

Travel Abroad Pre-departure Information

For Parents of Students Attending Whitman Faculty Led Trips Abroad

Passports and Visas

If your son or daughter does not already have a valid passport, they should apply for one immediately. For information on how to apply for a passport in Walla Walla, please see http://www.whitman.edu/study_abroad/. For information about how to apply for a U.S. passport elsewhere, please see <http://travel.state.gov/passport>.

For some countries, US citizens who wish to visit that country must also apply for a visa (permission to reside temporarily in the country). Visas are usually obtained from the Embassy or Consulate of the country of destination that is closest to the student's permanent residence. Students will receive information about visa application procedures directly from their trip leader.

Applying for a visa is the student's responsibility. **It is very important that the visa application be completed carefully and in a timely manner to ensure having the visa in time for the departure date.** Visas take anywhere from several days to several months to be processed depending on the country. To apply for a visa most countries require a valid passport, visa application, ID-style photo and fee. Some countries may require all or some of the following documentation: financial statement demonstrating that the student has the resources to study abroad; medical report; proof of a round trip airline ticket showing the date the student plans to leave the host country; and proof of medical insurance. A few countries require that visas be picked up by the applicant in person which entails traveling to the nearest consulate or embassy of that country.

If the student applies for the visa by mail, we strongly recommend that the passport and visa application be sent via some sort of express service (Express Mail, Federal Express, UPS) so that it will arrive quickly and can be traced if lost. We also recommend that the student purchase a prepaid express mail return envelope addressed to themselves and enclose it with the visa application so that they will get their passport back quickly and reliably from the consulate.

Health and Safety

We want your son or daughter to have a safe and successful experience abroad and feel it is important for both students and parents to understand the risks associated with traveling and living overseas. While many foreign destinations are not any less safe than the US, conditions are different abroad and travel obviously carries some inherent risks. Listed below are a number of points related to health and safety that we feel are important for parents to understand:

- Understand that Whitman College cannot guarantee the safety of your son or daughter while abroad or eliminate risk from the foreign environment.
- Obtain and read carefully the health and safety information provided by the trip leader, as well as information available from the Center for Disease Control, the US Department of State, and other sources about the conditions in the country where your son or daughter will be studying. For CDC information contact them at tel 404-639-3311 or see their homepage at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>. For the US Department of State's Travel Warnings see their

homepage at <http://travel.state.gov/travel/>.

- Be involved with your son or daughter's decision to participate in a given trip abroad keeping in mind that home campus services, facilities and conditions are not replicated overseas. Medical care, road conditions and safety standards in other countries are often inferior to what one finds in the United States.
- Find out if services that your son or daughter might need will be available overseas especially if your son or daughter has a physical or mental health condition or disability. Be sure your student informs the trip leader in a timely manner of any special needs they have.
- Encourage your son or daughter to disclose accurate and complete physical and mental health and disability information about themselves to the trip leader.
- Encourage your son or daughter to have a physical, dental and eye examination before going abroad to ensure that he or she is healthy before leaving the U.S.
- Ensure that your son or daughter has adequate health insurance coverage for their period overseas that covers them in all countries they might travel to as well as in the U.S., if they need to return home for treatment.
- Be aware that Whitman College cannot assure US standards of due process in other countries or provide legal representation if a participant has a legal problem abroad.
- Discuss safety and health issues with your son or daughter before he or she goes abroad.
- Be sure to obtain contact information for the program overseas in case you need to reach your son or daughter in an emergency.
- Keep in touch with your son or daughter and encourage the student to give you an itinerary if he or she intends to travel independently during their period abroad.
- Contact the trip leader or the Whitman College Study Abroad Office if you have any questions about the risks involved with study in a particular destination.

Medical Insurance

All students studying abroad need to check with their medical insurers to find out if they will be covered for medical expenses while abroad because many U.S. insurance companies do not cover individuals when they are abroad. Whitman College requires that students attending college-affiliated programs demonstrate that they have coverage for medical expenses incurred overseas and in the U.S., in the event the student needs to return home for medical care. The group insurance policy available to students through Whitman College does cover students when they go to foreign countries on a Whitman-affiliated trip. If you are interested in purchasing the Whitman policy and need additional information, please contact the Whitman College Health Center at tel 509-527-5281. If your son or daughter is going to developing countries or remote locations where access to good medical care may be limited, you may wish to purchase more comprehensive coverage for your son or daughter, such as that offered by OnCall International, which can be reached at 1-800-689-1896 or online at www.oncallinternational.com/membership.

Whitman College also requires that all students going to a foreign country on Whitman-affiliated trips purchase the International Student Identity Card (ISIC). Among the many benefits the card

offers, it provides cardholders with coverage of up to \$250,000 for emergency medical transportation and \$25,000 for repatriation when abroad. This insurance does not replace insurance for regular medical expenses, but does provide supplemental coverage in the event of a medical emergency. Information about ISIC fees and coverage is available by calling 715-346-0860 or online at www.insureamerica.com.

Financial Matters

Your son or daughter should already have received fee information from the trip leader. When planning for the student's expenses overseas, pay close attention to what the trip fees cover and what the fees do not cover. Here are a few points to consider when planning the budget for your son or daughter's out-of-pocket expenses:

- **Meals:** Some trips do not cover any meals or may offer only a partial meal plan.
- **Optional Activities:** Entertainment, cultural activities, weekend excursions and travel during breaks are usually not covered by program fees.
- **Medical Expenses:** Because foreign doctors and hospitals do not bill U.S. insurance companies directly, students who require medical care abroad will usually need to pay for the medical services in advance and then seek reimbursement from their insurance company.
- **Cost of Living:** The cost of living for basic incidental expenses may be much higher than it is in the United States.
- **Exchange Rate:** Fluctuations in the value of the U.S. dollar may result in items abroad being even more expensive than anticipated.

As far as determining how to take funds overseas, this will vary a great deal from country to country. Students should consult the pre-departure information sent to them by the trip leader for details about what form to take funds in (travelers checks, ATM card, credit card, etc). In many countries, a multi-pronged approach works best with students taking some of their funds in US dollar travelers checks and using an ATM card (with international pin in numbers not letters) for periodic cash withdrawals. A credit card is a good idea to have available for emergencies.

Trip Itinerary

The group's itinerary is as follows:

Emergency Contact Information

During the trip, the following telephone, fax and e-mail addresses may be used to contact your son or daughter in the event of an emergency:

Further Information

For further information about this trip, please contact: