

# THE RETURNEE HANDBOOK

A Post-Study  
Abroad Guide

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# Welcome Back!

Welcome back to the United States and to Colorado College. We hope you had a wonderful experience studying and living in another country. Many people find that returning to school after studying abroad is a difficult adjustment. You might have a hard time getting back on the block plan or sitting in a classroom. Re-entering this culture can be just as difficult as adjusting to your host culture when you went abroad; for some students it may be even more challenging.

This handbook is designed to assist you with your return to Colorado College. From writing papers to getting involved in student groups and activities to applying for grants and graduate school to strategies to get out of the country again, this handbook is filled with practical information and advice. We hope this provides a helpful start and encourage you to stop by our office in Worner Center for more specific assistance.

## **Readjusting to the Block Plan**

It may be difficult to get re-used to studying at CC after having adjusted to academic life in another country. Especially if you are enrolled in upper division courses in your major, it is important to put in the time to prepare for class discussions and write well-organized papers -- things that may have been less emphasized on your program. If you have spent the past few months primarily communicating in a language other than English, paper writing might present additional difficulties. If you are having trouble writing papers, **we encourage you to visit the Writing Center**. It is an excellent resource for overcoming all types of writing hurdles from grammatical details to clarity of presentation.

You may have also completed independent academic work while abroad. In some cases, this work can be incorporated into additional projects at CC. Your work could become the basis for a thesis or a final paper for a class. Even if you do not directly incorporate your academic endeavors abroad with your current academic work, you can continue to use what you learned while abroad to enhance the direction and content of the remainder of your CC education. Consider taking a class focusing on your host country or some of the issues you studied overseas. In doing so, you will be able to add an important perspective from having been there and you may gain further insight through different approaches to material.

## **Personal and Social Adjustment**

In addition to providing new academic experiences, many people find that study abroad involves significant personal growth and change. It will probably be difficult to come back to familiar situations and people with the expectation that things will remain the same. Family and friends who stayed in the U.S. while you were gone may tire of hearing about all the amazing experiences and realizations you have had. However, you should remember that time has passed for them too, and they may have changed as well. Try to find a balance between catching up with people and dwelling exclusively on your time abroad.

You may also find that studying abroad has generated new interests, new perspectives on the United States, new political ideas, and new concepts of yourself. In some cases, these can easily be incorporated into your life at CC; in other cases you may find it challenging to be open about your new interests or perspectives with others. Below is a list of some student organizations that could provide an outlet for new directions and ideas. Check with the Center for Service and Learning, Minority Student Life, and Student Activities (all located in Worner Center) for additional groups and additional information.

AASU - Asian American Student Union	Amnesty International
BSU - Black Student Union	BreakOut (Community Service)
Campus Pagan Association	Catholic Community
CCCA - Colorado College Campus Association	Chavarim/Hillel (Jewish Student Group)
CC Community Kitchen	Dance Workshop
Cutler Publications	EQUAL
La Junta	Honor Council
Livesounds	MOSAIC - International Student Organization
ORC - Outdoor Recreation Committee	QSA - Queer/Straight Alliance
Somos (Latino/Chicano Student Group)	SASA - South Asian Student Alliance

Another important thing to keep in mind is that the experience you had abroad is part of an ongoing growth process that need not stop now that you are back at CC. Embrace the new things in your life, reconcile with things that have changed, and continue to challenge yourself, your beliefs and your assumptions. Anticipate that you will likely experience some of the following aspects of what has been termed “re-entry shock”:

***Restlessness, Rootlessness and Depression***

***Uncertainty, confusion and isolation***

***Changes in goals and priorities***

***Boredom with old friends and activities***

Finally, you may find that you have a newfound or intensified negativity or intolerance towards the U.S., including people’s behavior, attitudes, customs and common social practice. While many of

these adjustments will ultimately be incorporated into your paradigm, some will fade as you become comfortable again in the United States and at CC. The coping skills and strategies that were successful in helping you adjust to your host culture will be just as helpful coming home: get involved, identify a support group of other study abroad students or a group relevant to new interests, suspend judgment until you understand a situation, and always keep a sense of humor. Consider the following list of suggested ways to incorporate your study abroad experience into your life back at school:

- Take an adjunct language class to maintain your proficiency (and get a quarter credit, too).
- Participate in a language table where people dine and converse in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Italian, or contact the OSAIS for help in establishing one for another language that you may have studied.
- Help members of the community who speak English as a second language. The Center for Community Service has lots of information on this.
- Find out about being a tutor for CC students who need help in elementary or intermediate language courses.
- Check out foreign films in Tutt Library.
- Correspond with friends and family from your host country.
- Connect with international students at CC from your host country.
- Check community listings for international groups around Colorado Springs.
- Get involved with a student group on campus.
- Become a Peer Advisor for the Office of Study Abroad.
- Submit original writing you did while abroad to be published in the Catalyst or the Leviathan.
- Engage in conversation and dialogue with others about your experience.
- Visit one of CC's Language Houses. They have events like dinners, dances and speakers.
- Go to Tutt and read newspapers in the language of your host country.
- Check online for current news and information on the country you studied in.
- Host an international dinner party.

# What Next?

With all you have experienced and learned, it shouldn't be surprising if you find that your life goals have shifted, expanded or completely changed. Maybe you want to find a way to continue to travel or maybe you've discovered a passion for Spanish literature and want to change your major. Take some time to think seriously about what you want and where you see yourself in the future. While you shouldn't feel too much pressure to plan your entire life at this time, you do need to think about plans for the next year. Deadlines for entry exams like the MCAT (for medical school), LSAT (for law school), the GMAT (for business school), and the GRE (for general graduate programs), as well as scholarships, fellowships and graduate school applications can come up quickly.

## Graduate school - at home or abroad?

Is the continuation of your academic career the next step? If you're thinking about going to graduate school, you should talk to your academic advisor and pay a visit to the Career Center, which is located on the second floor of Worner Center, room #226. They will help you identify programs that match your interests and goals and can assist you with the application process.

If you're thinking about going to graduate school abroad, there are several things to consider before applying. First of all, pinpoint what you want to study. Next, determine which schools offer the best programs. How will you finance your program? U.S. federal aid and loans may not be available for programs overseas. Whatever you decide, you'll first have to take the entry exams that are offered every few months. Institutions abroad may not require these tests, but it is still a good idea to take them now in case your plans change to include a school in the U.S. To find out when your particular test is being offered, stop by the Career Center, or visit Princeton Review's website at [www.review.com](http://www.review.com).

## Money for Graduate Study or Travel Abroad

Another great means to go overseas is through scholarships, fellowships and grants. The following is a list of CC-supported opportunities to receive funding for international study and travel. **(Please note that deadlines may be outdated.** Contact the faculty advisor for current deadline information.)

*The Marshall Scholarship* - For graduate study in the United Kingdom

**Deadline:** September 23, 2006

**Contact:** Mark Wilson, Olin 474

<http://www.marshallscholarship.org/>

*The Thomas J. Watson Foundation Fellowship* – For a “Wanderjahr” year abroad pursuing a project of your own devising

**Deadline:** September 16, 2006

**Contact:** Esther Redmount, Palmer 110

<http://www.watsonfellowship.org/>

*Rhodes Scholarship* – Funds two years of post-bachelor study at Oxford University in England

**Deadline:** Contact Professor, no later than October 6

**Contact:** Walt Hecox, Armstrong 253

<http://www.rhodesscholar.org/>

*Fulbright Program Grants*- For graduate study abroad

**Deadline:** October 8, 2006

**Contact:** Dick Koc, Armstrong 360

<http://www.iie.org/fulbright/>

*The Henry Luce Foundation Scholarship*- For a year in Asia in a career-related activity

**Deadline:** Contact Professor, October 15, 2006

**Contact:** Tamara Bentley, Packard 203

<http://www.hluce.org>

*The Harry Truman Scholarship Foundation*– Graduate study grant for juniors intending to pursue a career in government or public service

**Approx. Deadline:** Nomination package received by November 2006

**Contact:** Dan Johnson, Palmer 215

<http://www.truman.gov/>

*The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*- For a 6-month internship at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington

**Deadline:** December 15, 2006

**Contact:** John Gould, Palmer 25B

<http://www.ceip.org/>

*Beinecke Brothers Memorial Scholarship* – For juniors interested in graduate school in the humanities and social sciences

**Deadline:** February 1, 2006

**Contact:** Jonathan Lee, Armstrong 138

<http://scholarships.berkeley.edu/beinecke.html>

*Humanity in Action* – Fellowship program open to sophomores, juniors and seniors interested in human rights issues in Denmark, the Netherlands and the U.S.

**Deadline:** February 11, 2006

**Contact:** Sandra Wong, Palmer 130

<http://www.humanityinaction.org>

*Rotary Foundation* – Scholarship for world peace and understanding. Awards given for two-year Master's Degree program in academic pursuits specifically related to peace initiatives.

**Deadline:** Contact Professor

**Contact:** Corinne Scheiner, Armstrong 239A

[www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

## Study Abroad and your Résumé

Regardless of what you do, international experience can greatly enhance your résumé. Intercultural competence is increasingly appealing to potential employers and schools. To include study abroad on your résumé, think about the skills you gained and what you learned while abroad. Did you become proficient in a language? Did you gain research experience by conducting an independent study project? Have you become well versed in some aspect of your host country's culture? Remember that *you* must make the connection between the experiences you had and the actual skills you gained – it won't always be obvious to an employer.

The staff in the Career Center can help you articulate your newly acquired intercultural skills for inclusion on your résumé. Here is an example:

**EXAMPLE :** You can include your study abroad experience as part of your education, including those skills relevant to your academic experience.

### **Education**

The Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO May 2004

Bachelor of Arts. Major in Political Science. Minor in Cinema Studies. G.P.A. 3.6

Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands September –December 2002

Completed course work on European economics and history.

Developed proficiency in Dutch

Examined current election trends and presented report to City Council.

Wondering what other skills students gain while studying abroad? Some other possible outcomes of international experience may include:

### **SKILLS**

- Establish rapport quickly
- Function with a high level of ambiguity
- Achieve goals despite obstacles
- Take initiative and take risks
- Time management skills
- Accept responsibility
- Communicate despite barriers
- Learn quickly
- Handle difficult situations
- Handle stress
- Adapt to new environments
- Learn through listening and observing

### **QUALITIES**

- Self-reliance
- High energy level/enthusiasm
- Appreciation of diversity
- Perseverance
- Flexibility
- Tolerance/open mindedness
- Assertiveness
- Inquisitiveness
- Self-confidence
- Self-knowledge
- Independence

# Go Abroad Again!

There are many other ways to go abroad after you have graduated. Even on a tight budget, work, volunteer and independent study opportunities are readily available to you. Take advantage of them!

## **Short-Term Work Abroad**

Short-term work abroad (less than one year; typically a summer) usually involves working in an unskilled job, where you can earn enough to cover your food, lodging, and day-to-day living expenses. This type of job probably will not pay enough to cover air transportation; but, if you are lucky, it may help provide some extra money for travel after you leave your job. Short-term work experiences include positions such as “au pairs” (nannies), farm workers, typists, waitpersons, and youth camp leaders. If you are a full-time student or a recent graduate (within the past six months), the work abroad program through the Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE) is one of the easiest ways for you to secure legal employment overseas.

Through CIEE, you can cut through some red tape and obtain documentation that allows you to work from four to seven months in another country. No special skills are required, but you must speak the language of the country. CIEE does not find employment for you, but if you’re resourceful and willing to be flexible in the type of job that you do, you should be able to find a position within a week or two. CIEE’s publication *Student Travels* is a good place to start your research. That, and other publications useful for finding short-term work abroad programs are available at the Office of Study Abroad.

## **Volunteer Abroad**

Restoration projects, literacy campaigns and teaching are just a few examples of the many different volunteer programs abroad. Some programs charge a fee and provide services such as insurance coverage, meals, and even housing. Some provide free room and board in exchange for your work, and others even pay a small stipend. Volunteer work opportunities may range from a few weeks long to two or three years in duration. Volunteer work abroad is often service oriented and can provide you with a mini-Peace Corps experience. If you’re interested in development work, want to meet other foreigners and host nationals, and don’t mind rudimentary living conditions, you may want to consider this type of program.

One common volunteer option is participation in a work camp. Work camps consist of groups of people from different parts of the world who are involved in community projects in areas like health care, education, environmental conservation, construction of low-cost housing, or restoration of historic sites. There are usually no special requirements for participation, other than a willingness to work. A fee may or may not be charged. In many instances, time is set aside for participants to engage in cultural activities, group discussions, or field trips. Work camp experiences are generally short term and during the summer months.

Recently, the Office of Study Abroad has worked in conjunction with the Center for Service and Learning to compile a list of several reputable resources for volunteering abroad. Please see us for more information about these programs and other non-paid internships and traineeships abroad.

## **Teach Abroad**

While teaching abroad is different in many ways from other overseas experiences, it too can be a tremendous learning experience. First and foremost, it is important to approach the experience with *teaching*, not travel, as your primary focus. It is an exciting opportunity to educate. While teaching abroad, your responsibility to your position and to your students is imperative.

With that in mind, there are several kinds of teaching programs to consider. You can choose to work through a private, for-profit business or a non-profit organization. You can teach in a variety of subjects, from English to agriculture. It is important to remember that while your experience teaching abroad will probably not be a profit-making venture, the non-monetary benefits you reap can be extraordinary. A few programs to consider:

### **The JET Program**

The JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program seeks to enhance internationalization in Japan through the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and foreign countries. It focuses on creating ties between Japanese and JET participants and is run by local governments. Most participants are assistant language teachers and engage in language instruction under the guidance of teachers' consultants or Japanese teachers of foreign languages. To apply, contact the Japanese Embassy or Consulate-General closest to you at 1-800-INFO-JET. The Washington DC office is the Embassy of Japan, JET Office, 209-238-6772. You may also access the JET Program website at: [www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/jet/index.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/jet/index.html).

### **WorldTeach, Inc.**

WorldTeach is a non-profit organization administered by Harvard University that sends volunteers overseas to teach in developing countries. Subject areas vary from English to environmental education. While each participant must pay airfare and program start-up fees, the program subsidizes your expenses while you are working, and also provides some helpful fundraising suggestions. You can easily find out more information and even apply through the WorldTeach website at [www.worldteach.org](http://www.worldteach.org).

## **Other International Jobs**

Perhaps you want to do more than simply work abroad for a short time; maybe you are interested in pursuing something more permanent. Here are several suggestions for getting started on the path to a successful international career:

- ***The Colorado College Career Center***  
The Career Center has an “International Job Search” packet that helps you do a skills assessment and gives advice about how to gain the experience necessary to obtain a job abroad or add an international component to your future career plans. They also have a listing of CC alumni working internationally whom you may contact, as well as several international job reference books.
- ***Transitions Abroad***  
This site has lots of information and resources for those interested in living, working or volunteering abroad. Be sure to check out their link to “Worldwide Portals for International Careers.” [www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com).
- ***University of Michigan International Center***  
You can find a wealth of information from the University of Michigan’s International Center at [www.umich.edu/~icenter/swt/work/](http://www.umich.edu/~icenter/swt/work/). They have information on work-abroad programs, teaching abroad with or without a certificate, as well as links to region-specific work opportunities.
- ***JobsAbroad.Com***  
This website contains a searchable directory of employment opportunities around the world. It also contains links to information on internships, volunteer opportunities and teaching programs abroad. [www.jobsabroad.com](http://www.jobsabroad.com)
- ***Enlace***  
Maintained by the University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Latin American Studies, **Enlace** is the Electronic Network for Latin American Careers and Employment. You can check it out at [www.lanic.utexas.edu/enlace/index.html](http://www.lanic.utexas.edu/enlace/index.html).
- ***Peace Corps***  
Even if you’re not interested in the Peace Corps, you may wish to check out their information for returned volunteers, which includes advice on conducting a job search, as well as links to government agencies and job listing sites. [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov).

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## Conclusion

We wish you luck in making your re-entry transitions and hope this guide helps you reflect on your experience abroad and continue your international journey and exploration, whether it be through activities here or through further travels abroad. If you have questions or ideas, please don’t hesitate to stop by the Office of Study Abroad. We are located on the second floor of Worner Center (#233), and are open from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Again, welcome back to CC!