Things to Consider When Preparing for Your Program

- Mental Preparation
  - Before you leave, research the customs and laws of your host country as well as any terms or definitions used there to talk about LGBTQ+ or gender issues.
  - If you can, seek out connections you can trust before you leave.
  - Know what to expect; read, talk with other students, alumni, etc.
    - The OCS website contains recommendations; SHAC and other offices can provide additional ideas.

- Packing
  - Some items you may need may not be available in your destination country (e.g., birth control, Plan B, tampons, clothing/shoes that fit you, hair products).
    - For essential items, pack as much as you’ll need
    - Also consider a basic first aid kit with Band-Aids, ibuprofen, antiseptic, etc.

General Tips and Advice

- Know yourself. Who are you and what are your needs at home and abroad? Do you have any medical conditions, medications, allergies, past travel experiences, etc. Knowing yourself well will only help you trust your instincts and needs while traveling and studying abroad.
- The decisions you make do impact the situations in which you may find yourself. If at any point, you feel uncomfortable, exit the situation. Just go. It is better to offend someone than to ignore your “gut feeling” and become a victim. This applies to sexual situations as well as any other situation you may experience. For instance, in a shop, on a train, in a hotel, etc.
- Try to travel in small groups (3-4 people) whenever possible. If you choose to travel alone, do not advertise that you do not have any travel companions.
- Know how the phones work in whatever country you are in and be prepared to use them.
- Have some money (cash) stowed away for emergencies—for things like a more expensive hotel, an upgrade to first-class on a train, or a taxi to get you out of a bad area of town, to name a few examples.
- Leave your expensive accessories (e.g., jewelry, fancy watches) at home, as they can cause you to stick out even more.
- When you are traveling, read travel reviews, and make sure that you are staying in well-reviewed accommodations in a safe part of town.
- Do not give out your permanent phone number, email, Facebook, or street address, unless you really trust the person.
- Be aware of eye contact and body language, and how these are construed in your new environment/country.
- Most likely, you will find the people you meet to be interesting and interested in you. However, be careful about making judgments regarding your safety based on another person’s appearance, financial status, or how interesting they are. Be selective in terms of who you strike up conversations with while you are travelling.
- If you are on public transportation and the only option is to stand, stay near doors and keep your backside to a wall.
- Always keep your purse, backpack, or other personal items with you, even if going to the restroom in a restaurant or getting off a bus to stretch.
- Snap a picture of your cab’s license plate before you get in it.
- Be around other people. Try to sit, stand, or walk near other groups of people in transportation or in public areas. For women, if you are lost, try to find a woman to ask for directions.
- Know how fatigue affects your mental and physical well-being. Try to avoid, but also prepare for times where you may experience travel fatigue. Don’t feel bad about taking breaks.
- Research local culture, society, and etiquette. For example, are women in positions of authority in business or government? Is it okay for women to shake hands with men?
- Have access to copies of all of your travel documents, including VISAs, passports, and emergency contact numbers.
- Make sure you know where the local embassy or consulate is located and how they can assist you, if needed.
- Always be AWARE AND ALERT.
  - Know your surroundings; have a map; when possible, ask another woman for directions; act like you know where you’re going, even if you don’t.
What are steps you can take to minimize the risk of traveling abroad and still maximize the fun and rich cultural experience?

- Seek out and speak to local people, preferably around your own age, as soon as possible about expectations in the host culture. At the very least, observe locals and be aware of their social cues.
  - Find the people who can be a safe haven for developing coping skills and venting frustrations (friends, host families, etc.).
- Dress according to local custom or at least in a manner that is “appropriate” for that culture.
- Interact with men according to the local customs, or at least be aware of what generally happens when women don’t.
- Behave according to the local customs, or at least be aware of what customs you are breaking and potential implications.
- Do not allow cultural differences to be an excuse to endure verbal or physical abuse or harassment. Depending on the situation, remove yourself as quickly as possible from the threatening situation, confront the person, or ask for support from others.

Tips & Resources Available if Something Happens While Abroad

If something happens, stay calm and know that you have resources to support you both in your host country and back on campus. It may be helpful to know basic first aid and/or pack basic first aid supplies (Band-Aids, antihistamines, ibuprofen, etc.).

If you are experiencing street harassment or catcalling, do not respond or make eye contact. Do your best to maintain your pace and ignore the comments. Keep your distance and maintain your own personal space.
- AXA Assist or other Travel Assistance Company—English-speaking referral service: medical, legal, mental health – every person on a Carleton program gets the number for AXA and it’s on the OCS website. This may be different for non-Carleton program. Ask your program!
- Carleton Resources – faculty; OCS office, which gets you in contact with any other office you may need including SHAC; each other; and your own common sense.

Resources & Articles Worth Reading Before You Leave

- Diversity Abroad Information: https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/diversity-guide-to-study-abroad
- Sexual Harassment and Prevention: http://globaled.us/safety/v1n22000ed_sexual_harassment_and_prevention.asp
- Resource for Meaningful Experiences Abroad: www.transitionsabroad.com
- US State Department Information: www.state.gov/travel
- Smart Travelling Resources: www.smartraveller.gov.au/
- LGBTQ+ Travel Information: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations/lgbti.html

Videos Worth Watching

- Bystander Intervention at a Night Club: https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=9zr1oxEbdsw
- A Woman’s Experience with Street Harassment: http://www.pri.org/stories/2013-11-12/harassing-women-egypt
- LGBT Students in Seville: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DQyqC-HYV8
- What to Wear in Paris: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgKHQq8fil
- IES LGBT Study Abroad: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8-MThlnw9I
- “Reverse Culture Shock Is Hilarious: Korea to US”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRd4r5-y6m0
- U of M LGBT Study Abroad: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-a93xd7SxY&feature=youtu.be