



**Student Handbook**  
**Short-term U.S.-Based Off-campus Programs**



UNIVERSITY *of* ST. THOMAS



## **Pre-departure checklist**

### **Contact information and personal documents**

- Be sure to give family and friends your contact information and itinerary. Keep them updated of any changes.
- Leave credit card and ATM info at home, and take a copy with you.

### **Financial**

- Make sure your credit, debit and/or ATM cards have 4-digit numerical PIN numbers.
- Card numbers and emergency assistance numbers – leave one copy at home and take one with you, separate from the cards.
- Plan with folks at home for emergencies – can money be deposited in an account at home that you can access?

### **Academic**

- Bring books, syllabus, guidebooks, etc.

### **Health**

- Inform faculty director(s) if you have pre-existing conditions which may affect your participation at some point or which may be critical to know if you are ill/injured and unable to speak for yourself.
- Your health insurance card – bring it with you.
- Your regular prescription medication. Keep prescriptions in original containers from pharmacy!

### **General**

- Clothing packing list - Know range of temperature and precipitation for the area you will visit. See pg. 16 (Packing Lists).

## **Dear short-term traveler:**

Congratulations! Your decision to study off campus will provide you with many exciting adventures and experiences not to be found in your local environment.

We have put together this handbook to provide you with helpful information for planning and spending your time off campus. It is intended to be helpful both *before* and *during* your time away.

There are excellent tips in this handbook, and it is organized in a way we hope will be user-friendly and straightforward. However, this is not the only source of information you should use when preparing for your time away. Along with reading the handbook, prepare yourself mentally for your program will make it all the more fulfilling.

You should read this manual thoroughly, share it with friends and family, and of course, take it with you. Much of this information will be useful not only before you depart, but after you are on site.

Finally, keep in mind that the minute anything is in print it runs the risk of being outdated. Your real learning will come through experience, so experience all you can!

Good luck from all of us at the International Education Center!

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## Course expectations

Clearly defined expectations are one important way that short-term programs become successful. When everyone knows up front what is involved in a course, students and faculty are more likely to have a rewarding, positive experience.

### Academic expectations

The most important thing to remember is that programs are first and foremost academic experiences. These are not trips. The syllabus and itinerary are designed to make the most of the location(s) where your course takes place and are designed to meet the objectives of the course. We encourage students to take an active role in their learning outside of class time by visiting sites and getting to know another part of the United States.

You will receive a detailed syllabus and itinerary for your course. Reading lists, assignments and grading standards will be explained by your faculty director. Students are expected to be present—physically and mentally—at all required course activities and to be active participants in all course activities. Failure to do so may affect your final grade or result in your being sent home at your own expense.



### Assignments and academic journals

Another point to remember is that you are completing roughly the same amount of work in a three-week course as you would in an entire semester on campus. There will be assignments in each course which students are expected to complete in the time allowed. Your faculty director will give you more detailed directions.

### Behavior expectations

You are expected to behave in a manner consistent with the rules of your course and the University of St. Thomas. By signing the Short-term Off-campus Programs Agreement (see pg. 14) you have also agreed to:

1. Participate in all classes and scheduled activities unless ill,
2. Not buy, sell or use drugs at any time,
3. Not engage in abusive use of alcohol.

If you violate any of these, or other rules issued by St. Thomas or your faculty director, you can be sent home, immediately, at your own expense. Students who

are sent home may also receive a failing grade for the course. **Please also keep in mind that you are under the Rules of Conduct of the University of St. Thomas, and may face disciplinary action after you return.**

## **Dress for success!**

Appropriate behavior extends to the way you dress. Depending on the location of your program, your faculty director may have special instructions regarding appropriate clothing and behavior. The following general rules may help you avoid potential problems:

- Pack at least one nicer outfit (skirt and blouse for women, khakis and button up shirt for men) for group outings or formal meals.
- Short or revealing clothing is almost always inappropriate.

Remember that you represent not only yourself, but St. Thomas and the faculty director(s). Always treat guest lecturers, tour guides and other hosts as well as group members and instructors with the utmost respect. Behavior that disrupts others, be they students or faculty can lead to the offenders being dismissed from the course and being sent home at their own expense.

Finally, please remember that you will be held responsible for any property that is damaged. Previously, on a program to Ecuador, the hotel manager found a number of mattresses that had been ripped apart by a student. The student was charged for the replacement of the property.

And lastly, how you spend your spare time is YOUR responsibility. But please note these things:

1. Choose wisely.
2. Choose moderately.
3. Morning comes very quickly!!

# **Ways to have a positive group experience**

## **What is a successful group?**

Traveling in a group is very different from traveling with family or friends. Not only may your group be comprised of students from different classes, but these students come to the group with different academic backgrounds, attitudes and expectations. A truly successful group will find a way to maximize the strengths of its members and minimize any characteristics that might take away from those strengths. A positive group experience is one where members are flexible, positive and mature in their reactions.

Traveling with your group, you will go through long days and may have little free time. You might be asked to walk when you are tired, eat when you are not hungry, and focus on your program for longer periods of time than you are used to on campus. Through all of this, it is expected that you will be present with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn the material and participate actively. Everyone has a responsibility to the group to ensure that its goals are met and that problems are minimal.

## **Empowering yourself as a group member**

Group dynamics—the way groups work together—will have a tremendous impact on how successful your course ultimately is. We have put together a list of ways you can make sure your group has a positive experience traveling and studying together:

- Learn about your destination
- Be patient
- Be FLEXIBLE
- Rely on your strengths
- Take care of your health

## **How to overcome problems in groups**

Sometimes, despite the best intentions of the group, problems arise. Personalities might conflict or illness can impact group members' abilities to actively participate in the group, circumstances may be very different from what you are used to. With all the things that could have an affect on your course, it is a good idea to figure out ways you can go beyond the potential problems and keep the course on track. Here are some tips for you to use:



- **Be prepared to do something about problems.** If something serious is affecting your ability to fully participate in course activities, talk to your faculty director. By being proactive, you avoid letting little problems turn into major obstacles. Don't just complain, take charge of your reactions and change the situation if you can.
- **Keep an open mind.** It only takes one member who complains that things are not the same as back home to have a negative impact on the entire group.
- **Focus on what's really important to you.** Many groups will draw up a behavior compact, a sort of agreement of what kinds of attitudes and behaviors are wanted or are not wanted on the course. If you find yourself confronting some of the unwanted behaviors, remind yourself and the group of the priorities you have set as a team.
- **Recognize that there will be situations you won't be able to change.** Sometimes, you'll just have to let it go. There won't be anything that can be done about a situation. Instead of complaining and potentially sabotaging the group's progress, take a step back and look forward to the next day's activities.
- **Realize you have a responsibility to the entire group.** Your behavior can have a major influence on the success or failure of your group experience. It is each member's responsibility to ensure that he/she is prepared for class, ready to be an active and eager participant in course activities. By taking responsibility for your own actions, you ensure that you and your classmates will make the most of your time away.
- **Keep your sense of humor!** Try to keep perspective and see the humor in difficult situations. This can often mean the difference between a good day and a terrible one.
- **Remember, this too shall pass.** Your course will take you away from home for a brief moment. Before you know it, the time will be over, and you will be on your way back home. Make the most of that time!

# Health and safety

## Insurance

When preparing to study off campus, it is important to consider what kind of insurance coverage will protect you from major financial consequences should you have medical problems prior to departure or while traveling. St. Thomas *requires* that all students studying off-campus be insured against any medical expenses that may be incurred while participating on an off-campus program. Consider the following:

- Trip Cancellation Insurance
- St. Thomas Accident and Sickness Insurance Plan
- Parents/Spouse/Other Health Insurance

## Insurance is your responsibility

Make sure your present medical insurance covers you outside of your hometown. Also check to see if your (or parents') homeowners policy, covers your baggage while traveling. If you would like additional coverage, especially for trip cancellation, you must enroll for this on your own.

## Are you insured through the St. Thomas accident and sickness insurance plan?

The St. Thomas insurance policy covers you before, during and after your time abroad. See the brochure for a list of travel assistance benefits.

## You may need trip cancellation insurance

This type of insurance protects you financially if you have to cancel or interrupt your off-campus program for *medical reasons*. If you cancel from your program after the final deadline for any reason, you will forfeit not only your deposit but you could also forfeit the entire program fee (e.g. \$3,200). University of St. Thomas then makes final non-refundable payments for your program; therefore, in case of cancellation prior to departure, you could be responsible for the entire program fee. We suggest that students seriously consider trip cancellation insurance for this reason.

## Questions to ask your insurance provider:

- Does the plan include hospitalization coverage for accidents and illnesses while off campus?
- What is the maximum amount of coverage provided?

- Are there deductibles? If so, what are they?
- Will the plan include emergency room expenses?
- What is the coverage for medical evacuation?
- In the event of death, what is the coverage for repatriation of my remains?
- What do you do under the plan if you have to pay cash up front and have no money?
- Does the plan cover visits to the doctor or medication prescribed while off-campus?
- What are the procedures for filing a claim, and how long does it take to get reimbursed after filing?
- If it is a trip cancellation plan, what are the guidelines regarding pre-existing conditions?
- When does the plan begin and end?
- Does the plan enable you to have continuous coverage before, during and after your time off-campus?
- Is the plan the primary or secondary carrier? If secondary, when does the coverage begin?
- Is there a booklet explaining coverage in detail?

## Practical matters



### Packing and luggage

The best luggage is lightweight canvas or soft plastic (not heavy, hard material). Consider bringing a backpack, as it will come in handy if you take short trips. Remember that airlines require identification on all bags checked regardless of type. It is also recommended that your name and address are visible on the inside of your luggage should the outside tag be lost.

You will want to check with your airline provider to find out how much baggage each person is allowed to bring on a domestic flight. Also, check out the Transportation Security Administration website for specifics on what you can/cannot bring in your carry on bag at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov).

Due to higher security levels at airports worldwide, the list of restricted carry-on articles has been expanded to include the following: knives and cutting instruments of any kind, nail files, corkscrews and butane lighters. For liquids and gels in your carry-ons, follow the 3-1-1 rule. Each container of liquid or gel must be 3 ounces or less. The containers must be placed in 1 quart sized, clear plastic, zip-top bag and only 1 bag per traveler is allowed. If in doubt, pack it in your checked bag or leave it at home. **You are the one responsible for your bags, so we recommend that you consult the TSA website for the most up-to-date policy on U.S. security and screening procedures especially relating to liquids and gels, at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov).** Also it is strongly recommended to pack all film in your carry-on luggage. X-ray screening of checked luggage can destroy film.

### Packing advice

Rolling your clothes into cylinders and tying them with a rubber band saves space in your suitcase and actually keeps your clothes less wrinkled. For example, try placing all toiletry items in one bag and socks and underwear in another. The separation of items makes it much easier to grab items out of your suitcase.

Always carry a form of ID in your wallet, purse or shoulder bag and never in your luggage. All the items you'll need *during* the program, and essentials such as medication, should be carried in your carry-on luggage.

**Exposed film should not be included in your checked luggage**, but should be carried separately, since they may be ruined by procedures used during the screening. Lead-lined bags are provided by most airports which will protect these items from radiation.



## Money matters

### How much money will you need?

It is a good idea to keep close track of how you spend your money now so that you can gauge your personal spending habits and learn to budget your money carefully. Be aware that small expenses tend to add up.

### How much should you take?

Because spending habits differ widely, it is hard to provide a set amount for all students. In order to determine how much you will need, you should take into account both the fixed costs, such as meals not included in the program fee and transportation during free time AND variable costs, such as independent travel, entertainment, shopping and gifts, and frequency of communication.

Budgets vary depending upon spending habits and course inclusions. Check your course description for inclusions and exclusions. As a MINIMUM guide we suggest the following:

- \$7.00 for each breakfast (may be included with accommodations)
- \$11.00 for each lunch
- \$20.00 for each dinner (for information on the number of meals not included in the comprehensive fee, see the course description)
- \$50.00 for inner city transportation (bus, subway, etc.)
- \$50.00 for optional activities
- \$50.00 for incidentals such as toiletry articles, laundry, postage, etc.

### How to handle money safely

- **Do not flash large amounts of money** when paying a bill. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.
- **If your possessions are lost or stolen**, report the loss immediately to the police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of your plight. After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of:
  - ✓ credit cards to the issuing company,
  - ✓ printed airline tickets to the airline or travel agent.

## **A safe journey**

In the hope of helping you have a safe journey, we have prepared the following travel tips.

**Always try to travel light.** Traveling light allows you to move more quickly and you will be more likely to have a free hand. You will also be less tired and less likely to set your luggage down, leaving it unattended.

**Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary** and plan a place or places to conceal them. Your cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe. When you have to carry them on you, you may wish to conceal them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets, which are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

**Label your luggage.** Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity and if possible, lock your luggage.

A reminder: You have signed the following document and have agreed to abide by it...



# Short-Term Off-Campus Programs Agreement

## University of St. Thomas

***This is a Release of Legal Rights – You have signed this document with your application. Keep this for your records.***

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Program/Course: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Student's Name) will participate in a cross-cultural off-campus program ("Program") in \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ term, \_\_\_\_\_, offered through the University of St. Thomas International Education

Center I hereby agree as follows:

### **1. Risks of Off-Campus Study**

I understand that participation in the Program involves risks not found in study on-campus, these risks include: traveling to and within, and returning from, one or more foreign countries, foreign political, legal, social and economic conditions; different standards of design, safety and maintenance of buildings, public places and conveyances; and other matters which may be described in brochures and other written information concerning this Program which I have received and reviewed. I have made my own investigation and am willing to accept these risks.

### **2. Independent Activity**

Although the University of St. Thomas ("University") sponsors this program, I understand that neither the University nor any of the faculty directors or travel arrangers will supervise me at all times. I will have the opportunity and the right to independently leave the group periodically, subject to the faculty director's requirements for participation in and attendance at classes and other activities that are a required part of the Program. Therefore, I will be responsible for my own safety and cannot hold the University liable for any injuries to my person or property or any other losses as a result of my participation in the Program.

### **3. Institutional Arrangements**

I understand that the University does not represent or act as an agent for, and cannot control the acts or omissions of, any host institution, home stay, hotel, transportation carrier, tour organizer or other provider of goods or services involved in the Program. I understand that the University is not responsible for matters that are beyond its control. I hereby release the University from any injury, loss, damage, accident, delay or expense arising out of any such matters.

### **4. Early Departure**

If I decide to leave the Program before completing my course of study, I will provide the University with advance written notice of my intention to leave the Program. If I leave the Program prior to its completion, the University has no liability to provide or arrange for transportation, housing, dining or other services to me in connection with my early departure.

### **5. Standards of Conduct**

***A. I understand that each country has its own laws and standards of acceptable conduct, including dress, manners, morals, politics, drug use and behavior. I recognize that behavior violating those laws or standards could harm the University's relations with those countries and the institutions therein, as well as my own health and safety. I will become informed of, and will abide by, all such laws and standards for each country to or through which I will travel during the Program.***

B. I will comply with all rules and regulations issued by the University, faculty directors or any coordinating institution. It is within the faculty director's discretion to determine that my violation of such rules and regulations warrants my termination from the Program. **In that event, I may be sent home at my own expense.** I agree that the University has the right to enforce its rules and regulations, in its sole judgment, and that it will impose sanctions, up to and including expulsion from the Program, for violating these rules and regulations or for any behavior detrimental to or incompatible with the interests, harmony and welfare of the University, the Program or other participants. I recognize that due to the circumstances of off-campus study programs, procedures for notice, hearing and appeal applicable to student disciplinary proceedings at the University do not apply. If I am expelled, I consent to being sent home at my own expense with no refund of fees. **I also agree that I will: (a) not buy, sell or use illegal drugs at any time, (b) not engage in abusive use of alcohol, (c) participate in all classes and scheduled activities unless ill, and (d) abide by dress and cultural codes suitable in the countries visited.**



**6. Program Changes**

The University may, in its sole discretion, determine that circumstances within a foreign country may require the cancellation of the Program within that country. The University will provide me with as much advance notice as possible of its intention to cancel the Program in which I will participate. I also understand that the University, the on-site coordinators or the foreign government may prematurely terminate the Program. I understand that the University's fees and Program charges are based on current airfares, lodging rates and travel costs, which are subject to change. If I leave or am expelled from the Program for any reason, there will be no refund of fees already paid. I accept all responsibility for loss or additional expenses due to delays or other changes in the means of transportation, other services, or sickness, weather, strikes, computer problems or other unforeseen causes. If I become sick or injured, I will, at my own expense, seek out, contact and reach the Program group at its next available destination. The University bears no liability for any losses or claims incurred by me in connection with my own early termination from the Program or the University's termination of its participation in the Program. If I decide to remain in the foreign country after receiving notice of the University's intent to terminate the Program, I bear complete responsibility and liability for my own care and safety.

**7. Health and Safety**

A. I have consulted with a medical doctor with regard to my personal medical needs. There are no health-related reasons or problems, which preclude or restrict my participation in this Program.

B. I am aware of all applicable personal medical needs. I have arranged, through insurance or otherwise, to meet any and all needs for payment of medical costs while I participate in the Program. I recognize that the University is not obligated to attend to any of my medical or medication needs, and I assume all risk and responsibility therefore. If I require medical treatment or hospital care in a foreign country or in the United States during the Program, the University is not responsible for the cost or quality of such treatment or care.

C. The University may (but is not obligated to) take any action it considers to be warranted under the circumstances regarding my health and safety. I hereby authorize the University and/or faculty directors to procure all necessary medical assistance while I participate in this Program and to authorize any competent medical person to do all things reasonably necessary to treat any injury or illness that occurs during my participation in the Program. I agree to pay all expenses relating thereto and release the University from any liability or any actions.

**8. Assumption of Risk and Release of Claims**

Knowing the risks described above, and in consideration of being permitted to participate in the Program, I agree on behalf of my family, heirs and personal representatives to assume all the risks and responsibilities surrounding my participation in the Program. I and my heirs and successors and assigns agree to release, indemnify and hold harmless the University of St. Thomas, its past and present trustees, officers, employees, agents and the heirs, successors and assigns of each from any and all loss, cost, damage, liability or expense (including reasonable attorney's fees) resulting in or arising from my participation in the Program (including periods in transit to or from any country where the Program is being conducted).

**9. Program Charges**

I am responsible for any and all required payments and charges applicable to the Program. I understand the Program's cancellation policies and fees and agree to abide by them. I have read, understand and will abide by the terms of the **Short-term Off-Campus Programs Policies and Procedures** book included with the application.

**10. Health Insurance**

I am insured for any medical expenses, which I may incur while I participate in the Program. This policy is with \_\_\_\_\_ and my policy number is \_\_\_\_\_.

I have carefully read this Assumption of Risk and Release Form (this Agreement) before signing it. No representations, statements or inducements, oral or written, apart from the foregoing written statement have been made.

This Agreement shall be effective only upon receipt of my application by the University of St. Thomas, and shall be governed by the laws of the state of Minnesota, which shall be the forum for any lawsuits filed under or incident to this Agreement or to the Program.

Student Signature:	Date:
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I, (a) am the parent or legal guardian of the above student; (b) have read the foregoing Assumption of Risk and Release Form (this Agreement, including such parts as may subject me to personal financial responsibility), (c) am and will be legally responsible for the obligations and acts of the student as described in this Assumption of Risk and Release Form, and (d) agree for myself and for the student to be bound by its terms.

Parent/Guardian Signature:	Date:
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## Suggested packing checklist



### Documents and essentials

- ATM, credit or debit card
- Insurance information
- Phone card

### Miscellaneous

- Luggage locks and tags
- Swiss army-type multi-purpose knife (packed in your **checked** luggage!)
- Small sewing kit
- Laundry kit – line, soap, flat drain plug
- Alarm clock (battery-operated)
- Camera and film
- Favorite music – a couple of CD's or tapes (and portable player)
- Address book
- Journal
- A notebook and pencils to get you started
- Small flashlight & batteries
- Sunglasses
- Ziplock plastic bags
- Earplugs
- Eyemask to block out light while you sleep
- Pictures of family/friends
- Flipflops for the shower
- Bag to pack flat and use to carry purchases home
- other \_\_\_\_\_
- other \_\_\_\_\_

### Medical/toiletries

- Prescription medicine in original containers, plus written prescriptions
- Eyeglasses or contacts, spare pair, and lens prescription
- First aid kit
- Sunscreen
- Wash cloth and small towel
- Moleskin for blisters
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Shampoo, deodorant, hair care products, feminine hygiene products
- Over-the-counter medications such as pain relievers, cold/allergy medicine, antihistamines, vitamins, medication for diarrhea and constipation, decongestants and hydrocortisone cream.

**Clothing- cold weather**

- Heavier outerwear, as recommended (coat, mittens, gloves, hat, scarf)
- 1 pair comfortable walking shoes
- 1 pair boots or dress shoes
- 3-5 pairs socks
- 5-7 sets underwear (remember that nylon dries faster than cotton)
- 1-2 pairs of trousers or skirts
- 3-4 shirts
- 1-2 sweaters
- long underwear
- Pajamas
- Nice outfit (shirt and tie for men, nice dress or outfit for women)
- other \_\_\_\_\_
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**Clothing- warm weather**

- sunhat with brim/scarf
- 2 pairs sandals/walking shoes
- 3-4 shirts
- 2-3 pair of trousers/shorts
- Jacket/windbreaker
- 3-5 pairs socks
- 5-7 sets underwear (remember that nylon dries faster than cotton)
- Nice outfit (shirt and tie for men, nice dress or outfit for women)
- Swimsuit
- Pajamas
- other \_\_\_\_\_
- other \_\_\_\_\_

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