

To the end of the world and back: A primer for international study trips

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ABSTRACT

Global engagement is a move by many colleges and universities to broaden the perspectives of their students. Often, this is manifest in the form of short or longer-term study abroad trips. There is considerable excitement associated with traveling abroad on the part of both the students and the faculty sponsors, but one thing that must be understood – it is no vacation. From a pedagogical perspective there are a plethora of advantages to encouraging global engagement, but from a practical perspective there are a number of pitfalls to (try to) avoid. There is an enormous amount of detailed planning that must precede a trip of this nature, often over a period of many months. The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance to faculty members planning a study abroad trip and offer several shared experiences from a number of these endeavors.

Keywords: study abroad, trip planning, global engagement

Publisher's Note: This paper is based solely on the authors' familiarity with international study trips. The content is original and experiential. It is not based on empirical research or previously published studies and should be considered thusly.

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INTRODUCTION

A growing number of colleges and universities have begun including, as a strategic initiative, an emphasis on “global engagement,” generally through an introduction or expansion of “study abroad” opportunities for their students. Many colleges describe these opportunities in their marketing brochures, and the question of study abroad opportunities is one of the more frequently asked by prospective students and their parents. A recognition of the importance of students gaining a personal understanding of the much larger world beyond the United States has provided the impetus for this movement. While some colleges have offered this component for many years, and some even require their students to engage in some type of global experience, others are just beginning to explore what is meant by their global engagement initiative. This paper was written for those in the latter category, and perhaps even some in the former category, to offer a window into the planning and execution of a successful study abroad experience.

Each of the authors has personally led a number of diverse international study trips for undergraduate and graduate students. Recent destinations include Argentina, Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, China, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Morocco, Peru, Panama, and Spain. One commonality shared by each of the authors was the challenges of planning and conducting their first trip. The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance for other faculty members interested in leading their first (and hopefully subsequent) international study trip, share lessons learned, and essentially offer a primer on conducting international study trips. While there are a number of agencies which offer a complete “study abroad experience in a nicely wrapped package”, this paper focuses more on the faculty member who is making their own arrangements. Agencies can offer several benefits, but you will end up paying a relatively expensive consulting fee, which is generally on a per-person basis. This will be addressed more in the section on budgeting.

The organization of this paper is as follows. The first section provides an outline of considerations during the planning phase, which is critical to conducting a successful trip, in the form of a step-by-step primer. The second section will share a series of anecdotal incidents which have provided the authors with invaluable lessons they have used in subsequent trips, and ones in which hopefully the reader will benefit (without having to experience the actual incident!). It is our hope that our experiences can be used to guide the reader in conducting their own highly-valuable, event-filled, trip – not only for the benefit of the student travelers, but also the faculty member(s) themselves.

FAILING TO PLAN IS A GUARANTEE TO FAIL

Failing to take into consideration all the possible scenarios and events that might go wrong in the classroom just down the hall from your office can be an inconvenience. For example, forgetting your dry-erase markers or graded homework assignments might result in the need for an unplanned trip back to your office. However, the stakes go up considerably when your “classroom” is in a non-English-speaking foreign country thousands of miles away from your office, and rather than dry-erase markers you, or a student, has misplaced their passport or become injured to the point they need medical attention. If you have the opportunity to plan an international trip for yourself or your family, you know it can be quite involved, but there are many resources available for tourists. Planning for yourself and a dozen students who not only

are highly dependent on your knowledge and preparation but who also may be more, or possibly less, responsive to your instructions than your own children, is considerably more involved. Additionally, regional accreditation agencies, e.g., the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) are taking a much more active stance on ensuring proper learning outcomes are designed into, and subsequently measured for, international study trips. These are just a few of the issues to consider during the planning phase.

Purpose

The first question to answer is why you are even considering an international study trip. Is it a standard part of the curriculum, is it a tradition that has now fallen to you, is it a newly-implemented strategic initiative that your university will be recognized as providing “global leadership”, or has it simply been a long term desire to travel abroad and share the experience with a group of students. It might be that you have personally traveled in several places in the world, and believe that a particular destination would be academically advantageous to students. Answering this question will also depend on your academic area, and whether you are wanting the trip to be entirely cultural in nature, part cultural and part academic (the ratio between these can vary considerably), and whether you want to include a service-learning component as part of your trip. Regardless, you will need to identify the purpose early on for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that most likely more than one administrator will ask. In addition, you will also most likely be asked to document either your plan, or possibly even proposal for approval, and detailing the purpose of the trip will be required. Again, keep in mind your regional accrediting organization has, or soon will have, specific documentation governing learning outcomes for international study trips. These outcomes should be delineated in this section, or may need to be stated more obviously in a separate section. A proposed syllabus should also be initiated, but cannot be completed until you have progressed throughout the entire planning phase.

Destination

The world is at your fingertips – to a certain extent. The choice of destination for your international trip could be left up to you, could be dictated by a committee or university administrator, or could be decided by the nature of the course being served through the international trip, e.g., a trip to a German-speaking destination for a German language course. In the event that you, the faculty member, have input into the decision, you could begin by considering a destination in which you are particularly interested (but which will also provide the requisite experience for the students). One obvious benefit is that you will be better motivated when the planning stretches into hours, days, weeks, and months. The more interested you are in the destination, the more inclined you will be to delve into all the possibilities for the trip, just as you would with any course that you greatly enjoy teaching.

Regardless of how the destination is determined, two things must be kept in mind at all times – health and safety. It is imperative to study the Center for Disease Control’s website, which has a very comprehensive database of each country, specifying recommended or required immunizations, and other health considerations. By going to <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>, you are able to select your destination(s), and peruse the latest health information for that area. For example, if you were interested in taking a

group of students to Belize, you could scroll down on this page, select “Belize” (countries are listed in alphabetical order), and determine recommended immunizations include Hepatitis A, Typhoid, and possibly Rabies, Hepatitis B, and Malaria. Currently, an immunization for Yellow Fever is not needed for travel in Belize. This website also provides very useful checklists for staying healthy, as well as for health items you might want to bring with you. These checklists, and all health information, should be provided to the students and all other travelers well in advance of the date of the trip. Immunizations are often available at national drug stores and pharmacies, as well as doctor’s offices, although not all carry the same immunizations, particularly if it is not common.

With regard to safety, it is imperative that you refer to the U.S. State Department website (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html) prior to deciding on a destination to examine potential travel alerts and warnings. Obviously, you should also regularly check any news stories regarding the destination, as in today’s world, things can change rapidly. Before leaving, contact the State Department through their Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP - <https://step.state.gov/step/>) to provide a list of names of those traveling, and in-country contact information.

Time Frame

The summer break tends to be a popular time to schedule study abroad trips. During the summer months your group will most likely have greater flexibility in your travel dates, and have greater freedom to extend trips to three, four, or more weeks. However, summer travel also tends to be more expensive, and you will find yourself with a much larger contingent of tourists than if you considered other seasons. Travel to hot climates in the summer, or cold climates in the winter, may not be advisable. There are destinations, such as Quito, Ecuador, which are pleasant all year round. Quito is the only spot on the equator that is not tropical, and its high temperature each day is in the 60s.

Many colleges and universities complete their fall semesters 1 ½ -2 weeks before the December holidays, and this could be an excellent time to travel, particularly to regions that are very warm during the summer months. Alternatively, fall or spring breaks, or the days following the end of the spring semester, might work better into students’, and sponsors’ schedules. Certainly consider the weather most likely to be found at your destination during the time frame you are considering. You don’t want to have students write on every page of their travel journals, “it rained again today!”

Budget

As mentioned in the introduction, you have choice with respect to who plans your international trip. There are several agencies throughout the world who plan trips, have complete itineraries readily available, have contacts at local organizations, and can make your life much simpler by handling all the details. However, the tradeoff is that they will charge you a considerable fee, per student, for this service. In our experience evaluating various agencies, the average cost can be \$500-800, per student, for an agency to arrange your trip. While there are many colleges and universities who have opted for this approach, we felt the money was better spent on perhaps a couple of extra days on the trip, additional excursions, or simply reflected in a lower cost to the student by not having to incur this fee.

Assuming you have opted to continue planning your own trip, the choice of destination and time frame are the key drivers of your budget. For example, a ten-day study abroad trip to China will be considerably more expensive than a three-week study abroad trip to Costa Rica, due primarily to the two most costly components – airfare and lodging. Before firmly deciding on a destination, it is time to do some research on how much the components of the trip will cost.

Airfare

Use the various travel planning websites (e.g., Kayak, Expedia, Travelocity) and start running travel scenarios. With a large group, it may be very difficult to book flights through a third-party website, and you may be required to make air reservations through a travel agent or directly via the airline. Additionally, you may be able to obtain group rates using these options. If you have date flexibility, check flights 1-3 days around your most likely travel dates. It is possible to find significant cost differences. Also, if you are located in an area that is reasonably well-served by more than one airport, be sure to consider each airport. We have found several hundred dollars differences among airports within 100 miles. Also, consider smaller, local airports as a starting (and ending) point. Often there is relatively little cost difference from larger airports, the small airports offer free or much less expensive parking than larger airports, and it is much easier to “group up” and get through ticketing and security than at larger airports.

Lodging

Your airfare could easily be half of your total cost, but once you have some options, the next thing you need to consider is lodging, as most likely this will be the second most costly component of your trip. For most destinations you will have a multitude of options. One suggestion is to begin narrowing down the list based on criteria most important to you, such as: serves free (full) breakfast on-site, free wifi/internet access, and the proximity to either local transportation (e.g., bus stop, subway station) or is near where you will be spending the majority of your time. Next, identify lodging which offers twin or triple rooms – it is generally not overly comfortable, and can be awkward, for two students to share a double or even queen-size bed. In most situations you will be assigning students two or three to a room, as accommodations allow, and separate beds are preferable. At this point, you will probably have identified several international chains, as well as local lodging. Personally, if you take a group of students to a foreign country and stay at a Holiday Inn, they are not getting the full experience. We have had good successes with local hotels and bed and breakfasts, for example, the Hotel Umland in Munich. And, as always, check the ratings and read the reviews. Plan early – the most desirable places to stay are the ones which fill up early. Of course, this means you will also need to know the number of travelers, the number of rooms, the dates of check-in/check-out, etc., as early as possible.

Ground Transportation.

Ground transportation, meals, and excursions/site-seeing will be the next most costly components of your trip. The most popular destinations in Europe have efficient and easily assessable public transportation, and weekly or daily travel passes which can be purchased through the internet or in person after your arrival. The London Pass combined with the London

Travelcard, for example, provides access to all public transportation in London, as well as discounts or free entrance into dozens of attractions and sites. Other countries, however, may not have the same efficiencies with regard to public transportation. Private charter busses or vans are a good option, are reasonably priced, and make it much easier to keep up with everyone in your group. It can be mind-racking to try to count heads as you are trying to maintain your balance on a crowded city bus. You might also need to plan for longer-route transportation, if you are traveling to more than one city or country. Short flights on local airlines can be reasonably priced, but can also be unreliable. Train travel is very popular in many parts of the world, is relatively comfortable, comparatively priced, and likely an experience the students will not have had if their travel experiences have only been within the United States. In certain countries it is also important to determine what speed of train to use, as well as class of compartments. The use of overnight trains may save a night of hotel expense, but you need to have real knowledge of the overnight accommodations on a train. These can range from a hard table-like bed to reclining chairs to actual padded beds.

Food

With regard to meals, lunches often need to be quick, and sandwich shops and chains (national or international) are easy to get in and out. We often don't budget lunches, and instruct the students that these will need to be on their own, simply because of the challenges with trying to herd (and pay for) a group through this type of eatery. Dinner, on the other hand, can and should be a relaxing affair at a well-recommended restaurant where your group can sit together and reflect on their day, and plans for the next day. Certainly you will want to sample as much of the local cuisine as possible, but you will generally be able to find a variety of types of food, and as your students will probably also have a variety of tastes and preferences, it would be a good idea to not subject your group to the same type of food every evening of your trip. One international trip one of the authors led fell over July 4th, and regardless of whether the group was feeling nostalgic for the U.S of A., they went to the Hard Rock Café for dinner – specifically, cheeseburgers and ice cream sundaes! As it turned out, there was also an American rock music concert scheduled that evening, and U.S. flags hanging from the ceiling. As with lodging, you can research restaurant recommendations through the web, and you should make definite plans for at least your first evening. A restaurant within just a few blocks of where you are staying is best. This provides an opportunity to stretch your legs and take a short walk after many hours of sitting on a plane. You can plan each dinner ahead of your trip, or wait and ask for recommendations from the staff where you are staying. Regardless, determine how much you are budgeting, per person, for dinner. If you anticipate two or three more expensive dinners, taper these with lesser expensive, but still highly recommended restaurants. For longer trips, be sure to blend in periodic “like home” meals, even if only McDonald's. This helps reduce anxiety over constant culture shock simply due to food.

Excursions

Excursions and site-seeing are among the most important components of an international study abroad trip. Depending on your destination, you will likely have many options available, which could fall into a variety of genres, such as history and archeology, and can range from low-impact/minimal physical requirements, to high-impact/significant physical requirements.

You will need to know your abilities and those of your students, and marry this with the purpose and goals of the trip. At many destinations, local guides are available for walking tours and bicycling excursions, or organizations such as Viator offer a variety of pre-packaged tours. A walking or biking tour of your destination early during your trip will help acclimate the group, provide local history, and offer a “lay of the land.” Devote an entire day to a longer excursion or out of town tour. Tour packages range from 4-6 hours, to 10 or more hours, or even over multiple days. The longer the tour, generally the higher the cost. As this might be the only time in the students’ (and your) life that you might visit a particular location, determine the “must sees/dos” as well as the “like-to see/dos”. Consider getting input from the students, also, as they will have a vested interest in what they experience on the trip. A suggestion, depending on the level of maturity of the students, is to include an “open day” when, as long as they stay in small groups and let you know what they are doing and where they are going, they can explore on their own. Some students might prefer to go shopping, others might book another tour, and others may spend the day sampling as much local cuisine as possible.

Budget Summary

The sections above have identified the primary components that will constitute the majority of the trip costs. As you complete the budget, add a small, e.g., 10% contingency. In most situations, the faculty sponsor’s trip costs are covered in the total trip fees charged to the students, and as such, add these costs to the total, and divide by the number of students anticipated to go on the trip. You will then need to consider this per diem, to determine if it is within a reasonable range, or if adjustments need to be made. As airfare and lodging are generally the most expensive components, this is where you could possibly save the most money. Perhaps a less expensive flight alternative is available – one in which the time is not as conducive or the layovers are longer. Perhaps less expensive lodging is also available only a block or two further from public transportation, but is still quite safe and comfortable. Keep in mind that the time spent in your hotel, other than sleeping, will be minimal, and you shouldn’t spend extra on unnecessary amenities.

Preparing the Students

Most likely, there will be some of your to-be student travelers who have traveled internationally. On occasion, you may even have a student who has visited – or even lived in – your planned destination. However, most often this will be the first “major” trip outside of the United States (not to include cruises to the Caribbean) for many of your students. The first thing they need to understand is that the world beyond the U.S. can be very different, particularly in less-developed countries. Pre-trip meetings should be mandatory. Topics to discuss can range from what to pack, to what to wear, to how to behave, to how to ask where is the bathroom. Additional discussions should be held regarding personal money, safety, and health. Certainly you will want to spend time exploring and gaining an understanding of the culture of your destination, including any easily overlooked faux pas such as hand motions, as well as you are planning on each day of the trip. Surprises (for the student, not the faculty member) are fine, such as the night we took a group to see *Les Misérables* at Queens Theatre in London, but the students should be aware of the general plan. On most trips, a dress code should apply, and students should be aware of which day casual dress is acceptable, and which day business formal

is appropriate. Make sure any questions the students have are answered, and expectations are known, understood, and agreed to. One of the final things to discuss is to make sure every student knows where and what time to meet on the day you depart, and to double and triple-check to make sure they have their passport (of which you should have printed copies, as well as PDF digital copies on a flash-drive and on your email or other web-accessible storage location).

LESSONS LEARNED (AND APPLIED ON THE NEXT TRIP!)

International trips offer many wonderful and interesting experiences. International trips which include leading groups of students also have the potential to create wonderful and interesting experiences, as well as nerve-wracking, stressful, never-before-encountered situations. What follows in this section are Lessons Learned from our various trips – lessons which we certainly applied on subsequent trips, and lessons which we hope you can learn from without actually have to experience!

Don't go to Madrid the week that they celebrate bull-fighting!

The real lesson is to make sure that you do your homework on scheduling when you go where. On one trip to Morocco, we were flying through Madrid. We had a long layover. And we had assigned seats on the flight out of Madrid. So we took a tour of the city. When we came back with three hours left before our flight to check in, we were told that there were not enough seats for all of us. After a lengthy discussion, we found out that they oversold the flight and decided to dump on us. And the next flight out was the next morning. As a trip leader there is no way that you are going to leave half of your group behind in a foreign country – especially when as soon as you arrive at your destination you are supposed to be taking a long van ride to another town. So we all stayed in Madrid. The next idea is to find hotels. Well in Madrid, during the week that they celebrate bull-fighting, you had better have made hotel reservations months and months ahead of time. There were NO rooms to be had – in the entire city – of any level of accommodation. Plan C: beg acquaintances, friends, and anyone else to please allow you to sleep on their couches and floors. And that is what we did. We knew two American families in Madrid. The men on our team slept in one house – on the floor. The women on our team slept in another house – in beds, on couches and on the floor.

This could happen in any city in any country during a holiday, a festival, or other special occasion. Know where you are going and when you plan to be there and make sure that there are no conflicts with other events – even if you do not plan on staying there. Even if we had had hotel reservations, there is no way that I would have released 12 students into Madrid with the rabid crowds that littered every street. Don't go to Madrid the week that they celebrate bull-fighting!

Not all students like sleeping in former jail cells.

You really need to know your accommodations – and your students – when determining accommodations in foreign countries. For example, not every student can appreciate how interesting it could be to sleep in a room with a jail cell door – a door that clicks when closed as if you are being locked away for the night, or longer. And not every student really can get over

the fact that the room in which they are sleeping used to be one of the “guest rooms” when the establishment was a brothel. All aspects of history go out the window at that point.

And not all females really appreciate sleeping four to a room – even if they have four beds. It has something to do with one mirror, one toilet, one sink and – the worst – one plug for hairdryers, curling irons, curlers, cell phone chargers, electric alarm clocks (yes, we did tell them no electric alarm clocks!) and all other things needing a plug. Not all students like sleeping in former jail cells.

Can you believe that some people CANNOT eat chicken off the bone?

To be a little more specific, do you know that some people CANNOT pick the chicken off of the bone and eat it? They can eat it if someone else picks it off the bone. But they cannot pick it off the bone. And how can someone not eat Moroccan tagines for every meal for two weeks? I would love to do that. As it is there are NO Moroccan tagines where I live. Of course I don't live in Morocco, but I could have tagines every day in Morocco! But even having different versions did not make a difference to the students. Why would someone CHOOSE McDonald's over local cuisine in Morocco or Peru or China? Maybe everyone doesn't love Moroccan tagines and Peruvian cuy (guinea pig) and every form of Chinese fungi known to humankind as much as I do. And maybe I need to remember that when deciding where I am going to take students every day and night to eat. Can you believe that certain people CANNOT eat chicken off the bone?

Yes, you do have to take your meds. And no, you cannot drink the water.

Students must think faculty members are clueless, particularly when their faculty sponsor on an international trip gives them specific instructions for their benefit and health. Cusco, Peru, is what you would probably consider high altitude. If you fly there, you can either take hours or days to acclimate or you can get prescription medication to help you acclimate. If you immediately begin your itinerary when you arrive, for example working at an orphanage trying to keep up with very mobile children, you do not have hours or days to acclimate. So get your medications. And take your medications as prescribed. And take them for the amount of time prescribed. However, if you would really like to spend two days in your hotel bed with cramps, nausea, and headaches, stop taking your meds the first day because you feel great. And then as you lay there start wondering why you felt so good when you were taking your meds.

Also, please keep in mind that just because you do not swallow that contaminated water that your instructor told you to not drink, you can still get sick from the bad water. There is such a thing as absorption. And no, toothpaste is not adequate to kill all amoeba. Do not believe your roommate. Please believe your instructor.

Faculty leading study abroad trips must know the health-related issues in the countries and regions to where they travel. And they must communicate everything to their students. And students must sign those waivers of liability that state that they have read everything the instructor has given them and that the university requires, even though we know they do not read them. Yes, you do have to take your meds. And no, you cannot drink the water.

Don't pull your cellphone out while on the subway.

No matter how much you warn students about pickpockets, poverty, and some people's desperation in developing countries, it doesn't hit home until something gets stolen. I frequently use public transportation with my students. It gives them insight and exposure to the way people live in the country. It's also a new experience for some students. On a recent trip, I had students who had never flown in an airplane, never been in a taxi, never taken a train ride, and never been on a subway. For a student coming from a place where people will pick up your phone in the movie theater or restaurant when you drop it and hand it back to you, pickpocketing is difficult to fathom. I try to prepare students for the subway by telling them not to display any valuables such as cellphones, watches, or necklaces while in the subway. If students have these, I then explain how they should stow any valuables deep in front pockets or in the center area of a backpack, not in their back pockets or an outside pouch of a backpack or bag. I also show them how to hold their backpack in front of them rather than putting it on their shoulder or back. So what did a student do? He decided to play with his cellphone while waiting on the subway platform. Then, when the train came, he stuck the phone in his back pocket and got on. By the time we went two stops the phone was gone. "It was habit" he said. "I didn't think about it." Remind your students to think about it. Don't pull out your cellphone on the subway or stick it in your back pocket.

Where in the world is (fill in the name of the student)!

Same student. Twice in the same week. Not where they were supposed to be when they were supposed to be there. The first time was on a tour out of London to Bath, England. Although thirty-four people heard the bus driver specifically state what time and where to meet, one did not. And although the students were required to stay in groups of 2-3 minimum, one did not. And when the time came to load up and head to the next destination, that one student was nowhere to be found. As the minutes ticked by, and as various people tried repeatedly to text him, and as I got out of the bus and started walking around the block to see if I could see him, and as the bus driver is getting more and more upset, I started making plans to stay in Bath, wait for the student, and ride the train back to London while the other faculty sponsor continued with the rest of the group. Finally, after 25 minutes, the student comes walking up, convinced that he had heard the tour guide say to meet at another location.

Four days later. Day trip to Paris. The rest of the group knew to meet at the Louvre at 5:30 pm to catch the train back to London. This same student did not. He thought he was supposed to meet at the Eiffel Tower. However, this time he was with a "travel buddy" but somehow had convinced him the Eiffel Tower was where they were supposed to be. Again, frantic unanswered texting, and a decision made to go with the group to the train station, just in case the two wayward students had gone directly there, and so everyone else wouldn't miss the train on which we already had reservations. We arrived at the train station – no sign of the wayward students. I had the other faculty sponsor go ahead and board with the rest of the students while I sat on a platform overlooking the entrances – no possible way the students could get past me. Or so I thought. Three minutes before the train pulled out, I received a text from one of the other students saying that the two missing were actually already on the train. Rushing to security, I was told I wouldn't have time to board, and they wouldn't let me through.

Thoughts of spending the night alone in a Paris train station, alternating with thoughts of how this situation was going to *seriously* affect the students' grade, were going through my mind. Fortunately, I was able to exchange my ticket for a later train, which actually turned out rather nice. I ended up in a first-class, private suite and enjoyed the first quiet time I had had the entire trip.

The moral: Have a cell phone and keep it on! After that, all students were required to have an international texting plan, to provide me with their phone number, and have it on at all times. This lesson learned and later applied has shown itself to be very useful, such as when two students got on the tram going east in Munich, when the rest of us went (correctly) west, or had to split up and take multiple taxis in Lima.

Students won't bring everything you put on the packing list!

International trips are full of surprises. Trip leaders need to be flexible when things come up. Students get caught in customs or immigration, visits get cancelled, flights and trains get delayed, and then there's the weather. On a trip to Argentina there was a thunderstorm the day I had scheduled outdoor events and activities. Not wanting to waste the day in the hotel, I decided we would visit some museums instead. However, we were moving around the city using public transportation. This meant we needed to walk a few blocks from the hotel to the subway and then nine or ten blocks from a subway stop to the museum. I had an umbrella. I had listed "umbrella" on the packing list for the trip. Did the students have umbrellas? No. About a third of the group did not have an umbrella. Undaunted by their unpreparedness, I decided we would go anyway. By the time we got to the Evita Museum, half the students were soaked (poor-quality umbrellas), most were cold, and everyone could have used dry clothes and a warm drink. When we walked into the museum water-logged and dripping water everywhere, the museum staff weren't exactly pleased. They quickly ushered us into a side room where we could "wait a while to dry off." I know the students didn't get much out of that museum visit. They were wet, cold, and miserable. In hindsight, spending a few hours in the hotel that morning until the storm had passed would have been a better option. And, just because you put something on the packing list doesn't mean students will bring it.

So how was that vacation to Somalia?

First, for full disclosure purposes, none of us has taken students to Somalia. Second, for all of our administrators, none of us has taken students on vacation either! But how many friends, colleagues, administrators and students have asked, "How was your student vacation trip to Scotland?" Or. "How was your vacation to Thailand? How many students did you take?" For anyone who has ever taken students on a short-term, study abroad trip, the trips are the furthest thing from vacations. One might go to exotic locations, historical locations and beautiful locations. But trips there are not vacations if you are accompanied by students. It might be fair to question the academic integrity of trips for which student learning outcomes are not clear and/or not met. But none of them are vacations. You are not the curfew police on vacations. You are not the clothing constable on vacations. You are not the herder of cats on vacations. You are not the International Monetary Fund on vacations. No, trips with students are not vacations, no matter where your destination. They are work. You are responsible for the safety and well-being of other people's children. You have a commitment to the students to

provide them with an educational-based global experience for which they have committed considerable amounts of money. And there is the honor to the profession at stake. So don't mess up! So if someone asks about your recent "vacation" with 18 students, be prepared to set them straight.

CONCLUSION

Study abroad trips, properly planned, stringently organized, with rules and expectations set and students held accountable, are wonderful experiences. Not just for the students, but the faculty, as well. Certainly sharing experiences of a lifetime are valuable, but seldom do faculty have the opportunity to get to know students as is the case on an international trip. We certainly encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities when they present themselves, or take the initiative and pursue the development of a study abroad trip or program, if one is not already available at your college. However, as we have attempted to outline above, these trips are not for the faint of heart nor for the casual, laissez-faire leader. There is considerable effort that must go into the planning and successful execution of a trip. We hope these suggestions and "lessons learned" will benefit you in your future travels.

