



TIPS ON PACKING AND TRAVELING Study Abroad Programs

This advice is a combination of common sense and the accumulated wisdom of previous Northwood study abroad programs. In addition, be sure to read the program packet and follow any instructions from your program leader(s) when packing.

Luggage:

In general, the following limits apply to baggage on international trips:

Checked Luggage: limited to 2 pieces – 50 lbs each. Overweight bags will require paying an overweight fee of \$50 or more per bag.

Carry-on Luggage: One purse/briefcase (including laptops) and one additional piece – this must fit underneath the seat or in overhead bins.

****Be sure to check the luggage policies on the airline on which you are traveling BEFORE YOU TRAVEL. You can find this on the airlines' websites.**

****If you are doing domestic travel in Europe/Asia/Latin America as part of your study abroad program, the weight limit changes to 44 lbs (20 kg). Keep this in mind when packing.**

****Your checked luggage should have roller wheels. This is a HUGE advantage when carrying luggage around.**

****Remember that you can carry only very limited quantities of liquids and gels in your carry-one luggage. These must be sealed in a plastic bag.**

Packing:

The best advice of all is NOT TO OVERPACK. You will be carrying your own luggage throughout the program; often up stairs, through airports, onto trains, busses, vans, and on streets, etc. Students who overpack always regret it.

Please limit yourself to one piece of checked luggage with roller wheels and a backpack or laptop case/briefcase. Students have found that a backpack and bag with wheels is the best combination when traveling. In addition, space on busses, trains and vans is often limited, so having only one bag helps in this regard as well.

You may wish to pack another bag into your checked luggage (OR buy an additional piece of luggage while abroad) if you need the additional space for gifts you are purchasing abroad, but always remember that you are responsible for your own luggage.

Following is some good general advice from former students:

1. *Ideal luggage:* Soft-sided suitcases WITH WHEELS work best; hard suitcases are a pain. Backpack leaves hands free for passport control, handling money, etc
2. *Handbags:* An “across the shoulder” type bag is more secure as you do not tend to put it down and it is harder to snatch.
3. *Laptops:* be sure to have a laptop that either fits into your backpack or has a shoulder strap.
4. *Adapter:* An electrical adapter is a MUST for using electrical appliances like hairdryers and recharging things like camera batteries, iPods, phones, etc.
5. A "fanny pack" is good for digital camera, phone, and accessories like an iPod, but not for your valuables. . . again it is a prime target for would-be thieves.
6. "Test-carry" your luggage before you leave. Sure you can lift it in your bedroom... but how does it feel to carry it around the block? Try this, and then decide if you need everything you packed. Weigh it before you leave to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Clothing:

NOTE: Each program is different, but in general, “neat casual” is a good rule of thumb for dress – AND – having business casual/professional wardrobe as needed. Your program leader will have specific information as to times when a professional wardrobe is needed.

1. *Shoes:* The most important item in your wardrobe is a pair of comfortable, waterproof walking shoes, and a pair of dressier shoes. You will be doing a lot of walking, which is no fun with wet or sore feet. Break the shoes in before you leave. Shoe polish and some basic attention to your shoes will keep them looking nice throughout the trip.
2. *Everyday Clothes:* Dress as you would for college: casual but neat. . . ragged, tattered clothing is NOT acceptable. “Flip-flops” may be fine for your hotel room or the most casual events, but not for walking around all day or when visiting cathedrals or temples.
3. *Slacks, nice jeans, skirt, long shorts.* Avoid extreme styles: deliberately tattered clothing is not acceptable. Athletic garb (short shorts and tank tops) is not appropriate. Avoid clothing bearing rude or suggestive messages or clothing with “USA” or the American flag plastered on the front.

4. *Drip dry shirts and T-shirts.* Avoid items that require ironing or special laundering. Sending clothes out in a hotel can be very expensive. Washing clothes while on the go is a constant problem. Laundromats are less common than in the U.S., and you'll have better things to do than to watch your laundry spin. It is better to take very few changes of clothing and to realize that you can wash items in a sink and hand them in your room to dry overnight. Bring a small bottle of detergent, or get soap "strips" that are now available for travel.
5. *Be prepared for the weather.* Check the weather at your locations ahead of time! You can check a site like www.weather.com for this. If the weather will be cold, don't take a bulky winter coat, but bring lighter coats and sweaters and "layer" for warmth. An umbrella is a must, but bring a portable one that you can easily pack.
6. *For business visits:* You will need to look professional for business visits/presentations. Women: one professional dress, or pants suit and dress shoes minimum. Weigh your desire to create a sensational impression against the inconvenience of packing and carrying four different dressy outfits. Mix and match is the key! Men: A jacket that can be worn with slacks and a tie is best, as you can mix and match. Some men's shoes can pass equally as dress shoes or walking shoes (Rocksports, for instance). However if your walking shoes look like sneakers or hiking boots, bring some dress shoes.

Money: Carry at least one credit card (MasterCard or VISA) and one ATM card that has an international network (like Cirrus or PLUS). Take some cash as well, as not all overseas businesses will even accept credit cards.

It is always a good idea to contact your credit card provider/ATM issuing bank and let them know you are traveling overseas. It is also a good idea to get a PIN number for your credit card(s) if you do not have one.

DO NOT take traveler's checks. They are often quite difficult to cash and often carry a heavy fee for any transactions.

Laptops: Should you take a laptop? Many students now prefer to do so to keep notes, check email, etc. Be sure you keep close track of your laptop at all times. Email access is usually available, either in Internet cafes or many hotels have wireless networks or modems/cables available. Be aware that you may have to pay for Internet access – these fees can add up over time.

Some students have found that setting up an account with a carrier like Yahoo or gmail provides the best access overseas.

Cameras: A lightweight digital camera works best. Be sure to get a "card" that will hold enough photos, or be prepared to download photos onto your laptop to make sure the

camera does not get too full. Be sure as well to bring along the charger for the batteries.

We do not recommend cameras which need film, as film is often quite expensive and may not be available at all locations.

Cell phones/calling cards: Your regular cell phone will very likely NOT work abroad, as other countries may use a different technology. You can contact your provider to see if your phone chip can be changed to allow calls to/from International locations on your cell phone. You could also investigate international calling cards (a quick Google search of this will give you several options). Or, your regular phone service (MCI, Sprint) may have options for international calling.

Or you can also use the internet phone service *Skype*. You must register for this at www.skype.com

But beware – costs can quickly add up when you make phone calls/send text messages abroad.

You can also often buy pre-paid phone cards upon arrival in each country and use these.

Medications: If you are on any special medication, bring enough to last the entire program, as well as your original prescription. Carry this medicine and prescription on your person, not in checked luggage. If you have a drug allergy, be sure to carry this information with you as well.

Some students will take small bottles of over the counter medicines like *Tylenol* or *Immodium* in the checked luggage. Depending on your location, these items may also easily be available overseas.