

# TRAVEL RESOURCES:

# A F R I C A

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Traveling is often a large part of the study abroad experience. Every semester, students plan to take weekend trips to enrich their time abroad, and all have similar questions. To help you out, GPS has collected a list of travel tips and resources provided by WFU study abroad alumni.

When traveling outside of your host country, always make sure to check visa and immigration regulations for the countries you are traveling to. U.S. passport holders can go to [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for further information.

## PACKING FOR YOUR SHORT TRIPS WHILE ABROAD

- Pack light - only bring one bag – backpacks are often better than rolling suitcases
- Bring walking shoes (not white sneakers)
- Bring a water bottle with your own water, especially when traveling to rural towns
- Bring a lock for hostel lockers
- Pack printed directions to your hotel/hostel
- Pack immigration paperwork and store in a safe place with your passport. Remember to consider immigration/visa policies in advance before planning your trip. Some visas can be expensive
- Top-off your cell phone minutes—verify rates for out of country travel. In some places, you may need to turn on roaming before you leave to make sure you will continue to have service
- A small amount of cash in the local currency – smaller towns often do not accept credit cards

## TRAVELING BY AIR

- Depending on where you are it can be more expensive to fly out of your local airport. An alternative is to take another form of transportation to a further away airport.
- Budget airlines often use airports in remote areas -- far from easy interconnecting city transportation. Check with your program staff for suggestions about modes of transport to remote airports.
- Take your in-country address and a pen with you on your flight
  - You will be required to write your study abroad address on your customs form given to you in-flight
- Upon arrival, generally speaking, you will go through immigration, pick-up your luggage, and then go through customs
- Make sure you are familiar with items you are allowed to bring into each country you are traveling to
  - i.e. fruit, spices and other foods may not be allowed through customs
- Book your flights early to find better deals
  - Read the fine print! Double and triple check the dates and locations of travel before purchasing
- Budget airlines may seem like a great deal, but make sure you are aware of what the cost *doesn't* include

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- Some airlines do not have assigned seats, so make sure you arrive early and join the queue
- Most ticket costs do not include checked luggage
- Verify your check-in time and factor in travel time to the airport. Always leave a significant time cushion of at least two hours when traveling by air. There is often no guarantee that a bus will get you to the airport at the stated time.
- Always print your travel itinerary and don't depend only on scan codes or smart phones

#### **Web Resources**

[www.airbotswana.co.bw](http://www.airbotswana.co.bw)

[www.kenya-airways.com](http://www.kenya-airways.com)

[www.airmauritius.com](http://www.airmauritius.com)

[www.momondo.com](http://www.momondo.com)

[www.attitudetravel.com/lowcostairlines/africa](http://www.attitudetravel.com/lowcostairlines/africa)

[www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)

[www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)

[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

[www.flyethiopian.com/en/default.aspx](http://www.flyethiopian.com/en/default.aspx)

[www.vayama.com](http://www.vayama.com)

[www.flysaa.com/us/en](http://www.flysaa.com/us/en)

[www.Flymango.com](http://www.Flymango.com)

[www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)

[www.Kulula.com](http://www.Kulula.com)

**BOOKING TIP:** Always remember to read the fine print when booking through a budget airline. Sometimes a deal really is too good to be true once all the hidden fees add up.

## **TRAVELING BY RAILWAY**

- Always try to book your train tickets at least 2-3 days ahead of time to get a better price
- Keep your ticket handy; it will be scanned inside the train once you depart the station. Never travel without proper ticket.
- Pack a snack for longer train rides as food from the train trolley or store can be quite expensive

#### **Web Resources**

[www.bluetrain.co.za](http://www.bluetrain.co.za)

[www.railsnw.com/tours/africa.htm](http://www.railsnw.com/tours/africa.htm)

[www.go2africa.com/luxury-africa-train-travel](http://www.go2africa.com/luxury-africa-train-travel)

[www.southafricanrailways.co.za](http://www.southafricanrailways.co.za)

[www.railsafari.co.za](http://www.railsafari.co.za)

[www.Gatrain.co.za](http://www.Gatrain.co.za)

[www.railservice.com/Passenger/Africa](http://www.railservice.com/Passenger/Africa)

**TRAVEL TIP:** If you plan to take an overnight train, always make sure that someone in your party is awake. In the past, students who have taken an overnight train have had their luggage and belongings stolen once they fell asleep.

## **TRAVELING BY BUS**

- Book a bus ticket at least 2-3 days ahead of time
- Make sure you ask beforehand about where to catch the bus, since it is not always obviously marked
- Traveling by bus can be the most economical way to travel, but it will also take the longest. Make sure to plan your time accordingly.
- Busses may have less amenities that you may be used to. Many busses do not have air-conditioning or bathrooms.
- Check with your program before booking a night bus. In some cases, you should not arrive or depart from a particular bus station late at night.

#### **Web Resources**

[www.bazbus.com](http://www.bazbus.com)

[www.saroadlink.co.za](http://www.saroadlink.co.za)

[www.greyhound.co.za](http://www.greyhound.co.za)

[www.translux.co.za](http://www.translux.co.za)

[www.intercape.co.za/home](http://www.intercape.co.za/home)

<http://www.goswaziland.co.sz/>

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## HELPFUL TIPS

- Ask your program director where to find good deals, transportation websites, and accommodation resources. Find out the best way to make use of local transportation.
- Always notify your program director/study abroad office once you have finalized your travel plans. Make sure they have your travel itinerary.
- Research the country that you are going to and learn a few words in the local language – please and thank you can go a long way
- Make copies of your passport
  - Keep one with you, one locked in your room, one with your parents, and one with GPS
- Plan your “big” trips ahead of time
  - Popular events abroad will cause airline/rail/bus rates to increase, so it is best to book ahead for these events
  - In some cases, (especially travel within the country) you will not be able to plan your trip ahead of time. In some places, there is no set schedule for busses and you need to ask around to find out which busses are going where. Your program director and local students can help with suggestions about travel.
- Wait to book your smaller trips until after you arrive abroad and receive your course schedule
- Make a travel budget
- When you go to a new place, find a taxi driver with reputable company you feel comfortable with and get their number. You are less likely to be overcharged if you are using the same driver for the duration of your stay.
- Plan how you will get to/from your hotel/hostel
  - If you are arriving really early or late, some options may not be available, so make sure to check service hours
  - Take a map with you
  - If you do not own a map of the country, it is easy to print one from Google Maps, Yahoo Maps, etc.
- Always be aware of your check-in times
- Always have a printed copy of proof of payment with you if you have paid in advance
- Remember to factor in travel time to the airport, rail, or bus station to ensure you arrive on time
- Always remember to bring your immigration forms with you when you travel
- Always consult the local travel clinic when you plan your trip
- Avoid traveling alone if possible. Check with other students who may have similar interests. You may also benefit on group rates

## HOSTELS/HOTELS

- Ask your program staff or other study abroad alumni for suggestions of trustworthy hotels/hostels. Make sure to read online reviews.
  - Note when the last review was written
  - Often reading a mix of the best reviews and the worst can give you a good picture of the pros and cons
- Be sure to check how many beds your room has
  - Rooms can have anywhere from 4 to 40+ beds in one room and if linen is provided
  - Camping can also be cheaper option depending on where you are traveling to
- Always lock your passports and bags in a locker with a lock
  - Pack at least two locks of different sizes because most hostels will not have one
- Check what is included with your price

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- Some hostels will include breakfast, discounts on tours, linens, etc.
- Some hotel rates are per person and not per room. Check this when you make a reservation

### **Web Resources**

[www.hihostels.com/web/membership.en.htm](http://www.hihostels.com/web/membership.en.htm)

- Membership includes discounts on a variety of hostels

[www.africastay.com](http://www.africastay.com)

[www.backpackers.co.za](http://www.backpackers.co.za)

[www.expedia.com/hotels](http://www.expedia.com/hotels)

[www.hostelbookers.com](http://www.hostelbookers.com)

[www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com)

[www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com)

[www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com)

[www.kayak.com/hotels](http://www.kayak.com/hotels)

[www.momondo.com](http://www.momondo.com)

[www.orbitz.com/hotels](http://www.orbitz.com/hotels)

[www.rumbo.com](http://www.rumbo.com)

[www.sa-venues.com/hotels\\_south\\_africa.htm](http://www.sa-venues.com/hotels_south_africa.htm)

[www.travelocity.com/hotels](http://www.travelocity.com/hotels)

[www.travelsafeclinic.co.za](http://www.travelsafeclinic.co.za)

[www.travelclinic.co.za](http://www.travelclinic.co.za)

## **TRAVEL ADVICE FROM STUDY ABROAD ALUMNI**

It is often better to have only a vague idea of things you want to see and do because it is more rewarding to explore leisurely than to rush to see a million things in a short period of time.

–Jennifer Reed

It's really important to do research and plan ahead of time—airport transfers, museum hours, etc.

–Lauren Gensler

Things will go wrong. Stay calm.

–Sam Richards

Don't be afraid to ask for help, but make sure you're not by yourself when you do so. You should always be traveling with people anyway. Also, always know the emergency number for the country you're in. Ask for student discounts everywhere you go, but do make sure you have your ID to prove it.

–Eason Armstrong

Don't be scared to try new things!

–Stephanie Gifford

If you're going to a major city, don't just visit the touristy attractions and take pictures. My favorite memories were finding random restaurants or parks to visit with my friends. Allocate some time to explore.

–Steve Caracciolo

I found the New York Times "36 hours" pieces to be a great resource before traveling for a weekend. Each article describes in detail the best way to make the most of 36 hours in a variety of cities. Although I never followed the 36-hour plan in its entirety, the article helped provide useful information about navigation, nearby restaurants, hotels and how to see the sights most efficiently in a limited amount of time.

–Arden Smith

Bring an empty, folded up duffel bag in your larger suitcase. That way you will have a smaller, less cumbersome bag to use for weekend/day trips. At the end of your abroad experience, you also have the entire duffel bag to fill up with souvenirs and other additional items that you got abroad and want to bring back home with you.

–Katie Super

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