

# Studying Abroad – How to Get Started

Many students have the opportunity to study abroad during their four years of college. With the whole world to choose from and so many program offerings, it can be a confusing process. Here are some tips for getting started.

## 1. **Identify your key program requirements.**

- Do you want an English speaking program or are you interested in taking courses in another language to prepare?
- Do you need to complete requirements for your major or minor while abroad?
- In what region of the world and/or countries are you interested in traveling?
- Do you want to study abroad for a semester or the entire year? (There are also summer study abroad programs but it may be more difficult to get financial aid to cover these short-term programs.)

## 2. **Consult with your college advisor.** Most schools have study abroad offices and many offer their own study abroad programs. These offices should also have information on study abroad programs offered by other schools and organizations. Your academic advisor may also have recommendations on the best programs to meet your academic requirements.

## 3. **Look at the range of program offerings.** As studying abroad has become increasingly common for college students, there has been a corresponding increase in the choice of programs and places to travel and learn. Some key questions to ask when looking at program offerings include:

- *Cost* – tuition and fees, as well as the travel expenses – it will cost more to travel to China or Australia than to Europe!
- *GPA requirements* – some programs require a 3.0 or 3.5 GPA, while others ask for a 2.0 or 2.5.
- *Immersion* – some programs will put you in class with local students, while in others you will be in classes exclusively with other U.S. students
- *Living arrangements* – in some programs you will live in an apartment or on campus; others involve home stays with a local family

## 4. **Getting Academic Credit.** Once you have decided on programs that are of interest, you should check back with your academic advisor to make sure you will get credit from your college for those courses.

## 5. **Financial Aid.** Talk with your financial aid advisor to make sure that your financial aid will cover the costs of the program you are interested in. In general, federal financial aid will pay for approved study abroad programs – you can transfer the amount you were getting for your regular academic program to your study abroad program.

## Resources worth checking out:

- **Abroad 101** is a comprehensive guide to study abroad programs that allows you to search by your program interest and see the range of offerings, as well as reviews by other students. [www.studyabroad101.com](http://www.studyabroad101.com)
- **The Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University (IFSA-Butler)** currently operates programs in Argentina, Australia, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, England, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Peru, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Sharjah UAE and Wales. You can search by “subject,” “climate,” “population,” and “language.” Any student who applies for an IFSA-Butler program may apply for a scholarship. General scholarship awards are \$500 for summer programs, \$1,500 for semester programs and \$2,500 for full year programs, and there are also special scholarships attached to specific country programs. [www.ifsa-butler.org](http://www.ifsa-butler.org)
- **SIT** is a pioneer in experiential, field-based study abroad. SIT offers semester, summer, and academic year programs for undergraduate students in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Their approach is to have students immerse themselves in the local culture, typically living with a host family. To search their programs look at the world map and choose a country/region. SIT also awards scholarships, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 for semester programs, and \$300 to \$3,000 for summer programs. [www.sit.edu](http://www.sit.edu)
- **ISA** has a mission to provide high quality education abroad opportunities to American and Canadian college students at an affordable price. ISA's website can be searched by “country” and by “programs in English”. They have programs in 22 countries and also a number of scholarships, including “diversity scholarships.” [www.studiesabroad.com](http://www.studiesabroad.com)

As noted above, many programs offer their own scholarships and there are also competitive national scholarships available. If you're a current scholarship recipient, check with your program advisor. Many programs offer assistance throughout the study abroad process, helping you sort through the many choices and answer questions about travel costs, living expenses and other incidentals that come with traveling internationally.

These tips are excerpted from: [Top 10 Internship Interviewing Tips by Penny Loretto, About.com Guide](#) and [5 Ways to Ace a Job Interview at TeensHealth](#).