



Study Abroad Guide for Students with Disabilities

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Study abroad programs taking place outside of the United States have different disability laws, eligibility guidelines, and levels of access, so accommodations based on disability must be explored in advance.

This resource was developed to assist Rhodes students with various disabilities in considering how their access needs may factor into study abroad program selection and participation. The goal of this proactive approach is to assist students with identifying programs that align with interests and needs, exploring accommodations, and determining access barriers and possible solutions. The staff of Study Abroad and Student Accessibility Services are available for support with this process.

Identifying Your Needs

Before researching and applying to programs, we recommend students with disabilities pause to consider potential access needs and what, if any, accommodations may be required while abroad. Consider these areas.

Impact of Your Condition

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is the current functional impact of your condition on daily life activities?
- Has traveling impacted your condition in the past? If so, how?
- Are your symptoms exacerbated by physical activity, altitude, or climate/temperature? If so, how?
- Consider how this information may impact the types of study abroad programs you explore.

Mental Health

The availability of mental health resources varies widely by country and may be extremely limited in some destinations. Here are some proactive steps you can take now to ensure your mental health needs are met during your time abroad:

- Talk to your counselor, therapist, or psychologist about your interest in studying abroad. Discuss any concerns and needed resources.
- Develop a plan for support while away.
- Familiarize yourself with the resources available to you through the [Rhodes Counseling Center](#) (e.g., wellness resources, free Headspace app, etc.). You can call the 24/7/365 support line (855-850-4301) from anywhere in the world to be connected with a licensed mental health practitioner for in-the-moment support.
- Depending on your needs, you may choose to apply to programs in locations where mental health resources are more readily available vs. remote locations with fewer support resources.

Physical Health

- Do you have severe allergies or dietary restrictions? If so, talk with your healthcare provider about ways to manage these needs while away.

- Do you have regular, ongoing medical appointments with a physician or specialist? If so, talk with them to develop a plan for support while abroad.
- Do you use a mobility device (e.g., wheelchair, scooter, walker, etc.)? If so, consider what device(s) you will need to take with you and what resources for equipment repair may exist while away. You will also want to research any airline restrictions and guidelines for passengers with mobility devices.
- Depending on your needs, you may choose to apply to programs in locations with greater accessibility and resources vs. remote locations with less overall accessibility and fewer resources.

Medications

Do you take daily medications, either prescriptions or over-the-counter medicines? If so:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about the best way to secure enough prescription medication to last the duration of your trip.
- Think about time zone changes and their impact on your dose times.
- Research best practices for traveling internationally with prescriptions and over-the-counter medications. For example:
 - Pack medications in your carry-on bag in case your luggage is lost or delayed.
 - If possible, pack a couple days extra in case of travel delays.
 - Travel with medicines in their original, labeled containers.
 - If your medications require refrigeration, consider additional needs for transportation and travel (e.g., small carry-on cooler, international power adaptor, purchase batteries in advance).

Accommodations

Anticipate what, if any, disability-related access needs you may have while abroad.

- Consider these accommodation categories:
 - Academic accommodations
 - Housing accommodations
 - Physical access needs related to buildings, facilities, and excursions
 - Transportation accommodations
 - Dietary accommodations
- If you will require any accommodations to fully participate in a study abroad program, create a list of potential accommodation needs and questions to discuss with the program contact and host institution.

Researching Study Abroad Programs

Now that you have assessed your needs, you are ready to research study abroad program options that best align with your needs and goals. Your Study Abroad Advisor can advise you on using their system to search and filter the numerous opportunities.

It is critical that you consider the academic and physical requirements for each program of interest.

Academic Requirements

- What are the core, essential academic requirements of the program?
- Are you able to meet these requirements?
- What access barriers do you anticipate, if any?
- Will you require any academic accommodations or alternative formats for class materials? If so, what? These will need to be explored in advance with the host institution in order for you to know the level of access you would be provided should you choose that program.

Physical Requirements

- What are the required physical aspects of the program? Some programs require unique living situations, regular vigorous physical activity in harsh climates, and/or take place in inaccessible locations.
- Consider the following:
 - Environment – Climate, indoors/outdoors, amount of exposure to extreme heat/cold, hazards (e.g., allergies, air quality, wildlife).
 - Physical effort – Sedentary vs. amount of required walking, hiking, climbing, carrying weighted objects.
 - Physical accessibility – Locations, buildings, seating, stairs, transportation to/from program locations, compatibility of electronic devices/plugs, and lodging.
 - Schedule – Early morning hours, weekends, nights, breaks required for the program.
- Are you able to meet the requirements?
- What access barriers do you anticipate, if any?
- Will you require any reasonable accommodations? If so, what? These will need to be explored in advance with the host institution in order for you to know the level of access you would be provided should you choose that program.

Lodging

- What are the sleeping arrangements? For example, staying with a host family, sleeping in a shared tent, staying with a roommate or in a single room, bathroom access, etc.
- What access barriers do you anticipate, if any?
- Will you require any housing accommodations? If so, what? These will need to be explored in advance with the host institution in order for you to know the level of access you would be provided should you choose that program.

Additional Considerations

- What are the cultural attitudes, beliefs and norms of the host country regarding disability? Research as much as you can in advance and talk to other students who studied abroad with a disability.
- What terminology is used in the host language to refer to people with disabilities? Learn key vocabulary words.

Exploring Reasonable Accommodations

All disability-related accommodations are provided by the study abroad partner program and host institution. If through your self-assessment and program research you determined a need for accommodations, then the next step is to explore what reasonable accommodations may be available to you.

PLEASE NOTE: If you require accommodations that are not available in the host country, your Study Abroad Advisor may advise you to postpone participation and/or explore other programs.

Connect with Study Abroad Advisor and Program Contact

- The first step is to reach out to your Study Abroad Advisor to express your interest in applying to a specific program or specific programs. Share your access concerns and possible accommodation needs, and ask any questions about the program. Ask them to connect you to the program contact.
- Connect with the program contact to discuss your access needs and how they relate to the program. Ask your access questions. They should be able to answer questions about access barriers, accommodations they have previously provided and/or could provide, along with their documentation requirements. This information will help you determine whether the program may be a good match.

Submit Required Documentation

- Most programs will require you to submit supporting medical documentation or documentation of prior college accommodations.
- If you have approved accommodations through Student Accessibility Services, contact SAS@rhodes.edu to request an Accommodations History Letter.

Use Your Resources

- Maintain good communication with your Study Abroad Advisor throughout this process.
- Reach out to Student Accessibility Services for assistance brainstorming possible access needs or considerations.
- Depending on your situation, Study Abroad and Student Accessibility Services may be able to consult with your host institution to help you explore access needs.

Service Animals

When traveling outside of the United States with a service animal, it is important to research protections and allowances for your airlines, destinations, and host institutions. While most travel destinations have laws protecting service animals, the same protections are not available for emotional support animals. Make arrangements for an emotional support animal to remain at home.

If you will travel with a service animal, be sure to start early on the following tasks:

- Inform your program contact and host institution of your need to bring your service animal. Ask them to share their policies/procedures and work with you on any necessary preparations.
- Research your destination's service animal requirements for health, vaccines, documentation, certification, etc.
- Contact the embassy or consulate of the country you are visiting to find out if there is anything else you need to know before bringing a service animal (e.g., if there are any bans on specific breeds of dogs).
- Check with the appropriate government agency in the country you are visiting (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture) to learn about quarantine policies for incoming animals.
- Ensure all documentation relating to your service animal is up to date and that you have copies available.

Additional Considerations

Consult with Study Abroad about any questions or concerns related to your program or destination. It is important to know the resources that will be available to you during your time there. Below are additional areas for consideration.

Insurance

- If you are participating on a Rhodes program:
 - Students participating on Rhodes programs and the Bilateral Exchange programs are covered by a comprehensive international insurance plan mandated and paid for by Rhodes. This plan provides coverage for care while outside the United States.
 - A schedule of benefits can be obtained from the Buckman Center.
- If you are participating on a non-Rhodes program:
 - Students participating on a non-Rhodes program must check with their program provider to determine if insurance is provided. If it is not, students must secure insurance independently that will provide adequate health coverage outside the United States.
- Consider trip cancellation insurance. Trip cancellation insurance is helpful in the case of a sudden illness or injury that necessitates canceling or interruption of a trip. Most policies also provide coverage due to a wide variety of unforeseen events.
 - [Rhodes CFAR Instructions.pdf](#): How to purchase the "**Academic Explorer Adventurer Plan**" WITH the optional "**Cancel for Any Reason**" add-on.
 - [Academic Explorer - Brochure.pdf](#): This is an "at-a-glance" brochure explaining the policy.
 - [Academic Explorer - Policy Document.pdf](#): This is the longer official policy document for the policy.

Medical Emergencies

Consult with Study Abroad and your program contact about how they handle medical emergencies. Make sure you know the emergency services phone number (e.g., 911) for your destination. Usually, this number can be dialed even when you do not have full cell service.

In the event of a medical emergency while abroad, please adhere to the following procedures if possible:

1. Call an Ambulance or go to the nearest emergency room.
2. If you do not have a program coordinator and require urgent onsite assistance, contact the US Embassy.
3. Once you have received care or your condition is no longer an emergency, contact or have someone contact your program coordinator or host institution to inform them of the situation.
4. Then contact Rhodes College Campus Safety (901-843-3880) to alert the school of the emergency.

Resources

The following resources may be helpful for students seeking additional information. Please note that they are not affiliated with or endorsed by Rhodes College.

General Resources

- [Disability Rights from Human Rights Watch](#)
- [GO Overseas: 7 Tips for Studying Abroad with Disabilities and Chronic Conditions](#)
- [Mobility International USA: Americans Going Abroad](#)
- [Studee: The Ultimate Guide to Studying Abroad with a Disability](#)

Government Resources

- [CDC: Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [US Department of State: Traveling with Disabilities](#)

Other Guides

- [MIUSA: Tips by and for Autistic Travelers](#)

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