Preparing for Study Away: What’s in your Personal Toolkit?

Sooner than you imagine, you will have landed in a new city! Until you start living there, it’s hard to know what aspect of your life will feel most salient in a new place, and whether that is different than what you’ve noticed at home will be most important to you. However, there may already be things that are important to you so you can start planning for your needs now. Think of this as a Personal Toolkit you are building to help you adjust to your new city.

1. REFLECT on the role that [fill in the blank] plays in your life now.

Rank how often you think of each category.

5: Everyday
4: A few times per week
3: A few times per month
2: A few times a year
1: Never

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Now, rank how important you think each category will be for you when you study away.

5: Extremely important
4: Very important
3: Generally important
2: Not very important
1: Irrelevant

2. **CONSIDER:** For the category(ies) that you think about most often, do you need to do more research about your location before you go? Questions may include:

- What is the demographic makeup of my new city?
  - Will I be part of the majority or minority?
  - What are the histories of the different groups?

- What is the cost of living in the city?

- Are there any blogs, articles or news updates that can help me learn more?

- What communities exist in the city that I could potentially join?
3. **PLAN:** What can you do before you go?

- Make a list of any items you may need and find out if they are available in your new city (keep in mind certain items may be more expensive). Items may include:
  - Personal care products (hair care, make up, soap, lotion, etc.)
  - Medication

- Connect to Global Peer Mentors
  - This is a great way to meet someone who studied away in your city and gain more perspective on what your experience could look like. However, remember that every person is unique, so experiences will vary.
  - You can indicate specifically what you’d like to talk about, such as courses, packing tips, being a student of color abroad, practicing a religion in a new location, etc.

- Reach out to your Study Away Advisor for instructions on how to make special requests. This may include:
  - Accommodations for a registered disability
  - Dietary needs
  - Missing class for religious holiday
  - Prayer or meditation space

- Reach out to your Study Away Advisor to ask larger questions about study away. We work with our colleagues at the study away locations, former study away students, and partner offices in New York to give you the best information possible. Questions may include:
  - Is it safe to identify as gay in my new city?
  - What’s it like to be a student of color in the new city?
  - How can I practice my religion in my new city?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Diversity Abroad:
http://www.diversityabroad.com/destinations

IES Abroad:
www.iesabroad.org/study-abroad/student-diversity-access/resources/country-specific