

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE CHECKLIST

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE

Global Engagement

This document is intended to help you with your decision-making and planning process for a Columbia Global Experience. Please use this as a general guide, as timelines may vary dependent on the opportunity.

1+ Year to 6 Months Before Departure

Overall Planning

- Consider your goals.
 - Are you interested in learning more about a specific region?
 - Are you interested in building your language skills?
 - Do you have preferences related to professional or academic interests? How might a location align with them?
 - Would you like the experience to span an entire year or semester? Or, are you seeking something short-term, such as, over the summer, spring, or winter break?
 - Will your course load and progression towards your major allow for the experience? If so, are there certain programs that will help you fulfill course requirements while overseas?
- Identify which offices, departments, faculty, staff, and student groups on campus support and plan global experiences. Go on a “discovery tour” by setting up meetings to learn more about opportunities to go abroad.
- Identify prerequisites (i.e. language classes, academic level, previous group engagement, etc.)
- Determine best time for experience, based on the above, as well as other factors such as: recruitment cycles for jobs of interest, thesis work, leadership roles, etc.

Travel Documents

- Where relevant, understand criteria for travel, work, volunteer, and study abroad related to your citizenship and travel documents. Sources to gain clarity on this could include: International Student and Scholars Office (for international students), the consulate for your home country, as well as program advisers.
- Conduct early research on visas (i.e. student, work, tourist etc.) that may be required. Visit the consulate website for the respective country to determine if there are any restrictions on visas for citizens of your country of origin.

Finances

- Understand costs associated with program and travel options to determine financial feasibility.
- Identify potential funding sources and make note of eligibility criteria and application timelines.
- Begin saving and budgeting for out-of-pocket expenses, where relevant and possible.
- Consider how financial aid may or may not apply to your program of interest.

3 to 6 Months Before Departure

Overall Planning

- Put together application materials/proposals for programs/opportunities of interest.
- Where relevant, have materials reviewed by an adviser to ensure they are competitive and not missing anything.
- Prepare for any associated interviews.
- Purchase plane tickets, if program is confirmed.

Travel Documents

- Apply for passport/passport renewal, if necessary. Ensure that passport will be valid 6 months after your planned return to the U.S. and find out the # of blank pages needed in passport upon arrival on the consulate website.

3 to 6 Months Before Departure (Continued)

Finances

- Apply for available and relevant funding.

Safety and Emergency Planning/Regional and Cultural Research and Learning

- Keep track of news related to your region and follow U.S. Department of State information on travel to that location in the case that a world event could impact your program or location of interest.

1 to 3 Months Before Departure

Overall Planning

- Confirm your program participation & enrollment.
- Complete all acceptance materials required by your program.
- Reach out to departments on campus (i.e. housing, academic advising, financial aid, academic department, etc.)
- Register for appropriate study abroad course on SSOL, when relevant.
- Look at packing list to make sure you have all necessary items.
- Purchase plane tickets, if you have not done so already.

Travel Documents

- Collect documents required for your visa, if necessary, and apply as early as possible.

Finances

- Plan your budget.
- Clear all Columbia registration holds and make sure all outstanding balances are paid.

Safety and Emergency Planning

- Attend and complete mandatory orientation & pre-departure meeting(s) and webinars.
- If you are a non-US citizen, consult the ISSO to make sure you can re-enter the country appropriately.
- Complete and be approved for Columbia School Sponsorship.
- Create a profile and a trip in ISOS.
- Obtain an ISOS card from the Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement.
- Consider purchasing additional insurance for personal liability, property loss, trip cancellation, etc.

Health

- Verify that your health insurance covers you globally throughout your stay. Also, call your insurance company to learn about how to use your coverage while abroad.
- Inform yourself of health and safety issues in the country abroad and discuss them with your family.
- Have a physical, dental check-up, eye examination, etc.
- Make sure you receive all appropriate inoculations.
- Meet with disability services (if necessary) and/or advisers to consider how to manage accommodations and/or medical conditions overseas.
- Plan to bring prescriptions for your entire time away, if possible. You may need to submit documentation to prove to your insurance that you are abroad for an extensive period of time, so start this process early.

Regional and Cultural Research and Learning

- Obtain and review a guidebook, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guides.
- Educate yourself about local customs, current events and laws.
- Read relevant books, periodicals, websites, etc. that pertain to your location.

I-2 Weeks Before Departure

Overall Planning

- Determine how you will make phone calls home (i.e. sign-up for international service on your current cell phone; use Skype/Zoom/What's App or other Voice-over Internet Phone services; use international phone cards).
- Based on time zones, discuss with family and friends when/how often you plan to communicate with one another.
- Consider setting up a blog so friends and family can experience your time abroad with you.
- Find out what your airline luggage policy is: How many bags do they allow to check and carry on? What is the weight limit for each? How long before the departure time must you check in your bags?
- Email your supervisor/director/mentor to let them know when you will be arriving.
- Review your packing list, purchase any essentials, and begin packing. Be careful not to over pack!
- When applicable, check in with your program manager to ensure all program-specific tasks are completed
- Leave time aside to give a proper goodbye to your friends, family, and favorite foods!

Travel Documents

- Make copies (and keep in a safe place or leave with a family member/contact at home) to prepare for the possibility that your documents could be misplaced, lost or stolen while you are abroad:
 - Passport Identification page and visa, license, health insurance, ISOS and credit cards (front and back), flight and other travel itineraries
 - Immunizations and prescriptions; other medical history (i.e. surgeries, allergies)
 - Important telephone numbers (numbers for friends and family saved in your phone; write them down!)
- Scan your important documents and email them, securely, to yourself.

Finances

- Determine how much money you will need and how you will manage it (i.e. cash, open a bank account, etc.)
- Plan to bring appropriate credit cards & bank cards, as recommended by your program.
- If you are paying for expenses back home while you are abroad, set up regular payments so you do not have to worry about them while you are away.
- Notify your bank/credit cards that you are traveling overseas so that you can use your debit/credit cards.

Safety and Emergency Planning

- Update your emergency contact information in SSOL.
- If you are a U.S. citizen, enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about an upcoming trip abroad so the U.S. Department of State can possibly help you in an emergency.
- Have a plan in place before an emergency occurs.
- Download the ISOS Assistance App.
- Consider obtaining the following safety travel essentials: money belt or hidden pocket, luggage travel lock, reflective clothing, headlamp or mini flashlight.

Health

- Pack items for your health and safety. Refer to the [CDC website](#) country-specific "Healthy Travel Packing Lists."

Regional and Cultural Research and Learning

- Continue to read up on current social, political, academic and economic issues of your host and home country.
- Research time difference between your hometown and host country and consider creating a communication plan with family and friends to determine when you will speak with one another.
- Learn some key phrases in the local language or continue developing your more extensive language knowledgebase.

1 Day Before Departure

Overall Planning

- Verify your flight time, as schedules may change.
- Weigh your luggage to make sure they do not exceed the weight limitations.

Travel Documents

- Make sure you have all your necessary travel documents in your carry-on bag, book bag or purse: passport, visa, license or other photo ID, health insurance information, ISOS card, credit cards, flight and travel itineraries.

Finances

- Bring an emergency cash fund (~\$200-\$400) and \$100 in local currency with you on the plane.

Health

- Make sure you have all your essential medications in your carry-on bag, book bag or purse.

Upon Arrival/While Abroad

Overall Planning

- If you didn't bring foreign currency, exchange some money at the airport to pay for transportation and first meals.
- Take a trip to your site location so that you know exactly how to get there and how long it takes so you can avoid being late on the first day. If possible, go on a weekday to learn the weekday public transport schedule.
- Request that a transcript be sent to UGE, not the Registrar.

Travel Documents

- Follow any additional in-country procedures that may be necessary for your particular visa as outlined on the consulates website for the country you are traveling to (ex: registering your visa at a local police station, etc.)

Safety and Emergency Planning

- Remain vigilant to avoid being a target, and stay in physical contact with your luggage.
- Update ISOS with any changes to your lodging and contact information (i.e. new phone or SIM card).
- Update ISOS with any additional day trips, overnight stays, or weekend trips.
- Share your additional plans with a Columbia contact, in-country contact, friend, or family member.
- Avoid posting your travel plans on social media.
- Rely on public transportation, if appropriate, and use only licensed taxis ordered from a trusted source.
- Review locks, windows, smoke detectors, and emergency exits in your housing, office and/or university location.

Health

- In case of injury or illness, call your local emergency number, as needed.
- Contact ISOS for medical referrals and report any illness or injury requiring a doctor.

Regional and Cultural Research and Learning

- Make sure you know the relevant laws for each country to which you plan to travel. Foreign laws apply to visitors, regardless of the visitor's country of citizenship.
- Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs.
- Plan appropriate wardrobe: you do not want to offend the local community, nor draw unwanted attention.

Final Tip: Get ready for an amazing time abroad!! This will be an experience of a lifetime.