

Safety, Security and Well-Being of our Participants

International Studies Abroad

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The safety, security and well-being of study abroad program participants are of utmost importance to ISA. While neither ISA nor ISA's affiliate universities can guarantee a risk-free environment, all efforts are made to best ensure the safety, security and well-being of our students and faculty participants throughout the duration of the program. ISA follows prudent measures to verify that all transportation, lodging, medical facilities, communications, and emergency responses are in place to best provide a safe environment for the study abroad program and their participants.

While ISA is firmly committed to the provision of this support, we also emphasize to students, faculty and parents that all program participants must take responsibility for their own safety, security and well-being. This is highlighted during pre-departure preparations, on-site orientation and throughout their stay in the host country. This means using common sense, being aware of their surroundings and not putting themselves in compromising positions with the abuse of drugs or alcohol. The same precautions anyone would follow in their home communities in the U.S. should be maintained when traveling abroad.

This document provides a description of the infrastructure in place at ISA program sites abroad to provide for the logistical support of the students. A brief description of the safety and security measures taken regarding our transportation, lodging, health support and communications will demonstrate how daily activities lend to the safety and well being of our program participants. The document will also detail the guidelines and procedures established in the event that an act of war, terrorism or natural disaster occurs. The final section contains the ISA refund policy in case of emergency situations.

ISA Residential Staff:

ISA employs native born personnel at the majority of our international sites. Most were raised in the program city and all, without exception, are highly knowledgeable about the available facilities, customs, support services and local people. A staff of anywhere from 1 to 6 ISA full-time staff are available 24-7 to respond to the needs of the program participants. Each staff member has a cell phone, at least two land-lines (home and office) and email services at their disposal. Staff members make every effort to make themselves accessible to students at all times. Each program participant is provided with a Contact Card upon arrival in-country containing the names and phone numbers of all ISA staff, the appropriate U.S. embassy or consulate information, the recommended local hospital, and the local equivalent to our emergency "911" number.

Lodging:

The majority of ISA resident directors are natives of the country. All staff members are, without exception, very familiar with the program sites and aware of potentially unsafe areas. While there are no risk-free residential areas in any American or foreign city, ISA's student housing accommodations are located in areas deemed to be of lower risk. The same attentiveness is given to the arrangement of lodging during ISA-organized excursions. Hotels or hostels are selected based on the security of the area in which the accommodations are located, and also on their proximity to the sites to be visited. To the extent possible, ISA utilizes hotels/hostels with interior- rather than exterior-entry doors.

Transportation:

ISA is consistent in utilizing the safest and most reliable transportation (bus and plane) for ISA sponsored travel. The companies are selected based on their prior safety records, insurance coverage, their administrative responsiveness, and the mutual trust that has developed as a result of

the well-established relationships with ISA. In the selection of a transportation company, ISA also takes into account the recommendations from trustworthy external advisors.

Medical Facilities:

ISA provides all students and accompanying faculty with medical insurance for the duration of the program. The policy is provided by CMI Insurance Specialists in Lutherville, Maryland and includes medical evacuation and repatriation coverage. A detailed description of the coverage may be found at <http://studiesabroad.com/content/binaries/insurance/coverage.pdf>.

ISA provides all students with an Orientation Handbook prior to departure. One section of the Handbook is devoted to issues of medical health. It includes names, addresses, and phone numbers of medical facilities at the program site. Medical facilities are recommended based on the quality of their services, proximity to the areas in which students live and/or to the university or classroom facility, and their experience providing services to American students. In the event that a program participant must go to the hospital or to a doctor, the ISA resident director will assist in scheduling the appointment, accompanying the student on the visit and assisting in any other way necessary. Additionally, the resident director will ensure that the student is aware of all procedures required to file a claim for reimbursement for medical services. ISA's resident directors also take appropriate measures to ensure that medical facilities are available during ISA-organized excursions should a medical emergency arise.

Cultural and Academic Excursions:

In the event that a student needs medical assistance during an ISA-organized excursion, the resident director will always accompany the student to the medical facility. If more than one ISA director is present or if there is a U.S. faculty member accompanying the group, an ISA director or the U.S. faculty member will remain with the group and continue with the excursion while the other ISA director accompanies the student in need. A meeting time and place will be established for the director and student to reunite with the group. While apart from the group, the ISA director will maintain contact via cell phone with the U.S. faculty member or ISA director who remains with the group. If the ISA resident director is unable to return to the excursion, the other ISA director or U.S. faculty member will ensure the safe return of the students from the excursion to their place of residence/lodging. The resident director will provide the U.S. faculty member with all necessary instructions.

In the event that no ISA director or U.S. faculty member is available to remain with the group while the director accompanies the student in need, the director will select a responsible student to temporarily serve as the group leader throughout the excursion and to ensure that all students return to their place of residence or lodging. The ISA resident director will give this student all necessary instructions.

Communications:

Throughout the study abroad program, the ISA resident director is, above all, there to help the students. Students are provided with the director's cell phone number and are instructed to call the director at any time, day or night, for assistance of any type.

Prior to departure, all students are provided with a description of their host family or housing arrangements. A contact telephone number is included in the description and may be utilized in the event of an emergency requiring that a family member in the U.S. contact the student abroad. If they are not able to reach the student at their place of residence, they may contact the ISA Austin office during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30 – 5:30 CST). ISA will, in turn, contact the resident director abroad. During the weekend and evening hours, ISA Austin's telephone answering machine provides the cell phone number for the ISA Austin office emergency contact on duty 24-7.

Emergency situations: Upon the students' arrival to the program site, the ISA resident director facilitates an orientation meeting to provide useful information on acclimation to the host culture as

well as emergency situation procedures. The director will provide all students and accompanying faculty members with verbal and written instructions regarding the protocol to follow in the event of a political crisis, terrorist event, natural disaster, or other emergency. The phone numbers for ISA resident staff (possibly, also the local U.S. consulate or embassy information) is provided on a small card that students should carry with them at all times while on the program.

In the event of a crisis or emergency involving a student, faculty member, or group, the following procedural guidelines will be followed:

Step 1: ISA resident director makes immediate efforts to identify the problem and assess the situation (utilizing all resources available through the U.S. Embassy, local authorities, media, etc.) and then coordinates an on-site response, as necessary.

Step 2: ISA resident director attends to the students' / student's immediate needs.

Step 3: ISA resident director contacts the ISA U.S. staff immediately.

Step 4: ISA Austin staff contacts parents, the students' host university, local authorities, U.S. Embassy and/or insurance company, as deemed necessary. ISA resident director continues to take further action on site as needed, while ISA staff in Austin acts in the U.S.

Step 5: ISA resident director and Austin staff follows up as necessary and/or appropriate.

In the Event of War, Terrorist Activity, Political Emergencies and Natural Disasters:

In the event that an outbreak of war, a coup d'etat, terrorist activity, political instability, or a major natural disaster should occur at any of the ISA program sites abroad, the procedures and support mechanisms outlined above provide the infrastructure required for ISA to respond to the emergency.

In addition, there are specific actions or procedures already in place in the event of such an occurrence. Utilizing the Council on International Educational Exchange General Security Precautions as a guideline, the following describes specific actions on-going at ISA international sites:

- All ISA facilities abroad, if marked on the outside, are identified with a sign that has the ISA logo, acronym, and/or name of the organization. However, there is neither a sign nor flag identifying the building as being affiliated with the United States.
- All ISA students are registered with the U.S. Embassy and other appropriate government agency upon arrival.
- ISA residential staff is knowledgeable about local police and other local sources of authority.
- ISA residential staff maintains up-to-date contact information (addresses and telephone numbers) for each student abroad and has clearly outlined procedures for contacting them in case of emergencies.
- Program participants are provided with a wallet size card during orientation with ISA residential staff home and cell phone numbers, U.S. Embassy and Consulate numbers, the name and number of the recommended local hospital, and the U.S. equivalent of "911."
- Participants are instructed, in the case of an emergency event to return to their host family lodging and await contact from ISA. Specific response plans will vary according to the situation at hand.
- Students are required to provide ISA residential staff their contact information and travel itinerary when traveling independent of an ISA sponsored event during the program term.

- Students are discouraged from congregating in groups of Americans or foreigners and from spending time in restaurants and bars that are known to be frequented primarily by foreigners.
- ISA residential staff carries the Embassy phone numbers with them at all times. The U.S. Embassy is familiar with the ISA program and has been provided with all ISA contact information.

In the event that an international crisis prevents the program participants from returning to the U.S. at the conclusion of the program, ISA would work with the host families to assure that students could remain with them until the crisis is resolved. Once international travel is deemed safe and secure by the U.S. Department of State, ISA would work with the participants to assist in arranging return to the U.S. ISA would guarantee that these additional and unforeseen costs are covered for the participants until their return home. A careful accounting of these expenses will be maintained and the participants will be invoiced for the costs at that time.

U.S. State Department Travel “Advisory” and Travel “Warning”:

Country Travel “Warnings” are issued by the U.S. State Department when it decides based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to or possibly evacuate a specific country. Please note also that a U.S. State Department “Travel Warning” is something quite serious and rare. It is an official category of advisory statement issued by the U.S. State Department. The State Department often issues Travel “Advisories” or “Public Announcements”, pointing out the risks of traveling in a particular country and asking Americans to be careful. However, a Travel “Advisory” rarely constitutes a “Travel Warning”. If a Travel “Warning” is issued for a particular country, the State Department will clearly state that a “Travel Warning” is in effect for that country. For further information about all State Department “travel warnings”, “advisories”, “public announcements” and “consular information sheets”, please go to the State Department’s web page at http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html.

Department of State travel information is not the only information available for determining the security and well-being of students at a particular ISA site during this type of emergency situation. In such an event, ISA will be in close communications with police and other security personnel on site, trusted colleagues, and with our own resident staff.

ISA Refund Policy in the event of War or other national turmoil that affects host country:

If the U.S. State Department issues an official 'Travel Warning' for a particular country where ISA has a program, or if the U.S. State Department recommends evacuation from that particular country, ISA will cancel the program in that country and refund all unspent program fees to those students already participating, or preparing to participate, in that particular ISA program. If the program is cancelled due to a State Department “Travel Warning” prior to the program start date, ISA will work with students to transfer to another ISA program if they wish and have approval from their home institution. ISA program participants and accepted applicants are not necessarily entitled to any special refund privileges if and when there is an outbreak of war. If a student withdraws from an ISA program that has not been cancelled, the student is not eligible for any special refund. The standard refund policy applies.