THE WORLD AS A CLASSROOM

Why Study Abroad?
According to the International Institute of Education (IIE), more than 300,000 American students study abroad each year, and that number continues to grow. The experience is not only a wonderful adventure for students—as they discover the world beyond our borders—but it provides them a broader worldview, which is an increasingly essential attribute for a new generation of leaders.

Put another way. Now’s the time. You may never have this opportunity again.

In this guide, we will address:
- Benefits of Study Abroad
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Hidden Surprises

All photos in this guide were taken and submitted by Wheaton College students.
BENEFITS OF STUDY ABROAD

Many students are first attracted to the idea of studying abroad because it gives them the opportunity to travel and expand their horizons outside American borders.

Deb Kim, Director of Study Abroad at Wheaton College, agrees study abroad programs are beneficial in a variety of ways. “Students are exposed to a whole new perspective and way of thinking. Their experiences abroad build confidence and complement their studies at home. Studying abroad allows emerging adults the unique opportunity to increase intercultural competencies, as well as discover more about their place and future as global citizens.”
Some of the main benefits to studying abroad include:

**Improved Academic Performance**

In the past, skeptics suspected that studying abroad could be a distraction to students and even lower their academic outcomes. However, Inside Higher Ed reported on a 10-year study that showed just the opposite held true—study abroad students actually receive higher GPAs upon their return home and better graduation rates by the end of their college career.

**Increased Employability**

As we move toward a more global economy, employers are increasingly impressed with students who have had experiences studying abroad. *Time* magazine recently reported on an INSEAD study showing that students who were able to adapt to foreign cultures were better at problem solving and displayed more creativity than their peers. That same multicultural engagement also led to more job offers. A recent study from IES Abroad showed that 97% of study abroad students surveyed found a job within a year of graduating, compared to 49% of their peers.

In addition to academics, students also learn a variety of useful life skills during their time abroad. The *Huffington Post* reports that “soft skills,” defined as adaptability, problem solving, communication and listening skills are also growing in importance. Immersion in another culture provides students with a cultural context and worldview that will translate into success in the classroom and beyond.
Learning to Communicate Across Cultures

We live in the age of communication. So, naturally, the ability to communicate effectively with many people across cultures and in different countries is a valuable and marketable skill. While many study foreign languages, study abroad students go one step further and immerse themselves in another culture, thereby living the language.

Living in another country for a semester or even a full year of study will expose students to new customs, lifestyles and traditions that will broaden their minds and provide a better global worldview. Students will dig deeply into a new culture as they immerse themselves in a new country and engage with locals, and their Christian worldview will expand tremendously.

Students with Demanding Schedules Can Study Abroad

There are a variety of programs open to students of any major, and yes, even to athletes. Many schools are increasingly in favor of their athletes studying abroad. As an athlete, if studying abroad is a top priority, research the schools that have opportunities to engage in sports while abroad. Another option might be summer study abroad programs, which typically last between four to six weeks. Study Abroad takes planning ahead to accommodate even the most rigorous major or sport but will be well worth it.
FAQ’S ABOUT STUDYING ABROAD

Below is a list of the top seven questions students face before deciding to jump into the adventure of studying abroad.

1. **Why should I study abroad?** One might argue that the better question is “Why not?” Studying abroad gives you the opportunity to push yourself outside of your comfort zone, set aside all previous biases, and try something new. In addition to cross-cultural learning, you will also have the chance to build up a storehouse of memories: stand in awe gazing upon great works displayed in museums, cheer alongside dedicated fans at a soccer game, and barter in the local markets.

2. **Do I need to speak another language in order to study abroad?** No, many programs offer classes in English. However, if you do speak another language or are interested in learning a new one, studying abroad is the perfect time to learn and practice speaking a foreign language with the locals.
3. How much does it cost to study abroad? Studying abroad can be quite affordable and comparable to the regular university tuition. Deb Kim, Wheaton College’s Director of Study Abroad, says, “Wheaton has a generous financial policy for study abroad. Wheaton charges the student the cost of the program without any additional administrative fees, and financial aid is also transferable to semester study abroad participation, except for a couple of restricted scholarships.” In the end, some programs cost less, some a little more, but in the majority of cases, the average tuition costs are generally equivalent to being on campus, with many students reporting their semester abroad actually costs less.

4. Where will I live during my time abroad? During your time abroad, there are a variety of housing options ranging from a homestay with a local host family to dorms/residential halls, and student apartments. Take the time to really consider where you think you would thrive the best. Your housing situation will play a key role in shaping your time abroad, so be sure to consider all of your options.
5. How do I know if my classes will transfer back to my school? Transfer of credits is handled differently from university to university. Before going abroad, you should meet with the key staff at your school to understand details about the transfer of credits. Many campuses have students complete course transfer requests prior to departure. This way there are no assumptions or surprises in how courses will or will not return to degree requirements.

6. Can I still graduate on time if I study abroad? Yes! Most students still graduate on time. However, it is vital that you plan ahead and map out the courses you need to complete in order to graduate on time. This will help ensure that you will not miss a required course that is only offered during a specific semester.

7. How long is the typical study abroad program? Most programs generally span a full semester; however, your options are not limited to this time frame. You also have opportunities to study abroad during the summer and during spring break if you are unable to commit to a whole semester of studying abroad.
HIDDEN SURPRISES OF STUDYING ABROAD

from Wheaton College Students

For Wheaton College students, studying abroad is about changing perspective and not simply location; gaining understanding and not simply collecting experiences.
1. **Unexpected friendships** — It is entirely possible that you may enter into your time abroad with fellow classmates or even some of your best friends. However, it is also possible that you will leap into this adventure alone, knowing no one in your program. Be willing to invest in the people around you. This investment may lead to a richer experience full of unexpected friendships.

“Studying abroad is a chance to become personally acquainted with another small chunk of the world. Life elsewhere is both familiar and strange. When you experience a little more of the huge, mysterious world, you are prepared to see your corner of it more clearly by comparison. And the more clearly you see reality around you, the better you can respond to it. It’s worth your while.”

- Sheldon Campbell ’15, Gordon in Orvieto, Art major

2. **A newfound appreciation for your home institution** — Immersing yourself in a new environment will ultimately bring about a fresh perspective and appreciation of your home school when you return.

“For me, studying abroad put Wheaton College in perspective [...] It was a humbling experience, and it helped me to make the most of my remaining years at Wheaton. I have never regretted studying abroad. My college experience has been richer and more focused as a result of my semester living with a Chinese family, taking intensive Mandarin classes, learning how to navigate a city of 22 million people, and building friendships with international students.”

- Grace Pyo ’15, CIEE: Accelerated Chinese Language, International Relations major
3. Your outlook on life will change – It is easy to go into any new situation with pre-conceived notions and expectations about how a different culture will look. When you actually experience something first-hand, you get a whole new perspective, and most of the time that’s different from your original expectations. Immersion into a different culture shapes your world view in new ways.

“Studying abroad will change your outlook on life. Immersing yourself in another culture for an extended period of time can radically impact your very way of thinking - from how you take in information to how you view yourself, others, and God in this world.”

- Nicole McNevin ’17, East Asia Institute at Tokyo Christian University, Anthropology major

4. God is bigger than any obstacle you will face – When studying abroad, you will experience the unexpected. There will be challenges along the way. Anything can happen from a lost passport, to a stolen purse, to realizing the bus you’re on is going to go two hours outside the city before it gets you back to where you thought you were headed. Remember that in the midst of everything, God is bigger than any obstacle you will face.

“God is bigger than any obstacle that I could ever face. Study abroad can be lonely, exhausting, and an often stretching experience. But, it has also deepened my understanding of His character. He has lavished me with comfort and has affirmed the path He’s prepared for me.”

- Silas Helm ’17, London, CIEE, Media Communications major, Photo/Graphic Design minor
5. The Importance of Listening – Often students go into an experience thinking they know more than they really do about themselves and the cultures they are coming into.

“I came in thinking I knew more than I actually did. I learned how people conduct themselves, like in a store. I learned that American individualism and Japanese community mindset are really distinct. I went in with zero language other than a love for Japanese anime and ended up giving testimony at my church. God showed me that He’s everywhere. I found out about how my American worship style influences me and how cool it was to learn about others. I learned to value people and their stories more.”

- Joshua Savidge ’17, East Asia Institute at Tokyo Christian University, History major

“Study Abroad is a chance to think about the things you’re interested in, about whatever you’re passionate about, and go study it somewhere else. Be humble so you can learn the most. Studying abroad takes the gap in your experience, the gap in your cultural understanding, and gives you a whole new world view.”

- Gabe Sandoval, Latin American Studies Program, Business/Economics and Mathematics major

Ready to learn more about study abroad opportunities?

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