

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR USC STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

HEALTH INSURANCE AND INTERNATIONAL SOS

All USC students are required to have sufficient health and accident insurance protection during their study abroad program. In order to ensure proper coverage, all students going abroad must enroll in either USC Overseas Policy or the USC Student Health Insurance Plan for the semester (or year) during which they are abroad. Both policies have a deductible while you are overseas, after which your eligible medical expenses are covered at 100%. These insurance policies work on a reimbursement system, which means you will generally be expected to pay for your medical care and prescriptions out of pocket and then file a claim for reimbursement. When you submit a claim, you need to attach all of your receipts for payment. If your receipts are *not* in US dollars, you must also submit exchange rate information and “reprice” the receipt.

We recommend that if you normally waive the USC Student Health Insurance Plan while you are on campus (because you have coverage through a family member’s health insurance plan for example), select the USC Overseas Policy but do not discontinue your coverage through the other plan (the USC Overseas Policy provides coverage while you are abroad ONLY!). If you normally purchase the USC Student Health Insurance Plan each semester (so USC is your primary health insurance provider) continue to purchase this plan during your semester/year abroad.

Both the USC Student Health Insurance Plan and the USC Overseas Policy include important medical evacuation and repatriation coverage (International SOS) not normally covered under domestic plans. Your total cost is based on the month of your departure and the month of your return. For example, if your program starts on January 13th and ends June 15th, you will be charged for 6 full months of coverage. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THE USC OVERSEAS POLICY ONLY COVERS YOU WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD—it does not provide any coverage when you are in the United States.** Before you go abroad you should review the policy plan statement and notice the limits of the policy.

When you go abroad you will have two cards (one for the USC Overseas Policy or the USC Student Health Insurance Plan, and one for International SOS—an evacuation and repatriation/travelers assistance plan) and 2 descriptive brochures: one has the insurance carrier information and one has the International SOS Assistance information. **You should bring these with you overseas.** International SOS will serve as a “first stop” for all of your medical needs. If you get sick or have an emergency, you should call SOS first, and they will assist you.

Some of your benefits with International SOS include:

- 24-hour access to International SOS physicians who provide emergency and routine medical advice
- 24-access to International SOS Global Alarm Centers for medical information, referrals, and emergency assistance
- Medical and dental referrals
- Emergency evacuation in the case of political or other unrest
- Emergency medical evacuation

- Medically-supervised repatriation
- Case Management
- Medical Expense guarantee and payment – If you are hospitalized, call International SOS and request a guarantee of payment

Please refer to the brochure for a full description of your benefits.

It is important that you become educated about your insurance coverage while you are abroad.

If you are thinking of engaging in any activity that could be considered high-risk (e.g. skydiving, whitewater rafting, bungee jumping, drag racing, downhill skiing, participating in political demonstrations, etc.), check your insurance policy first, as many high-risk activities are not covered by insurance. You can also call the USC Health Insurance Coordinator at (213) 740-0551 or uscins@usc.edu to check coverage and for other general questions.

International Student Identity Card

It is also recommended for students to purchase an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). The ISIC is recognized worldwide and entitles you to supplemental accident/sickness insurance, as well as significant travel and entertainment discounts.

You can purchase an ISIC at STA Travel.

The ISIC is an international identity card for students and offer savings on travel arrangements, accommodations, museums, cultural events, entertainment and much more!

Accepted in over 90 countries, the ISIC is an internationally recognized proof of full-time student status. It is endorsed by UNESCO and is recommended by established student travel guidebooks. As proof of your student status, the ISIC is your passport to student discounts available at home and abroad. And it allows you to access certain services available only to students. It is much more widely recognized in some countries than others.

What the ISIC can offer-

- Discount student airfares and other great travel products
- International recognition of your full-time student status
- Access to a network of over 5,000 student travel organizations that can give you information on local ISIC discounts.
- 24-hour Help Line emergency service
- Basic sickness and accident travel insurance (*PLEASE NOTE: this does NOT replace the USC Health Insurance!*)

The ISIC Student Travel Handbook, a country by country guide to ISIC benefits, travel tips, where to go, how to get there, do's and don'ts, and loads more.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In study abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own health and safety abroad through the decisions they make before and during the program and by their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

Participants should:

- Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the sponsor that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in host countries.
- Consider their health and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in a program.
- Make available to the sponsor accurate information about physical and mental health issues as necessary to plan for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
- Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
- Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
- Inform parents/guardians/families and any others who may need to know about their participation in the study abroad program. Provide them with emergency contact information, and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.
- Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and emergency procedures of the program. Obey the laws of the host country.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals.
- Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
- Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and law enforcement services in the host country.
- Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their whereabouts and well-being.
- Look out for your fellow students. If you notice that their health is being endangered, please bring that to the attention of the appropriate program representative or USC representative, or others, as you deem necessary. Please understand that program and USC representatives are limited by law in what they can tell students' parents in cases where the student's health seems to be in jeopardy.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Discuss with the student any of his/her travel plans and activities that may be independent of the study abroad program.
- Keep in touch with the student. But keep in mind that local conditions may prevent the student from immediately responding to you.
- Be aware that the student rather than the program may most appropriately provide some information.
- Be sensitive to local customs and cultural norms in the host country and the home-stay or dorm.
- Remember time differences when phoning your student.

Understand that if you call us about your student, we will contact the program and the student; however Federal Education Rights of Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) may prohibit us from responding to you directly. At the postsecondary level, parents have no inherent rights to access or to inspect their son or daughter's education records. This right is limited solely to the student.

PRE-DEPARTURE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

Pre-departure Exams

Some programs require medical examinations, immunizations, or a doctor's certification of health prior to students' departure. The USC Student Health Center can provide these services. Before your departure, be sure to get any check-ups, gynecological, dental, vision, etc., that would fall within the time you are abroad.

You should bring the following important health records/information with you:

- Blood type
- Eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions
- Prescriptions for medications being taken (including the generic name of any prescription drugs)

Disclosing Medical Conditions and Special Needs

It is very important that you notify your study abroad office and your program provider if you have any pre-existing medical conditions that could affect you during your time abroad. If you experience physical or mental illness overseas, the staff of the program can assist you better if they have some information in advance.

Prescriptions

If you are currently taking prescription medicine, try to bring enough with you for the entire duration of your stay abroad. If your doctor normally prescribes your medication for short periods of time, explain how long you will be living overseas and request an exception. Don't mix different medications into one bottle to save space in your luggage. Keep medication in the containers they originally came in. Do not stop taking prescribed medication while you are abroad without first checking with your doctor.

International Travel Medical Services

The USC University Park Health Center and USC Campus Pharmacy provide a service called International Travel Medical Services. They can provide exams and letters required for certain visas, advise you on managing diabetes or other health issues overseas, and provide immunizations if needed. You can contact them at (213) 740-9335.

International SOS Advice and Referrals

You will receive an International SOS card. You may call the toll-free numbers listed on the card to get free advice about taking and obtaining medications abroad as well as referrals to English-speaking care providers.

Your SOS member card gives you access to their website, which includes health and safety information on most countries. Check this site regularly and make sure that you are up to date on the recommended vaccinations for your specific country.

Managing Diabetes and other Chronic Illnesses

It is likely that the country you are going to will have available insulin and disposable syringes. Check availability and prices with the program director or the foreign university's international students' office before you go. You may want to consider renting or purchasing a small refrigerator for storing your medication.

Immunizations/Vaccinations

If the program director does not inform you of what immunizations/vaccinations are necessary or recommended, consult the USC Student Health Center.

Regardless of the country you are going to, you should be up-to-date with your tetanus and diphtheria shots. For many countries, it is advisable to get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B before you go.

Copies of Documents

Make photocopies of your passport, your driver's license, credit cards, bank cards (and prescriptions and leave them in a safe place at home.

Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets

These US Department of State publications include information about countries where one should avoid traveling as well as public announcements about threats to the safety and security of American travelers. Consular information sheets are available for every country in the world, and include the location of the US Embassy in that country, health, crime and security information (including road and transportation safety), currency information and entry regulations and more. The consular information sheet for your country is the absolute minimum information that you should have before traveling abroad. You can find consular information sheets, public announcements and travel warnings on the US Department of State website at: www.state.gov.

STAYING HEALTHY OVERSEAS

Common Traveler's Illnesses

Colds, flu, diarrhea and other gastrointestinal troubles are the most common ailments that travelers suffer. Travelers are also at increased risk of Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Malaria, HIV, and more, depending on their location and behavior. Carry a basic first aid kit that includes medications to treat common illnesses such as diarrhea, hay fever or colds. If you suffer from gastrointestinal troubles for more than a few days you should seek medical attention.

Food

Discovering new foods can be one of the great joys of traveling but these new foods can sometimes cause serious illness. Make sure that you are informed about what is and what isn't potentially risky. Should you eat uncooked vegetables and fruits? Can you drink the water? Ask your resident director and host family, if appropriate. Especially at the beginning of your stay abroad, err on the side of caution when it comes to eating and drinking. Becoming accustomed to different kinds of food, portions, and meal times always takes some time. If you get sick from anything you eat, please discuss this with the resident director and always follow the precautions suggested by the program regarding food and water.

Environmental Conditions

If you are in a climate you are not used to, observe how locals dress and do the same. Dressing in layers is important in colder climates, and keeping well-hydrated is especially important in hot climates.

Smoking is more prevalent in other countries/cultures outside the U.S. In addition, air pollution can be a problem to contend with in some cities (e.g., Beijing, Santiago, and Milan). Allergies can crop up unexpectedly when exposed to allergens your body is not equipped to deal with.

If you are used to Los Angeles with its many days with sunshine, be aware that living in a city with fewer days of sunshine can affect your mood and even cause depression.

Eating Disorders

Different foods, different levels of physical activity, and the stress of adjusting to new environment can sometimes lead to or intensify eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. Stay aware of your eating habits and seek help immediately if you sense a problem. Program personnel, friends and family are people you should consider asking for support. International SOS can refer you to local clinical help, and you may call the USC Counseling Center (213) 740-7711 (www.usc.edu/scs).

If you suspect a friend's health is in serious danger from an eating disorder, please discuss it with him or her and request outside help if needed.

Exercise

Your lifestyle will change dramatically. Make a point of getting regular exercise. If you can't do the same activities you are accustomed to here, join the locals in the sports they enjoy. This is one of the best ways to make friends and integrate into the culture, and it can also be a good way to combat depression.

Creativity and Spirituality

Catering to your creative and spiritual needs may also assist in maintaining optimal health. Involving yourself in local creative endeavors and spiritual pursuits can also lead to a stronger connection to the local culture and people.

Culture Shock and Depression

Students studying abroad experience emotional ups and downs and can sometimes feel lonely, homesick, and overwhelmed. These feelings are normal, and some degree of culture shock is an inevitable part of living abroad. Being able to recognize the process of culture shock and the homesickness that accompanies it can make it more bearable. Keeping a journal can really help you to recognize your own emotional patterns.

Sometimes homesickness and culture shock can lead to depression. The USC Student Health and Counseling Services has prepared the following list of suggestions of things to do if you are getting depressed.

What to do when you are getting depressed:

These are some simple ways to help you alleviate symptoms while you're waiting for other help, or trying to keep things on an even keel. They may not solve the underlying problem but they will provide some relief.

- Use cognitive techniques to get you out of negative thought patterns. For example, "No one cares about me" is a negative thought so consciously stop the negative thought. Besides, it is an inaccurate generalization.
- Try not to over-generalize -- that is to think in terms of "never" or "always".
- Plan your day with some activities you have to do and some activities you enjoy.
- Break down difficult tasks into smaller incremental parts.
- Give yourself credit for even the smallest things you get done.
- Remember that depression passes. Focus on living one day at a time.
- Get up in the morning and get dressed even when you don't feel like it.
- Get emotional support from a friend, support staff or professional. Talk to an understanding, non-judgmental person for as long as you need to talk
- Get involved in a fun activity that you enjoy
- Go to class even when your impulse is to blow it off.
- Listen to or help somebody else.
- Use whatever spiritual resources you are comfortable calling on.
- Get some exercise, whatever you can muster.
- Get out in the sunlight as much as possible.

- Eliminate sugar, caffeine, and junk food from your diet. Eat three healthy meals a day.
- Limit use of alcohol

Above all, if you do start to feel bad while you are overseas, don't keep it to yourself. All of the programs we work with have on-site support staff and they are there for you. Use them! Finally, although you may be coping well, your classmates and friends may be facing larger challenges. If you notice serious problems, discuss them with your friend(s) and/or the resident director.

Continuing Counseling

If you are seeing a counselor on a regular or periodic basis, discuss your study abroad plans with him or her. If you determine that it is in your best interest to continue seeing a counselor while overseas, inform your program director and/or counselor of your needs, so she or he can help you make the necessary arrangements. In addition, the Office of Overseas Studies can arrange for a counselor from the USC Counseling Services to call you overseas if you feel that this kind of intervention is needed.

International SOS and program directors can refer you English-speaking mental health professionals overseas.

Alcohol

Most countries where USC has programs abroad have lower drinking ages than the United States, *but they all have very different attitudes toward consumption of alcohol and public drunkenness*. In many cultures, public drunkenness is very unacceptable and *illegal*. Learning about these attitudes will be part of your cultural adjustment. Sometimes students free from U.S. laws and attitudes toward alcohol slip into patterns of alcohol abuse while abroad. It is important for you to remember that alcohol and drugs can impair your judgment, especially while you are abroad in unfamiliar surroundings and can make you that much more vulnerable to unsafe sex, sexual assault, theft, and physical attacks or fights.

The majority of crimes and many accidents involving study abroad students involve the excessive use of alcohol.

Other Drugs

Although alcohol is socially accepted in many countries outside of the United States, use of other drugs is almost never allowed. In some countries simple acquisition of prohibited drugs can result in heavy fines, deportation, or prison sentences. While you are abroad you will be subject to all local laws, and these can be very severe when it comes to illegal drugs.

If you are recovering from an alcohol or other substance abuse problem, you can find meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and other support groups in many countries. Get locations and phone numbers before you go.

Marijuana and Other Drugs

You may encounter clubs or other situations where so-called club drugs such as ecstasy (MDMA), crystal meth (amphetamine), ketamine, GHB and the like are used more openly than you might see in the U.S. When you purchase or accept such drugs, you do not know what exactly you are getting and don't know whom you can really trust. Besides, they are illegal. There have been cases of these kinds of drugs (e.g. rufhydol) being slipped into study abroad students' beverages without their knowledge. Drug

peddlers have been known to tip off police and get students arrested in hopes of getting a cut of a bribe or protection. Many of these kinds of drugs are known to sometimes trigger latent psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc. It would be especially unwise to take such drugs, without thoroughly educating yourself about all the risks involved.

If you get caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country, all the U.S. embassy can do is refer you to English-speaking lawyers and notify your family, and you are subject to that country's laws and jail conditions.

Intravenous Drug Use

In some parts of Europe and Australia, I.V. drug use among college-aged people is more prevalent than in the US. Even if you steer clear of such drugs, remember that having sexual relations with a person using drugs intravenously could expose you to HIV or hepatitis B or C.

Safer Sex

Always practice safer sex whether you are at home or abroad. But while you are overseas, being safe and careful in this area takes on a special urgency. If you think there is a chance that you will be sexually active while you are abroad, bring contraception with you. Some contraceptive methods that are easily found here are not always available in other countries. For example, you may not be able to access certain kinds of implants or shots, certain kinds of birth control pills, "emergency" or "morning after" pills, sponges, reliable condoms, etc.

While they do not offer 100% protection against pregnancy, condoms are the easiest form of contraception to obtain around the world. Bottom line: if you have sex overseas, use a condom. Do NOT throw caution to the wind because you are in a totally new environment. Exercise good judgment, and weigh the risks (not just physical, but emotional too) of getting involved with someone overseas.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV) may occur in higher percentages of the population or occur in quite different populations than in the U.S. After abstinence, condoms used properly are the best-known protection from exposure to STDs but cannot prevent all exposure to STDs. Some STDs (e.g. syphilis) can be spread through skin-to-skin contact.

HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis B/C and Study Abroad

AIDS, caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), breaks down the body's immune system and leads to infections and cancers that may be fatal. Be aware that the HIV virus is present in virtually every country. There are no known vaccines to prevent HIV infection. Nobody should put himself or herself at risk of contracting HIV.

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) found in persons who have the disease. HCV is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person. There is no vaccine for the prevention of HCV infection. The Hepatitis B virus (HBV) can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. Get vaccinated! Hepatitis B is preventable.

The risk of getting HIV, Hepatitis B/C depends on you. Here are some general precautions you can follow anywhere in the world:

- Avoid the exchange of semen, blood, or vaginal fluids with anyone. Either abstain from sexual activity or practice safer sex.
- USE A CONDOM. Men and women should both carry their own condoms.
- Use water-based lubricants during sexual intercourse.
- Do not share needles and syringes or use those that may have been used previously.
- If you need an injection at a hospital, ask to see the needle removed from its original (new) packaging.
- Avoid excessive drug and alcohol use, as intoxication impairs judgment and negotiation skills in sexual situations

Getting tested for HIV in a foreign country can be a scary experience but does not have to be. International SOS or local AIDS organizations can provide information on testing locations, policies and procedures. If you are currently HIV positive, consult very carefully with your health care providers regarding your study abroad plans.

Blood Transfusions

Not all countries have mandatory screening of donated blood for the HIV virus. In some locales, ascertaining the availability of HIV screened blood and blood products may be difficult. Hepatitis C is also transmissible through unscreened blood. Because of obvious uncertainties, consider these precautions: If you are injured or ill while abroad, avoid or postpone any blood transfusion unless it is absolutely necessary. If you do need blood, try to ensure that screened blood is used.

Injections

In some countries even disposable equipment is reused. In some places, if an injection is required, you can buy needles and syringes and bring them to the hospital for your own use. Avoid injections unless absolutely necessary.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that diabetics or other persons who require routine or frequent injections should carry a supply of syringes and needles sufficient to last their stay abroad. But carrying needles and syringes without a prescription may be illegal in some countries. Take a note from your doctor.

SECURITY AND SAFETY ABROAD

Basic Rules

- You are a guest and always behave with this fact in mind.
- **All student conduct policies listed in *SCampus* apply while you are overseas. This includes the University's policies on alcohol and drug use, as well as sexual misconduct. You should bring a copy of *SCampus* with you.**
- You are still a USC student when you are abroad, even on programs not directly run by USC, and all incidents of misconduct will be reported to the USC Office of Student Conduct.
- The rules and recommendations given by your overseas program are in existence for good reason and are often based on real-life experience.

- Being “foreign” does not excuse you from knowing and obeying the laws of your host country.

General Precautions

- Take good care of your essential documents (passport, tickets, traveler’s checks, etc.); make photocopies and keep them in a separate location. Use a money pouch and keep your valuables discreet and well guarded.
- Don’t stand out; try to fit in with the surroundings and keep a low profile. One of the stereotypes about Americans is that we are loud! Prove them wrong. Be attentive to how the people of your host country dress and behave in public and in social situations. Integration into the host society is a safety issue.
- Avoid crowds, protest groups or other potentially volatile situations, as well as restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate. While “safety in numbers” is generally a good rule to follow, traveling as a “pack” of American students may attract attention and possibly cause problems.
- Be wary of receiving unexpected packages and stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, or other areas of uncontrolled public access.
- Register upon arrival at the local U.S. consulate or embassy having jurisdiction over the region of your study abroad program. Many programs take care of this for you.
- Make sure the resident director, host family or foreign university official, who is assigned the responsibility for your welfare, always knows where and how to contact you in an emergency. Always give someone your schedule and itinerary if you are traveling, even if only overnight.
- Develop a plan for regular telephone contact with your family.
- Be streetwise; know where you are going--or at least appear to know. Avoid impairing your judgment through excessive consumption of alcohol.
- Have an action plan in mind for various types of emergency situations.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Know the number to dial in case of an emergency in your host country. Know to whom you should report a crime. Your program’s resident director or university’s international students’ office often provides lists of emergency contacts as well as procedures to follow in various emergency situations. Make sure that you know what these are.

International SOS also provides assistance and services to USC students in security and crisis situations. In the case of a security emergency such as civil unrest, attempted coups or acts of terrorism, International SOS can provide political evacuations, emergency and contingency plans, crisis centers and referrals. The International SOS website is a great resource for general travel security information and region-specific information. www.internationalsos.com. Make sure that you have an International SOS card on you at all times while you are overseas.

Crime

The most common types of crime students experience abroad is the theft of personal belongings, often by pickpockets, and fraud. We strongly recommend that you carry your money and bank cards in a money belt while traveling. Certainly always remain extremely vigilant about keeping a close eye on your purse, bags, pockets...

Reporting Crimes and Incidents

Authorities and the general public in other cultures may respond to reported cases of crime and incidents (including sexual assault and harassment) differently than might be expected in the U.S.A. If you are the victim of a crime, call International SOS and seek assistance from your study abroad program staff. They may be in a much better position to deal with local authorities.

High-Risk Activities

Your insurance may not cover you if you engage in certain high-risk activities, such as skydiving, bungee-jumping, drag racing, whitewater rafting, joining political protests, etc. Read your insurance policy carefully.

Transportation Safety

Traffic-related accidents are the most common cause of injury and death among students who study abroad. Alcohol consumption is often a contributing factor. Among such accidents, many occur while riding on motorcycles or walking across the street. Pedestrians often do not have the right-of-way and the traffic may be coming from the opposite direction than expected.

While it is tempting to rent a motorbike and ride around that Greek isle or Spanish village, realize that the chances of being involved in an accident are quite high. When taking local transportation, including buses, trains, ferries, and domestic flights, always consult with locals about the level of safety. If a bus or van driver is driving erratically or looks intoxicated or overtired, consider getting out and finding alternate means of transport.

Driving in countries where cars drive on the left-hand side of the street is especially dangerous as those used to driving on the right may react inappropriately (e.g. pressing the wrong pedal or veering the wrong way) when faced with "close calls" from other drivers or under stress or fatigue.

Civil and Political Instability

Political demonstrations abroad can sometimes deteriorate into anti-American demonstrations. Demonstrations anywhere can shift very quickly from peaceful, controlled events to violent chaos.

Do not get involved in any social or political unrest or illegal movements, no matter how sympathetic you are with the cause or the people involved.

If a brewing or ongoing situation becomes increasingly dangerous, follow the instructions of the resident program director. Upon arrival in your host country, be sure to register with the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy. If you are not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, register with the embassy or consulate of your country.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate Assistance

The U.S. Embassy or Consulate *cannot* get you out of jail or out of a legal dispute. The protection of American law and legal procedures does not apply in foreign countries.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

The following is a list of safety tips for students everywhere:

- Carry a whistle or an alarm beeper.
- When walking, appear confident. Always look as if you know where you're going.
- Always be aware of what is happening around you and watch out for potential problems.
- Always follow your instincts. If a situation seems unsafe, get out of there as quickly as possible.
- Try not to walk alone at night. Instead, take a taxi, have your friends walk you home, etc.
- If you know you're going to be out late at night, arrange for a ride home beforehand (make arrangements with a friend or taxi company, or carry the phone number for a taxi).
- Never hitchhike or accept a ride from a stranger.
- If you suspect that someone is following you and you want to make sure, try crossing the street several times. Go into a public place or find a police officer.
- Avoid shortcuts through poorly lit areas and parks.
- Carry your keys in a separate place from your address, preferably in your pocket (in case your purse is lost).

SEXUAL ASSAULT RISK REDUCTION

Following is an outline of steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of sexual assault while overseas. The Center for Women and Men in the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Southern California can provide more detailed information regarding sexual assault risk reduction, as well as post-assault counseling. The telephone number is 213-740-4900. The website address is <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm>.

Victims of sexual assault may be men or women. Ninety-nine percent of perpetrators are male regardless of the victim's gender. In this document the victim is referred to as "her", with the acknowledgement that this is for the sake of clarity and continuity.

While there is no guarantee that a sexual assault will not occur even if you take every precaution, a few safety measures can reduce your risk. Statistics show that most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. It could be a student from another country, a local you've met in a nightclub, coffee shop or library, or a member of the host family with whom you are staying. The following are ways to reduce the risk of sexual assault and unwanted sexual contact.

Cultural Awareness

The "culture" at USC may be quite different than the culture in a foreign country. Here it is not uncommon for males and females to be friends; to share the same dormitories and apartment buildings; to crash on each other's couches; to socialize without any sexual expectations. But in some foreign countries these very things may be interpreted as unintentional invitations or exploited by sexual predators. In some cultures a woman going out in public unescorted by a male could be imagined as a sign she is seeking unsolicited attention. Before you go abroad to study in a foreign country you should familiarize yourself with the local customs surrounding male/female relations. When you arrive you should observe how the locals interact, how they define "personal boundaries", how the women dress when in public, and what is considered appropriate socializing between genders.

Some Avoidance Techniques

- Define Your Personal Boundaries
Personal Boundaries are both physical and emotional. You must decide what your boundaries are. For instance, will you allow a man to put his hand on your knee while talking to you? Will you allow him to ask probing questions about your previous or current relationships? What if a man just seemingly "accidentally" brushes against you? Should you allow a man whom you just met to buy you a drink at a coffee shop, bar, or nightclub? You may want to be more thoughtful about personal boundaries overseas than you would at home.
- Make Clear Your Personal Boundaries
Be firm and direct. If a man touches you in a way you do not like, attempt to remove yourself from the situation. If you choose to say, "I don't like that. Don't do it again" and he does it again, then you should take this as a signal that he does not respect your personal boundaries and remove yourself from the situation. Be conscious of both your body language and your words. Saying "No" with a smile on your face provides a mixed message. Whether overseas or at home predators may test personal boundaries to see what you will allow and escalate inappropriate and criminal behavior as they feel successful.
- Trust Your Instincts
If a person or a situation feels "creepy" to you – it probably is. Don't talk yourself out of how you feel. Don't say, "Something feels wrong here, but it's probably just my imagination." It's better to go with your gut and get yourself out of the situation.
- Stay Sober
Alcohol and drug consumption is involved in many sexual assaults. Some things you should remember:
 - If you drink, only drink with trusted friends who can watch out for you;
 - Never accept drinks from strangers. **REMEMBER: DRINKS CAN BE SPIKED;**
 - Do not leave drinks unattended;
 - Go home in a group. Be responsible for each other. Do not leave a friend in a vulnerable position.
- Socialize Safely
When socializing or dating in a foreign country, always do some research first. Ask around. Find out what areas of the city or town are considered dangerous. Find out what clubs or bars should be avoided.
- Maintain Contact with Friends

Plan your social activities ahead of time. If you are going out with a stranger or recent acquaintance, leave word with someone where you are going, with whom you are going, and what time you plan to be back. Bring a cell phone. If there are any changes to your plans, let someone know. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, call a friend and ask them to come and meet you.

- *Keep Emergency Contacts at Hand*
Always carry your USC emergency information card, your insurance card; your International SOS card; and any other local or international numbers you might need. Know how to contact the local police and ask for medical assistance in the local language. Know where the closest hospital or health clinic is located. Know how to contact the American Embassy or Consulate.

If you are the victim of a sexual assault during your overseas study experience, contact your USC program coordinator who can provide support and information regarding your options for medical care, reporting and counseling. International SOS is also available by phone 24 hours a day to assist with these issues. If you are participating in study abroad program sponsored by another institution, there may be other staff available on-site for immediate assistance.

These safety precautions are not meant to infringe upon your overseas study experience. They are meant to enhance it. A good resource for personal safety while overseas is the Center for Global Education SAFETI (Safety Abroad First Educational Travel Information) website. The address is <http://www.lmu.edu/globaled/safeti>. Click on 'SAFETI On-Line Newsletter' and you will find numerous articles about creating safety while overseas. Of special note are:

"Sexual Harassment and Prevention in College Students Studying Abroad", by Nancy Newport.

"Top Ten Ways to Not Become a Victim of Crime Around the World", by Malcolm Nance and Lisa Hughes.

"Personal Safety Overseas: Safety Tips for Overseas Travel, An Update", by Michael O'Niell.