

TRAVEL RESOURCES: MIDDLE EAST

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 they 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 for further information.

PACKING FOR YOUR SHORT TRIPS WHILE ABROAD

- Pack light- only bring one bag
- Bring walking shoes (not white sneakers)
- Bring a lock for hostel lockers
- Remember to use travel size (3 oz.) bottles for your toiletries
- Pack your battery-run alarm clock
- Pack printed directions to your hotel/hostel
- Pack immigration paperwork and store in a safe place with your passport
- Top-off your cell phone minutes—verify rates for out of country travel

TRAVELING BY AIR

- Take your in-country address and a pen with you on your flight
 - You will be required to write your study abroad address on the 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
- Some airlines do not have assigned seats, so make sure to 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

Web Resources

www.airarabia.com/home

www.emirates.com

www.expedia.com

www.kayak.com

www.mea.com.lb/English/Pages/default.aspx

www.momondo.com

www.omanair.com/wy

www.qatarairways.com/us/en/homepage.page

Please note that the resources listed are not endorsed by the WFU Study Abroad Office, but suggestions from study abroad alumni and online resources.

www.rj.com/en
www.saudiairlines.com

www.tripadvisor.com
www.vayama.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.rail.co.il/EN/Pages/Homepage.aspx

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
- Traveling by bus can be the most economical way to travel, but it will also take the longest, so make sure to plan your time accordingly
- Overnight buses can be very uncomfortable; most students do not recommend this option

Web Resources

<http://www.jett.com.jo>

HELPFUL TIPS

- Ask your program director where to find good deals, transportation websites, and accommodation resources
- Research the customs in each country. In some countries, modest clothing is expected – men don't normally wear shorts. When visiting locations with a religious significance, women may be required to cover their head and shoulders.
- Always notify your program director/study abroad office once you have finalized your travel plans. Make sure they have your travel itinerary.
- Learn several words and phrases in the 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
- Wait to book your smaller trips until after you arrive abroad and receive your course schedule
- Make a travel budget
- 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

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- If you do not own a map of the country, it is easy to print one from Google Maps, Yahoo Maps, etc.
- Taxis can be extremely expensive, so try to use other options
- Always be aware of your check-in times
- 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

HOSTELS/HOTELS

- Check with program staff and study abroad alumni for suggestions and check 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
- Make sure to know how many beds your room has
 - There can be 4 to 40+ beds in one room
- Always lock your passports and bags in a locker with a lock
 - Pack a lock in case your hostel does not provide one
- Check what is included with your price
 - Some hostels will include breakfast, discounts on tours, linens, etc.

Web Resources

www.hihostels.com/web/membership.en.htm

- Membership includes discounts on a variety of hostels

www.asia.com/hotel-continent-guide/middle-east

www.asiarooms.com/en/middle-east-hotel-guide.html

www.expedia.com/hotels

www.hostelbookers.com

www.hostels.com

www.hostelworld.com

www.hotels.com

www.kayak.com/hotels

www.momondo.com

www.novotel.com/hotel-directory/gb/middle-east/novotel-hotels-middle-east.htm

www.orbitz.com/hotels

www.rumbo.com

www.travelocity.com/hotels

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

Pack as light as possible! It's such a hassle to drag your luggage around every place.

–Elizabeth Willis

Stay in hostels as opposed to hotels. You are more likely than not in a much more central location and you meet a lot of people. Not to mention you are spending far less money!

–Kelley McGraph

Things will go wrong. Stay calm.

–Sam Richards

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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