable accommodations they may need as early as possible. It may not be possible to accommodate a late request.

Research types of accommodation that are typically provided in the host country and be flexible and open because other countries may provide disability access in a different way.

Before you travel, research your host culture and their view of disability. [Mobility International](#) provides information and resources for people with disabilities around the world.

SAFETY ABROAD

Packing

Never pack essentials (documents/computers/medicine/money or bank cards) in your checked luggage; be sure to put them in your carry-on bag. Before you begin packing, take some time to consider what you must take with you. Do not take valuables with you that could be lost, stolen or damaged during your travels. Leave items at home that have monetary or sentimental value to you

Luggage

Mark all luggage, inside and out, with your name and address. Mark your checked bags in some distinctive way (i.e. bright colored tag or ribbon), so they are easily spotted. Travel light; it is safer and easier. Airlines limit the weight of a suitcase or have an overweight luggage fee that can be costly. Check with your airline for full details on restrictions. Also, read the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\) website](#) for details and updates.

Keeping Valuable Secure

Crimes of opportunity can happen in the U.S. as well as abroad. It is very important that you take all precautions to keep your belongings safe.

Pickpocketing: This occurs more frequently outside of the United States. Many travelers report not even knowing that they were pickpocketed because it was done so skillfully. To prevent being a victim of this crime:

- Keep your handbag, backpack, and suitcase close to you. Always keep your arm through the straps of your bags (don't hang on the back of your chair, put on the floor, or even just on an empty chair near you where it can be easily snatched).
- Keep your money, credit cards and passport in a security pouch (around your waist or neck and hidden under your shirt)
- Carry a shoulder bag with the strap over your head (across your body) so that it cannot be pulled off your shoulder easily
- Carry only bags with zipper closures, not open where items can be easily lifted
- Don't carry a wallet in your back pocket where it is easy to lift
- On public transportation or in a crowd, keep your backpack in front (not on your back) to keep an eye on it
- Be vigilant at tourist spots where pickpockets are likely to occur

Be aware of distractions: Some thieves work in pairs, and one will distract the subject by spilling something on them or bumping into them while the other steals the person's valuables

General Crime Prevention Tips

The CMU Police website offers helpful [crime prevention tips](#) whether students are at home or abroad.

FBI Information for Student Safety Overseas

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) seeks to generate awareness about risks that students could face overseas while studying abroad and has created this website with [pertinent information](#).

Terrorism

There has been terrorism in the U.S. and abroad. Just as we are advised to be vigilant in public place in the U.S., the same advice applies abroad. The U.S. Embassy will send all travelers registered in STEP Alerts when they have information to share. Be sure to always carry your cell phone with you and keep it fully charged.

Protests or Political Unrest

In some countries, protests are not uncommon. When people want their voices to be heard—just as in the U.S.—protests can take place. They may begin peacefully but could quickly become violent. Even though you may be sympathetic to the cause, DO NOT take part in any protest in a foreign country. Furthermore, stay away from any areas where protests are or may take place no matter how curious you may be. Be aware that protesting in a foreign country by a visitor can be cause for legal action and/or deportation.

Active Assailant/Shooter

Gun violence is an issue in the U.S. and abroad. The CMU Police website offers a video and instructions about action to take when an [active assailant/shooter](#) is in your vicinity: **RUN, HIDE, FIGHT**

Swimming Safety

Be extremely cautious when considering swimming abroad. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report that drowning accounts for 1 out of 10 deaths in U.S. travelers abroad. It is very important to prepare for water activities and you can read the [CDC water safety recommendation](#) on their website.

It is also very important to be aware of rip currents and know how to protect yourself. Read the [United States Lifesaving Association's rip current educational information](#) before any water activities.

Basic recommendations are:

1. Know how to swim
2. Swim near a lifeguard
3. Never swim alone
4. Look for and heed warning signs

5. Assume that rip currents are always present at beaches. These are common dangers ([Know what to do if you are caught in a rip current](#))
6. If in doubt, don't go out

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED MISCONDUCT

CMU'S policy on [Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct](#) is a commitment to the elimination of all forms of prohibited discrimination. Students studying abroad are covered under this policy and the procedures provided. The [Office of Civil Rights and Institutional Equity](#) offers resources, support, and options to students who are victims of sexual and gender-based misconduct on campus or abroad.

INCIDENT ABROAD

In case of an incident, contact your site director or faculty leader immediately. This is important so that all program participants can quickly be accounted for and information can be relayed to CMU and your family.

Be sure to keep your site director and/or family members informed of your travel plans so that you can easily be located. Always check current U.S. State Department travel advisories before traveling.