Berry College International Programs
Personal Safety Information and Travel Tips

Pre-Departure Preparations

- Make 2 copies of your passport, ID cards (driver's license, military I.D., ISIC card), credit cards, medical insurance card. Give one copy to your parents, guardian, or spouse and take the other with you. Leave a copy of your passport with Sarah Egerer in International Programs.

- Take the phone number of your credit card companies with you in case your cards are stolen and you need to inform your bank. Also, leave these numbers with friends/family back home.

- Type up personal information, including home address, Passport #, Emergency contact information, Health Insurance provider and #, and any medical conditions or prescriptions. Give one copy to your parents and keep one for yourself.

- Pack with your documents the list of Berry College emergency numbers (this was distributed at orientation).

- Get your Embassy or Consulate contact information for your host country before you leave. Embassy web pages can be found at http://usembassy.state.gov. Register with the US embassy at http://travel.state.gov.

- Purchase a travel belt, which can hide your passport, credit cards and cash under your clothes while you travel. Keep some small bills out for use, but hide your big money. Websites for safety travel items are in your blue folder.

- Purchase or compile a basic first aid kit to carry with you.

- Purchase a small lock box to hold your passport, money, credit cards and medicines while you are in the country.

- Study currency denominations and coins to familiarize yourself with an estimate exchange rate to the US dollar. This will make you seem like less of a tourist.

- Make sure your ATM cards can be used in a foreign bank machine (those on the "Visa" system usually work). This way when you arrive at your final destination, you can have immediate access to that foreign currency at the best exchange rate. Find out before you go what the service charge per transaction is. If you feel at all uncomfortable traveling for the first time, it is recommended to exchange some money in the US so that you can make use of those monies in case of emergency or in the case that you arrive late at night. This can be done through local banks, but it usually takes several days; exchange services are available in Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

- Inform your credit card company of the dates you will be out of the country. These companies have begun to "red flag" international purchases and not permit the transaction.

When packing, consider a number of situations:

- Do not pack knives, nail files, lighters, or any other object that could be considered a weapon in your carry-on luggage. Many items can be purchased in the host country. See www.tsa.gov for current stipulations for carry-on and checked luggage.

- Bring small locks with you to keep your luggage secure in hotel rooms and other places. You may now lock your bags using a TSA-approved luggage lock.

- Pack a full set of clothes and some toiletries (i.e. toothbrush for long flights) in your carry-on. Luggage does get lost.

- Pack as lightly as possible so that you needn't leave your bags unattended. Unattended bags are considered a threat in most airports in the world. Once you've packed at home, carry your bags around the block – remember the rule: when in doubt, do without!

- Airlines' luggage stipulations are changing all the time! Check your carrier's website for requirements.

- Pack clothing that will not make you conspicuous or cause you to feel threatened. This includes those typical American items such as baseball and cowboy hats, t-shirts with pictures, flags, or college names and insignias; flip-flops are also usually a dead giveaway. Provocative clothing is also not recommended. Be aware of what is considered appropriate style of dress in your host country – your host country might have a more formal dress style than what you're used to.

- You will likely do quite a bit of walking in your host country. Be sure to pack a pair of comfortable walking shoes – these should be "broken in" before leaving the US!

- Pack gallon-size Ziploc plastic bags – these are extremely useful.

- Take a few snacks with you in case you arrive to find shops closed or if you wake up at odd hours.

Host Country

- Learn the local rules of your host country and obey them.

- Emergency plan: Learn the location of your embassy/consulate, of hospitals and the nearest police station. Ask your university or program office about their emergency plan.

- Know this about your Embassy or Consulate in the Host Country:

    - Several embassies operate under a warden system. Find out your embassy's emergency plan. If there are several American students in your program, create your own warden system. Establish a phone tree and a point person for the group.

    - Map a route to your embassy or consulate from your place of study and living in case of emergency.

    - Be aware that some embassies are potential targets for terrorists and thus security will be tight. You might phone the embassy to register and find out how best you can be served in cases of emergency.

- If possible, visit the US embassy/consulate building in country to learn its location. Make sure to give them your in-country contact information so that you are immediately contacted in case of an emergency or crisis in the country.

If you are arrested.
Americans and other foreigners arrested abroad are jailed abroad. Though they cannot get you out of jail, your embassy can assist and advise you in providing a list of local attorneys to help you. Arrest is serious business here and abroad. To avoid any such situations you must learn and abide by the laws of your host country. Penalties for drug violations, including possession of small amounts of marijuana and other substances, are severe penalties in most countries and a strictly enforced.

If your passport or purse is stolen.

- Contact the Embassy immediately. Your passport will have to be replaced, and this takes time. Also, this is when the copy of your passport and typed information will be helpful.
- Complete form DS-0064 to report the stolen passport
- Contact your credit card companies
- File a police report
- Contact your parents and Sarah Egerer if they can offer you any assistance.

If you need help with a translation or legal advice in cases involving law enforcement and customs officials. Below is advice on how to behave in such situations:

- Be cooperative. Do not get rattled.
- Communicate as best you can. If you cannot speak the language, immediately request a translator. Learn the phrase and words that can help you make this request.
- Realize that rights vary according to the country. Be respectful of that difference.

Money and valuables

- Carry traveler's checks and extra cash in a security pouch for emergencies. Do not rely solely on ATMs!

- Be smart when traveling! Do not be obvious when counting money. Do not carry massive amounts of money with you but carry some. Plan for daily trips but only take what you need and a little extra for emergency.

- Be sure your credit card is returned to you after each purchase.

- Be sure to receive a claim check for each piece of checked luggage.
- Do not leave valuables in your room while you are out. Just because a hotel room has a safe, doesn't mean it's safe!
- Conceal personal valuables (money, passport, etc.) in several places to avoid easy theft. Put them in different pieces of hand luggage or on your person.
- Put your passport in a safe place. Some schools may offer to lock up important items. Keep a copy of your passport on you at all times.
- Put your personal information in a secure place and lock up all medicines.
- Women should carry handbags in a secure manner to prevent snatch theft. To avoid motorcycle thieves, walk on the inside of paths and/or carry your purse on the side away from the street.
- Keep a rubber band around your wallet or keep it in a zipped compartment of your handbag. It makes it harder for a pick pocket to steal.
- Beware of cute animals. People can train animals, especially monkeys, to pickpocket. Also avoid stray animals because of the concern of rabies.
- Beware of con artists. They do exist around the world.
- If confronted by a superior threat (ex. gun, knife, gang etc) don't fight attackers; relinquish your valuables.
- Report loss or theft to appropriate authorities and keep a copy of the report for insurance purposes.
- Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets, or purchase souvenirs.

Personal Safety Concerns

- Consider purchasing or renting a cellular phone in your host country. It will be easier to stay in touch with family and friends. Be sure to give these people your number so they can reach you in an emergency. Websites of cell phone companies are in the Education Abroad handbook.
- Keep a low profile. The best way to do this is to immerse yourself in the culture of your host community.
- Dress and behave in a dignified manner, avoiding the sorts of flashy items that indicate your wealth or behavior that reveals your ignorance of cultural norms and your nationality. Some specific examples are revealing clothes and clothes or other items tagged with symbols of the American flag.
- Be polite and low-key. Avoid loud groups of foreigners or people having loud and argumentative discussions.
- Avoid political rallies or protests.
- Listen to locals! They know which places are and are not safe. Avoid dangerous areas that involve short cuts such as narrow alleys and poorly lit streets.
- Avoid traveling alone at night.
- Do not give your room number or address to persons you do not know well. Meet visitors at a public place where you feel comfortable.
- Avoid taking pictures of police, military personnel, and military installations.
- If staying in hotels on your travels, book a hotel room between the 2nd and 7th floors; high enough to avoid easy entrance and low enough for fire equipment to reach.
- Know the fire safety exits and read the instructions (where available). Count the number of doors between your room and the exit. This could be a lifesaver if you must crawl out of smoke.

- Realize that you are a potential target. Act with caution and never enter an area that appears unsafe. Try to know the area – running *away* from danger is not the same as running *to* safety – know *where* to run to!

- Learn some of the local language to assist you in the process of immersion and so that you can obtain help if needed.

Traveling outside the host country

- Carry your official passport with you and leave one copy in your host country and take another in your suitcase.

- Check the travel advisory/warning list on the http://state.gov website for countries you will travel to prior to departure. You may wish to revise your itinerary. Do not travel to countries under warnings.

- Check with Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/travel) for health related issues. Some areas of a country made have pockets of malaria and other problems you need to prepare for.

- Let your advisor at the host institution know where you will be traveling and your expected time of departure and return. This is important for your safety. If you have a cell phone number or contact information, be sure to leave it with your advisor. You might also share this same information with a trusted friend in the host country as well.

- The above information and suggestions apply to your traveling abroad even if only for a short period.

- Use common sense even on vacation. Read up on the culture and customs of the "new" country.

Returning home

- Become familiar with the US Customs rules and declaration policies. The booklet "Know Before You Go" is very helpful and can be found in the federal passport offices or http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/.

- Pack a change of clothes in your carry-on.

- Do not pack something that could delay you at security check-points.

- Make certain you have all of your I.D.'s and passport!

- **Reconfirm flight reservations 2 weeks prior to leaving**.

- Notify the embassy/consulate of your departure from the country.

- Do not pack souvenirs that go against customs rules (ex. unprocessed food, fruit, plants, Cuban cigars).

Links to internationally oriented websites

http://travel.state.gov - Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Travel Warnings, passports, visas, etc.
http://www.osac.gov/ - Global security and news reports
http://www.usembassy.gov/ - Links to U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide.
http://www.globaled.us/safeti/ - Safety information for students studying abroad.
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html#student_travel - Tips for US students abroad.
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html#emergencies Summarizes the work of the State Department during a crisis overseas.

Links to Health Related Sites

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_4971.html - Medical information for Americans traveling abroad.
http://www.cdc.gov/travel - Centers for Disease Control – Travelers health issues and vaccinations.
http://www.iamat.org/ - International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers
http://www.asirt.org - Association for safe international travel
http://ciee.org/travelsafe.cfm - Information on AIDS and International Travel
http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org - Alcoholics anonymous
http://www.overeatersanonymous.org - Overeaters anonymous
http://www.anad.org - National Association of Anorexia Nervosa