

Individuals with Disabilities and Study Abroad



*A participant on an exchange to Japan,
visits with a new friend after a drumming workshop.*

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Are you an individual with a disability who would like to study abroad? If so, you are taking the right step by reading this brochure. There are many short term, semester and year long programs that can enhance your academic career and broaden your personal horizons. The Office of International Programs (OIP) and the Office of Academic Support Services for Students with Disabilities (ACSSD) are dedicated to helping you do so, as well.

Ithaca College has many study abroad programs and most of them should be able to accommodate your needs. Depending on your specific circumstances, you may need to choose certain programs over others. There are many factors to consider when choosing the program that is right for you. The OIP will assist you in finding the right program, but there are several things you should do in order to prepare to study abroad. While it may seem overwhelming at first, we hope you will find the planning and preparation to be an exciting anticipation of the adventures awaiting you and we hope to hear from you with any questions or concerns.



“I think I have changed (after my semester abroad) in that I am more independent and I am not afraid to express my opinions. I am a little shy, but I know now when to speak up for myself. I also learned how to live in a big city, which is a huge change from my usual living environment! I definitely think I have been bitten by the travel bug after my semester in London and I am ready to start traveling again!”

**– IC student who spent a semester at the
London Center**

Steps to Studying Abroad

1. As early as your freshman year, talk with your advisor about your interest in studying abroad. The sooner you begin to investigate which study abroad program will fit best with your academic program, the easier it will be to tailor your Ithaca College curriculum.
2. Visit the Office of International Programs and pick up a Guide to Study Abroad at IC (which you should have received at orientation), and/or visit the OIP website, at www.ithaca.edu/oip to see what kinds of programs are available and in which countries.
3. Attend a study abroad information session (held towards the beginning of every semester) to learn more details about what your study abroad options are and how study abroad might affect your academic career, finances, etc.
4. Talk to the ACSSD staff and let them know which programs and/or countries you are interested in visiting and discuss how you will meet your individual needs while abroad. The office of ACSSD will work with the study abroad office to find out as much information as possible in order to ensure that your needs will be met.
5. If necessary, talk to the financial aid office to see how your time overseas can be funded. Most types of financial aid will be applied to any IC or affiliated semester-long study abroad programs. Keep reading for more financial aid information.
6. Talk to your parents and/or support group to elicit support at home for your plans. If necessary, have them talk to ACSSD or OIP staff.
7. Talk to the study abroad staff in the OIP and let them know of your plans and needs. The more you let the office staff know ahead of time, the more they can help you plan for your time overseas.
8. Once you have chosen a program you will have much to do in terms of applying and preparing. Be sure to also check with the tips and resources listed on this brochure to prepare yourself so that your disability needs will be met.

TIPS:

- **Disclose your disability needs to program staff early**, so appropriate arrangements can be made in advance.
- **Investigate medical and/or counseling services, interpreters, personal assistants, etc. in the countries you are interested in visiting.** Talk to your program provider for recommendations.
- **Remember that other cultures may provide disability access in a different way--**learn about what types of accommodation are typically provided in your host country, and be flexible and open to different ways of accommodating your disability.
- **Before you go, find out as much as you can about your host culture** and how they view disability by reading, talking to other students, and making use of the resources listed here. The more you know, the better prepared you will be.
- **Think about how you will answer questions and talk about issues** which arise due to your disability in the language of your host country-- look up key vocabulary words ahead of time.



“I changed so much from being in Australia. For one, I learned how to cook, but I also learned a lot about myself from learning to live on my own. The experiences I had made me a stronger person, and have given me a new outlook on life. I’ve come to realize to try everything life has to offer to you, because you never know where your path will take you.” – IC student

Support while Overseas

Ithaca Programs:

Ithaca College operates two of its own programs and a number of exchange and short term programs. We will work with you to make your experience overseas as pleasant as possible.

- › The London Center – There is a full time staff in London who will work with you.
- › The Walkabout Down Under to Australia – The universities which participate in this program all have support offices specifically dedicated to working with people with disabilities.
- › Exchange Programs – The exchange partners are all fully accredited universities overseas. The OIP and ACCSD staff will work with you to find the office at each university that can help you with your needs.
- › Short term winter or summer programs. – Faculty leading these programs will work with you and the OIP to make your travels possible.

Affiliated Programs

IC also works with several program providers. Information about these programs can be found at the OIP and on the OIP website under “affiliated programs”. The OIP and ACCSD have contact information for people at each affiliate institution who are available to you, as a student with a disability. They can assist you in choosing a program that is best for you and answer any concerns that you have. These programs also have resident directors in the countries in which you will be studying who can be a resource for you while you are overseas. We encourage you to be open with these people as to your particular needs. A few of these affiliates have scholarships specifically for people with disabilities. You may also be eligible for other scholarships which they offer. We have provided links to scholarship information on the OIP website and we encourage you to apply.

Non-affiliated Programs

It is also possible for you to attend a non-affiliated study abroad program. If you choose this option, you will have to take a leave of absence from IC and your financial aid will not apply. Credits earned on a non-affiliated program will transfer back provided you have completed appropriate paperwork. We strongly urge you to consider how another program will be able to accommodate you, as a student with a disability, by inquiring ahead of time.

Financial Aid:

If you choose to go on an Ithaca College Program or on an affiliated program, most or all of your current financial aid will be applied to your studies abroad. This includes grants, scholarships and loans. All financial aid will be recalculated based upon the actual cost of the program you will attend. In addition to the scholarships which we have mentioned above, there are several organizations which give general grants for study abroad which are also listed on the scholarship webpage.

Scholarship Information Link:

http://www.ithaca.edu/oip/abroad_scholarships.htm



Culture Shock:

While studying abroad, most students experience what is known as culture shock. This consists of an initial period of exhilaration as a result of the new things you are experiencing, followed by a period of isolation and homesickness. Eventually, one overcomes this period and begins to adapt to a new way of life. Spend some time before you leave creating a support network of friends and family both at home and overseas who you can turn to. Let them know ahead of time about this anticipated period of loneliness and ask them to be there for you and to support you in getting through it. Simply having someone to talk to can make a world of difference. Ask the OIP for more information about culture shock and how you can best prepare for it.

General Resources for Students with Disabilities and Study Abroad:

Please visit the following websites to read about experiences that other students have had, to see a list of countries where students with disabilities have had success, and to find additional resources.

Mobility International: <http://www.miusa.org> – MI serves to educate people with disabilities and related organizations about international exchange opportunities; increase the participation of people with disabilities in the full range of international volunteer, study, work and research programs, and facilitate partnerships between people with disabilities, disability-related organizations, and international exchange organizations. MIUSA can put you in touch with other students with disabilities who have studied abroad through their Peer-to-Peer Network.

Access Abroad: <http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/access/index.htm> - This web site is devoted to making existing international opportunities accessible to college students with all types of disabilities, in accordance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. The site provides advice for students with disabilities considering an international experience and stories from students with disabilities who have studied abroad. There are also detailed summaries of accessibility and available accommodations at sites in more than twenty countries.

Brown University: This document has stories from students of all different backgrounds and how it affected their time abroad:
http://www.brown.edu/Administration/OIP/pdf_docs/diversity_st_abroad01.pdf

Books available through Mobility International

Bucks, Christina, Ed. A World of Options: A Guide to International Educational Exchange Community service and Travel for People with Disabilities. Mobility International USA. 1997.

Susan Sygall & Cindy Lewis. Building Bridges: A Manual on Including People with Disabilities in International Exchange Programs. Mobility International, USA. 2006.

A World Awaits You Journal. Mobility International Online Journal.
<http://www.miusa.org/ncde/away>

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- Japanese sign language