

Study abroad

The decision whether or not to study abroad can be a difficult one. But once you've decided that you have your heart set on traveling to a foreign country, there are still many decisions to be made.

Pick a length

There are study abroad programs of all kinds. Go abroad for a few weeks, a semester or a year. Take a trip during winter break or do a summer program.

The most common college programs involve studying for a semester or year in another country. Some programs are administered by your home university, while others are offered through foreign universities.

Research your options

Some schools send students and professors abroad for the semester, creating a group atmosphere with people from your home university.

Other schools might be part of programs where you'll be with students from other colleges. Or you could take classes through a foreign university. But before signing up with another college, make sure credits from other universities will transfer to your school.

If your school doesn't have a program in the country you want to study in, then a private company might be the answer.

If you're up for deep immersion into a different culture and language, you could also apply directly to a foreign univer-

sity. If you plan to finish school in the U.S., then you are responsible for credit transfer, organizing your application and maintaining a relationship between your college abroad and your home school.

Pick a location

Make sure the program you pick fits your needs and your lifestyle. Check out the classes before applying, as well as the housing and meal programs.

Check the requirements

Does your program require a certain proficiency of language? When do you need to arrive? Make sure your academic load is acceptable, and ensure that the credits will transfer back home.

And don't forget to apply for a student visa early — it takes time to process. For more information on student visas, go to <http://travel.state.gov/visa>.

Lastly, investigate your health and travel insurance and transportation options.

Pack

Once you're accepted and all your paperwork is in order, start packing your bags! Be reasonable about what you pack, though. Check the climate of the region and leave space to bring things home!

Excerpted from "How to spend a semester studying abroad" by Elizabeth Bond.

NOTES:

Read more!

Get more tips on studying abroad at NextStepU.com/StudyAbroad

