

BEING A WOMAN ABROAD

Helpful Tips from SCU International Ambassadors

Health, Safety, & Street Smarts

- Register with the American Embassy (if the country has good relations with the U.S.)
- Check with the American Embassy and/or your program provider for a list of English speaking doctors; get a receipt when you go to the doctor (insurance reimbursement).
- Look less vulnerable by acting like you know what you're doing and where you're going (even if you don't- pretend!).
- Stick to where there are other women, and always try to go out with a group that includes at least one guy (Italy, Spain).
- Only carry purses with zippers for pick pocketing safety.
- If it's late at night, be careful- don't go into dark areas, be careful on Metros, & spending the money on a cab is often worth it (Spain, France).
- If you plan to go somewhere at night, go there in the daytime first, so you're familiar with that place.
- In some countries, like El Salvador, always go places & travel with a friend.

Cultural Gender Norms & Appropriate behavior

- Be prepared to face differences in how women are viewed and treated; be aware of it and reflect on how you will deal with it abroad.
- Research cultural norms and pay attention to locals so you can dress appropriately.
- Europeans have a stereotype of American women as "easier" and/or "flirtier". Women in Asia are much more modest in behavior.

Social/ Dating Issues

- Be aware! Culturally, men may expect more from you than you intend to get into.
- Be aware of what people consider "signals", in Greece, for example, eye contact is a big deal; in others, responding to attention from men, and giving out your number are very suggestive of your interest, be especially careful when drinking.
- There are many cultural differences in dating- be mindful of men's expectations, especially considering negative stereotypes of American women.

Girlie Stuff (Tampons, Hairdryers, Birth Control, etc.)

- In poorer regions (El Salvador, for example) don't bring/wear your fancy jewelry.
- Don't bring your hair dryer or straightener, the voltage differences often fry them or your hair (Europe).
- Tampons, condoms, etc. are widely available in European cities; in more developing countries, they are available, but many women are more comfortable bringing their own from home.
- If you plan on being sexually active, be sure to bring your own protection (many men in southern Europe don't carry their own).

- You may want to research *Gardasil* (an HPV vaccine).
- Make sure you have enough birth control to last your entire time abroad, before you leave.
- High heels are terrible on cobble stones, in Europe, you may wish you had flats instead.

Other Challenges/Tips

- If you get to know a local, they will tell you where you will be safe.
- If your lost or in unsafe situations, and older woman is a good person to approach for help or directions.