

# STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK: SAFETY ABROAD

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## SAFETY RESOURCES

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

General information, including links to several safety resources, is at the [Health + Safety](#) tab on the study abroad website.

### SAFETY IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Safety in and around your host city will be discussed during your orientation abroad. Information on crime, road safety, drug penalties, and terrorist activity in your host country is included in the [US State Department Country Information page](#), Safety & Security section.

The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) has annual safety reports for most countries in the world: <https://www.osac.gov/>

### SMART TRAVELER ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

Shortly before your program begins, you must enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) through the U.S. Department of State. The nearest U.S. Embassy in your host country can then contact you via email about safety conditions to help you make informed decisions about travel plans. It also helps the Embassy, family and friends contact you in an emergency.

## SAFETY TIPS

### MAKING SAFE CHOICES

Much of safety abroad is made up of smaller events and decisions. The CIE and on-site staff monitor security risks in each country, but you are most responsible for your personal safety on a day-to-day basis. When everything around you is new and exciting, it is easy to forget safe behavior you would follow at home. Remember:

**Know local laws and abide by them:** U.S. citizenship (if you are a US citizen) offers no protection if you are arrested abroad. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. The “Local Laws & Special Circumstances” section of the [U.S. State Department Country Information page](#) for your host country is a good starting place.

**If you drink, do it responsibly:** If you choose to drink, do so in moderation, respecting yourself and others. Many countries have laws against public drunkenness. Alcohol is often a factor in crime here and abroad; a drunk person is an easy target for a criminal. In addition, drink-spiking occurs abroad just as at home: always watch your drink being made or poured and keep an eye on it.

**Do not use illegal drugs.** In some countries, drug use has harsh penalties, including long prison sentences or even a death sentence. Again, the “Local Laws & Special Circumstances”

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section of the [U.S. State Department Country Information page](#) for host country contains brief information.

While drugs like marijuana may be relatively common in some countries, they are generally still illegal, and as a non-citizen you face higher risks, including deportation. In addition, if you are reported using illegal drugs during a program, both the host organization and UWEC disciplinary processes, including suspension from the program or expulsion from the university, may apply.

**Do not walk alone at night:** This advice applies to both men and women. Walking alone at night makes you an easier target for assault, theft, and in some places, transportation accidents. If you have been drinking, are in unfamiliar parts of a city, or an isolated area, the risk is even greater.

**Respect the knowledge of the staff at your host site.** Follow their advice: if they say to stay away from somewhere, do it!

**When traveling, always leave an itinerary with a friend or family member at home and on-site:** This helps locate you in the event of an emergency at home, or if you do not arrive at your next location on the expected day and time.

### NOT BECOMING A TARGET

Tourists are often easy targets for crime. Thieves and other criminals may also be aware that a new group of study abroad students arrives in their city each term. To be safer:

1. Do not wear clothing with U.S. logos (team or university logos, U.S. flags, etc.).
2. Stay away from "typical" U.S. hangouts abroad (McDonald's, Hard Rock Cafes).
3. If you need to visit a U.S. Embassy, fine-- but don't hang around just to see it.
4. Find out which bars or restaurants are known to be international student gathering places.  
Be extra careful if you drink in such locales. Always come and go with a group.
5. Don't yell across the room or street at your friend in loud, U.S. American tones.
6. Do not stop in the street to be "interviewed" or "surveyed" by anyone. This is often a cover for theft.

### KEEPING VALUABLES SAFE

#### DO

#### DO NOT

✓ Leave valuables in a secure place at home whenever possible.	✗ Carry more cash on your person than you need for the day.
✓ Wear a money belt or neck pouch under clothing when you must carry your passport, credit/debit cards, etc.	✗ Have expensive phones or other electronic equipment out in public.

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## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence can happen to people of all gender identities anywhere in the world. It is 100% the perpetrator's fault. The most important thing you can do for yourself or a friend who is sexually assaulted is to get support and medical care.

If you or someone you know is facing or has been a victim of sexual assault overseas, please contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747 (from overseas: 202-501-4444) or the closest U.S. embassy or consulate.

See the [Health + Safety](#) tab, Sexual Violence Abroad section on the study abroad website for links to sexual violence support resources.

## HOW TO GET HELP

Even if you take all the right precautions—things happen! And although you'll be a long way from home, you are not alone. Here are several ways to get help.

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

All UWEC programs have an on-site contact person. An emergency contact card will be uploaded to your BlugoldsAbroad account prior to departure. Print it and keep a copy in your wallet in case you don't have internet access when you need it! USAC students will have two cards, one with UWEC information and one with USAC information.

### TEAM ASSIST: CISI 24-HOUR ASSISTANCE PROVIDER

If you are on personal travel outside of the program framework, you may not be able to contact the on-site contact person for help. You have 24-hour assistance through your CISI insurance. Team Assist can help with replacing important items (think passport or credit card), or locating legal services, such as a local attorney or appropriate consular officer. Find all details at the [CISI portal](#) or access the information on the CIE website by following the path [Health + Safety](#) → *Required International Insurance Coverage*. Print out the brochure and emergency assistance benefit card to carry with you whenever you travel.

### 911 EQUIVALENT

The U.S. State Department provides a list of [911 numbers abroad](#). In some countries there are different numbers for fire, police, and ambulance. The numbers are listed in your UWEC program guide or in your USAC Arrival Guide for USAC programs.

### NEAREST U.S. EMBASSY

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U.S. Embassies and/or Consulates also offer some assistance to U.S. citizens abroad. You can find a complete list of U.S. Embassies abroad on the CISI portal or at [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov). They will assist in the following:

- Provide a list of local physicians and lawyers
- Contact next of kin in event of emergency
- Aid during civil unrest or natural disaster
- Contact relations on your behalf to request funds or guidance in an emergency

### CRIME VICTIM OR ARREST ABROAD

If you are the victim of a crime or are arrested abroad, notify the program coordinator at your host site and your UWEC Study Abroad Manager and/or get in touch with the nearest [U.S. consulate or embassy](#).

### EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

In the event of a large scale national or international emergency, follow these steps. The contact information you need is on your Emergency Contact Card(s).

- 1) Contact your on-site contact person.** Follow this person's direction on whether to go about your normal activities, stay where you are, or gather at a designated location. **This person should be your first point of contact**, since a person in the same location as you will have much more accurate information on conditions where you are than the CIE or someone else at home. (In programs where you live with host families, your host family may be your first point of contact.)
  - 1a) If the on-site liaison is not available, contact your host site's emergency number.**
- 2) Contact the UWEC Center for International Education.** Often, we will have already been contacted by your on-site liaison, and we will be in touch with students abroad through their liaisons, and directly via e-mail, with any pertinent information.
  - 2a) If you are unable to reach your on-site liaison or the Center for International Education, call the UWEC Campus Police After Hours Numbers** listed on your Emergency Contact Card. They can reach a staff person.
- 3) Contact your family at home.** Parents and other important people want to know that you are safe. E-mail is often the most reliable contact method.

## REPORTING HEALTH/SAFETY CONCERNS

### WHY REPORT?

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If you or a friend experiences a health or safety incident abroad, we encourage you to report the incident to the CIE. We can then provide support or resources to help manage the concern.

In some instances, UWEC has a legal obligation under the Clery Act to report incidents that occur on study abroad programs. Your report helps determine if an incident needs to be reported to the federal government. No personally identifying information will be shared.

Finally, incident reports assist UWEC in evaluating the safety of existing study abroad locations.

### WHAT TO REPORT?

Our partners abroad often report serious concerns involving UWEC students, but we would also like to hear from you about any of the following:

Aggravated Assault	Illness	Sexual Assault	Disease Outbreaks
Arrests	Injury	Sexual Harassment	Fires
Death	Missing Person	Theft	Floods

### HOW TO REPORT?

Report an incident through this [report form](#) found on the study abroad website. Go to [Health + Safety](#) -> *Health and/or Safety Incident Reports*. You can report an incident anonymously or provide your name and contact details.

You can also report an incident by contacting your UWEC Study Abroad Manager and providing the following information:

- Date of the incident
- Time (in-country time) of incident
- Country/city of incident (note these may be different than your program site if you are traveling)
- Nature of the incident (e.g. illness, injury, assault, theft, etc.)
- Individuals involved

## PERSONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

All UWEC study abroad students have limited [personal liability insurance](#), in addition to their CISI medical coverage.