

EXPAND Your Horizons

By Michael A. Longinow

Could a study-abroad program be right for you?

For some, college is about class schedules, books, exams and research papers. For you, it might mean getting out of town – like Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America. Sound too weird? Think again. Research has shown that students who spend time studying in another country come back with more than just better language proficiency. They also have more self-confidence, better problem-solving skills, and the ability to adapt to the curves that life throws them.

Is it risky? The world changed in a big way on September 11, 2001. Since then, some Americans have been more cautious about leaving the U.S. But research this year by studyabroad.com showed that the biggest fear of teens contemplating study in another country was whether they would run out money. Sure, they and their parents had other concerns – personal safety from political crime, profiling of Americans, safe housing and travel, clean food and water, protection from disease – but these were well down on the

list. Certainly there are war-zone hot-spots in the world that should be avoided when looking at study options. Caution is good. But paralysis is rarely necessary.

Students and their parents are inquiring by the millions into study time in nations such as England (top choice in one survey), France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Japan, and India. Others in the top 15 were Australia, Egypt, Ireland, Canada, Brazil, Switzerland and Mexico.

Can you afford it? Study overseas is not cheap. But some programs offer scholarships to students with stellar grades or who have demonstrated financial need – particularly if they have strong academic standing as well. Some programs figure leadership potential into their selection of students. (It's another reason why you're not wasting your time serving as an officer of that school club you're in.)

Your study abroad, much as you'll find here in the U.S., will be measured in hours or in credits. Some of it will be set up in traditional lecture-study approaches. Others will be structured as an internship or experiential learning experience – hands-on stuff. You can plan these courses and their content so they mesh with the curriculum of your high school or the college you intend to enter. The better study-abroad programs

will provide you with an academic transcript that can be placed in your permanent academic file – a nice supplement to your transcripts from high school and college study.

But you're encouraged to keep all your notes, papers, assignments, textbooks, and

liability if any accidents happen overseas, how you'll get your study materials, costs, housing arrangements, transportation, and ways you'll be able to communicate with your friends and family back home. The best programs have on-site staff in the study-abroad location who can act as resources for any needs that arise.



other materials in case your school in the U.S. wants some verification that you were actually studying. Study abroad, in some people's minds, is another way of describing vacation. You'll need to be able to show it was more than that – much more.

So you'll need help. Choose your study-abroad program carefully. The group you go with should be one that has real people – as opposed to voice recordings or web pages – who will work with you to plan the entire duration of your study-abroad experience. They should give you clear details about insurance, legal

One of the best parts of studying abroad is the people you'll meet. Many will become life-long friends. In some study programs, particularly those connected with missions or social service agencies, you'll not only study with fascinating people your age, you'll pound nails, dig ditches or do other work alongside them. It's the kind of life-learning that can shape you in positive ways – ways the regular school systems and college curricula here in the U.S. can't touch. That's because it's about you, and your development in outside-the-box settings. Think about it. 📖

Some helpful sources for study abroad and other programs

-  studyabroad.com
-  globalsemester.com
-  allensguide.com
-  gowithcea.com
-  iiee.org
-  studiesabroad.com