



OFFICE OF STUDY ABROAD

# AIRPORT NAVIGATION GUIDE

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THE INS AND OUTS OF FINDING YOUR  
WAY THROUGH AN AIRPORT

**Newcomb-Tulane College**

Study Abroad



# BOOKING TICKETS

## AIRPORT AND CITY

Double check that it is the correct airport and city, many booking websites can be confusing; If the airport isn't specifically important, it may be enticing to go for the cheapest airport option, but keep in mind that this may be far away from the city, requiring extra transit.

## LAYOVER TIMES

Make sure your layover hours are appropriate for your schedule, and only book a stopover if it's enough time to actually leave the airport. For the latter, stick to destinations with efficient ground transit that are close to their airport, like Copenhagen or Munich International. If an overnight layover will save you a lot of money, make sure nearby hotels or nap pods at the airport aren't going to cost you more than the difference.

## FLIGHT TIME

Flights labeled as direct may still have stops along the way, so check the actual travel time, as you want as short a travel time as possible.

## CHEAPER OPTIONS

For the cheaper options be aware that some amenities involved such as checked bags and assigned seating may not be part of the deal

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

If it is within your budget, get travel insurance. This is particularly important with Covid-19 but also during hurricane/monsoon seasons and snow months. Any intense weather could disrupt or cancel flights.

- Consider the risks involved with your flight and whether or not you'd be willing to lose out on the reservation if an emergency arises. Things to note include monsoon and hurricane seasons, political issues like labor strikes or visa issues, and health or personal issues.
- Some credit cards have built in travel insurance, so it is worth reading your cards TOS to see if that is built in or not. This varies by card and bank.

# PACKING

## IMPORTANT ITEMS TO BRING

- **Passport:** must be valid for 6 months after end of travel, so make sure it is up to date. If you travel within 6 months of your passport expiring, you could have issues with security or customs upon leaving or reentering the country
- **Visa:** if you are going to a country that requires a visa make sure that it is valid and completed by your travel dates. Each country has a different visa process, and individual study abroad programs will explain how the visa works for their particular program. Again, each country's rules are different. Some visas may take months to be approved, while other locations may not even need an extensive visa. For more complicated visa processes, the program may require you to fill out a form about past travels among other things, or they may take your passport for a while to physically place the visa where it needs to go. Some require additional passport pictures. Regardless of what the specific procedures are, it is important to follow what the program says needs to be done for the visa in a timely fashion.
- **Emergency information:** in case your flight is delayed or you have to contact somebody regarding your travel, have a list of emergency numbers handy for your program, as well as the study abroad office in case of emergencies.
- **Arrival information:** who to call when you arrive, where your meeting location is, who you are meeting and how to get there is all generally set out in a document sent by the individual study abroad programs.
- **Flight info:** Bring your flight information, either digitally or in paper if you are worried about technology losing power. This includes confirmation number for when you get your boarding ticket either digitally beforehand or in paper at the airport





# PACKING

## IMPORTANT ITEMS TO BRING

- **Storage:** items like your wallet, passport, phone, travel documents need to be properly stored so that they cannot be lost or stolen, but are still accessible. Either a purse that you watch carefully, or something like a passport pouch is a good idea, as you can keep your eye on it at all times. Backpacks are iffy, as you generally carry them behind you and someone could easily reach in and grab your valuables.
- **Money matters:** First and foremost you should notify your credit cards and bank that you will be traveling out of the country prior to your travels, so that they do not flag any payments and freeze your accounts, leaving you without access to money.
  - Money before travel: It is generally a good idea to have some money in the currency of your destination while you travel in case you need some for the taxi fare, or a hotel or some other issue comes up. You can easily exchange money at your local bank or credit union before traveling.
  - Exchanging while abroad: There are ATMs and Exchange kiosks where you can exchange money in foreign countries. These have exchange fees, but the fee ranges and it is generally cheaper to use your debit card at an ATM to exchange money, or to simply pay for things using a credit card directly. If it is a cash based society, debit cards/ATMs are your best bet.
  - You should also check with your credit and debit cards to see if there are international fees for in-airport purchases. Also, some credit cards have generally higher fees than others in terms of foreign transactions.

# PACKING

## WHAT TO PACK

- **Carry on:** daily medications, chargers for devices, any documents that may be necessary, wallet, passport, entertainment (book, magazine, game etc.) change of underwear in case luggage gets lost, tooth brush and facial wipes, snack, pain reliever in case of discomfort and headache, For more carry on travel tips look [here](#):
  - Pack a few snacks in your carryon in case you arrive at an airport early morning or late at night that may not have dining options other than vending machine due to the inconvenient time.
  - Make sure you're aware of the airline's weight and size allowances to avoid exorbitant overage fees.
  - Bring an empty water bottle that you can refill after security and before your flight. Airplanes are very dehydrating, and the water offered on flight is generally in small amounts.
- **Restrictions:** make sure to do a quick check to see if the country you are traveling to and any you may be stopping through have any specific restrictions on what is allowed to be brought in to the country. For example, some countries may not allow certain medications such as anti-anxiety medications, and may be as extreme as Singapore which does not allow gum (except dental and medicated gum) to be brought into the country. Do a quick google search to find out what is restricted by country just to be sure.
- **Drugs and narcotics:** you should not attempt in ANY way to smuggle drugs of any kind with you to your study abroad destination. Tulane will NOT help you if you are arrested abroad, as this is your issue with your host country. For example, in Japan you can be held for weeks without bail or explicit reason if you are caught with drugs. In Thailand, the punishment for bringing in any THC based substances is "imprisonment not exceeding 5 years and a fine not exceeding 100,000 Baht (~\$3k) for carrying across borders.
- There is a comprehensive guide of what is allowed in both carry on and packed luggage [here](#)



# ARRIVAL AND CHECK IN

- **Terminal:** Check which terminal your chosen airline is in, as larger airports have different terminals for different airlines, as well as domestic and international flights
- **When to arrive:** Generally the rule of thumb is to arrive to the airport 2 hours early in order to have plenty of time to check bags, get through security and find the gate, possibly even grab a bite to eat.
- Find the desk in the terminal that corresponds with your airline, and begin the check in process.

## CHECKING IN

- **Paper tickets are very rare these days.** You'll receive an itinerary and confirmation number by email. Within 24 hours of flight time, you can check in online to get seat assignments and receive a boarding pass which is required to pass through security and board the plane. You can print your boarding pass or save it to your mobile device. Alternatively, you can check in and get a paper boarding pass at the airport ticket counter or self-service kiosk. There are generally kiosks or agents available at each airline to help you through the process.
- **At the counter:** You will need to present your passport/identification as well as a confirmation number or email for the plane ticket(s).
  - **Have your passport scanned.**
  - **Receive your boarding passes\* and baggage claim card (do not lose your boarding pass!)**
  - **Weigh bags and hand over any checked luggage (carry-on luggage is subject to size limitations)**
- \*\*\*If you need to change planes and have booked flights on separate tickets, you will need to acquire your next boarding pass from the airline's transfer desk at the following airport! You may also need to collect your checked luggage.

## BAGGAGE DROP OFF

This generally happens at the same place as an in-person check in. If you have checked in online, there are signs to direct you to a desk for bag drop off. Once you have dropped your bags, follow the signs to the security checkpoint in order to pass through and find your departure gate.



# CHECK IN

## SECURITY

- Security checks to make sure that no one carries any illegal substances onto the plane. There are restrictions (as mentioned earlier in the “baggage drop off” section)
- Your carry on will pass through a scanner, and you will pass through a scanner as well. Here are some tips on how to pass through security more efficiently
  - Wear as little metal as possible; large metal jewelry, belt buckles etc. may set off the metal detector
  - Be sure to have your pockets empty; change, keys etc. will show up on the scanner and the security agent will have to conduct a pat down.
  - Wear socks and easily removable socks; You will have to take your shoes off at the security checkpoint and put them into a plastic bin for screening unless you are over age 75 or under the age of 12. Some exceptions are made, and some airports do not require you to take off your shoes. Look at signs and fellow travelers to see what your particular airport does
  - Put liquids and gels into a one-quart plastic bag. Generally all things that could be considered liquids must be placed together into a bag in your carry on
  - Prepare laptops and cameras for screening You will be asked to take your laptop out of its case unless it is in a TSA-approved laptop case or you have TSA PreCheck. Pack your camera carefully. If you are carrying undeveloped film, ask your screener to inspect it by hand. X-ray screening will damage undeveloped film, but it will not affect a digital camera's memory card.
  - Head coverings may be kept on, though if your head covering is too concealing, you will be asked to undergo a pat-down screening, which may or may not involve removal of your head covering. You may ask the screening official to conduct the pat-down and/or head covering removal in a screening area away from public view.
  - Each airport does security slightly differently, so be sure to pay attention to surroundings and see what others are doing for guidance
  - Here are other resources and tips for getting through security quickly and efficiently:
    - <https://www.tripsavvy.com/preparing-for-airport-security-2972587>
    - <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips/travel-checklist>
    - <https://www.eaglecreek.com/blog/8-expert-tsa-tips-get-through-airport-security-faster.html>



# IN THE TERMINAL

## FINDING YOUR GATE

- In many cases, your gate number will already be printed on your boarding pass. However, both the gate number and terminal can change, so it's important that you constantly check flight departure screens for updates.
- When navigating the airport, signs above will provide directions to your gate e.g. GATES 31-45 with a left arrow. With time to spare, grab something to eat and drink but remember:
  - Always find your gate first - the airport may be bigger than expected!
  - Check flight monitors regularly
  - Update your clock to the local time zone
  - Be at your gate for boarding time, NOT departure time!
  - Ask airport staff for directions if needed



## DUTY FREE

- **What is it?** If you buy something "duty free," it means you're not paying taxes on it in the country where you purchased the item. So if you buy French wine at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, you are not paying taxes on it in France. But it could still be subject to taxes when you cross the border back into the U.S. However, for U.S. residents, there's often an \$800 exemption, meaning you can spend \$800 outside the country (on French wine, say) and not have to pay "duty" in the U.S. even though you're bringing the wine across international borders.
- People often stop at duty free stores in the airport on their way home to grab last minute souvenirs or spend the last of their foreign currency. Be aware however, though it sounds like a much cheaper option than buying things outside of the airport, the savings are often not as much as you may think.
- If you purchased anything from duty-free and it is over the liquid requirements for carry-on luggage (3.4 ounces), make sure to put your purchases in your checked luggage after you clear customs.
- You were able to purchase duty-free after you cleared security for your first flight. When you go through customs, you will need to go through security again. If you don't put large liquids in your checked bag, you will be forced to either throw your item(s) away or drink it on the spot when you go through security the second time.
- Liquids can only be 3.4 ounces and go through security, even if you purchased it in duty-free. Many people end up having to throw away their duty-free purchases because they can't bring them through security and it is too late to go back and put them in their checked bag.

# FLIGHT ITSELF

## BOARDING

Planes generally board in groups, so check on your boarding pass what group you are in and wait for it to be called.

## WHILE IN FLIGHT

- **Jitters and nerves:** [here](#) is an article on how to deal with flight anxiety
- **How to keep busy:** read a book, watch some movies, listen to a podcase, write a journal, play a game, brush up on the language of the country you're going visit
- **Some flights offer free in-flight alcoholic beverages** such as wine or beer. Though it can be fun to take advantage of this (if you are of age of course) be sure to limit your consumption, as tolerance is lower in higher altitudes, and any disturbance or bad behavior will not be tolerated by the airline or the OSA.
- **If you have a long flight** and are expecting to sit for hours on end, be sure to stretch or get up occasionally to get your blood flowing and stretch your legs. This can help with discomfort as well as aches and pains.
- **Smoking or vaping** on the plane is a very bad idea, as this will trigger smoke alarms and lead to fines and possibly even jail time. This holds true for every airline and every country. The only acceptable place to smoke/vape while en route to your destination is in designated smoking lounges, though these care very much country and airport specific.
- **Ear aches and flight pains:** These are common when flying, and there are several tricks and tips to avoid them
- **Yawn and swallow during ascent and descent.** These activate the muscles that open your eustachian tubes. You can suck on candy or chew gum to help you swallow.



# FLIGHT ITSELF

## WHILE IN FLIGHT

- **Use the Valsalva maneuver during ascent and descent.** Gently blow, as if blowing your nose, while pinching your nostrils and keeping your mouth closed. Repeat several times, especially during descent, to equalize the pressure between your ears and the airplane cabin.
- **Don't sleep during takeoffs and landings.** If you're awake during ascents and descents, you can do the necessary self-care techniques when you feel pressure in your ears.
- **Reconsider travel plans.** If possible, don't fly when you have a cold, a sinus infection, nasal congestion or an ear infection. If you've recently had ear surgery, talk to your doctor about when it's safe to travel.
- **Use an over-the-counter nasal spray.** If you have nasal congestion, use a nasal spray about 30 minutes to an hour before takeoff and landing. Avoid overuse, however, because nasal sprays taken over three to four days can increase congestion.
- **Use decongestant pills cautiously.** Decongestants taken by mouth might help if taken 30 minutes to an hour before an airplane flight. However, if you have heart disease, a heart rhythm disorder or high blood pressure or you're pregnant, avoid taking an oral decongestant.
- **Take allergy medication.** If you have allergies, take your medication about an hour before your flight.
- **Try filtered earplugs.** These earplugs slowly equalize the pressure against your eardrum during ascents and descents. You can purchase these at drugstores, airport gift shops or a hearing clinic. However, you'll still need to yawn and swallow to relieve pressure.

## DEBOARDING

- The plane deboards from front to back, so take your time and gather your things once the plane has taxied and is stationary.



# LAYOVER

## WHAT IS A LAYOVER?

- **What is a layover?** A layover is when you stop and change planes in a location en route to your final destination. This often happens when you are traveling from a smaller city and need to connect to a flight in a larger airport, or if the travel distance is very long, or where it is cheapest to change planes
- **What happens during a layover?** It is quite simple - you get off one plane, walk to your next terminal and gate and then board your connecting flight.
- **For some destinations, you may need to change flights midway;** allowing a minimum of 90 minutes for your layover in case of busy queues, misdirection or delays is a clever idea. When disembarking the plane, you simply need to follow the 'flight connections' signs and proceed through security again, but don't forget:
  - If you haven't got a boarding pass for your next flight, go to the airline transfer desk
  - Some airports may have extra security checkpoints
  - Transit visas may be necessary
  - Depending on the airport, you may need to proceed through passport control
  - Find your gate first and check flight screens
  - Laws and regulations in your transit country may be different than home
- If the airport is large with many different terminals, you should use the shuttles that move between terminals, as this can save you time and energy. This is especially true for shorter layover times in larger airports.

## DOMESTIC LAYOVERS

- Assuming you booked both flights together on one itinerary (as opposed to two separate itineraries) you will get both boarding passes when you check in for your first flight. When you land at your layover airport, you need to look at the departures board and find the gate for your next flight.
- your checked luggage will be tagged to your final destination, so there's nothing for you to do while on your layover. Your bags will get taken off the first flight and loaded onto the second flight.

## INTERNATIONAL LAYOVERS

- if you used a booking engine and your flights are with two different airlines, especially airlines that aren't really partners, you might only get your first boarding pass when you check in. Then, at your layover airport, you'll have to find a ticket counter for the airline that operates the second flight to get your second boarding pass.
- If you fly from somewhere outside the US or Canada to an airport in the US or Canada, you will have to collect and recheck your luggage no matter where you're going on your second flight.
- In most other countries, as long as both of your flights are on the same airline or partner airlines, your luggage will get transferred from the first to the second flight for you.
- Again, if you're not sure, just ask the agent when you're checking in if you will need to collect and recheck your luggage at your layover airport.

# ARRIVING AT DESTINATION

## PICK UP BAGS

- All you need to do is follow the 'BAGGAGE CLAIM' sign
- The only time you have to get your checked bag and re-check it is when you have to go through customs and you have a connecting flight. You go through customs in the first country you land in.
- If you check a bag and you have a connecting flight in the U.S. but your destination is in the U.S or a foreign country, you do not have to go and get your checked bags until you arrive in your destination.

## CUSTOMS

- Generally when leaving the airport and entering another country
- Usually go through customs after your flight arrives in the new country (though some have mutual agreements to help speed up the process so you may go through customs before flying, but this is rare such as between Ireland and the US)
- There is generally a form to fill out that is passed out on the plane for you to fill out declaring that you have nothing illegal to bring into the country
- Fill out this form before going through customs
- They will ask a series of questions, that could include whether your trip is for business or pleasure, how long you'll be in the country, what you do for a living, and what cities you'll be visiting during your stay.
- Generally they will also ask if you have anything to declare, which is generally answered with "no" unless you are bringing in some kind of substance that the country does not normally have (this varies by country and can be googled beforehand)
  - Anything you bought while traveling, either for your personal use or as a gift for someone else
  - Any gifts you received while traveling
  - Anything you inherited during the trip
  - Anything you purchased in a duty-free shop
  - Anything you'll use for work, either to sell or use yourself, even if they're items you brought with you from the US and you're bringing them back
  - Any food products, alcohol, or tobacco



# ARRIVING AT DESTINATION

## ARRIVAL AREA

- **Look for the proper arrival area where you meet your group or find transit to your final destination**
- The arrival areas of airports can be difficult to navigate, so be sure to follow the signs that lead to “ground transportation” or something along those lines if you are in need of a taxi or ride to your next location. If you are meeting with your program coordinator in the airport, they should have a clear set of directions for you, but if you are unsure, there are help desks in each airport that are friendly and often speak various languages to assist you.
- NEVER take a cab from anywhere besides an official taxi stand. The vehicle should also have official branding.
- Also, don't assume ride sharing is an option as some countries don't have it at all and you don't want to be stranded.

## WHAT IF...

### YOU MISS YOUR FLIGHT

- **If its your fault:** if you get stuck in traffic, don't arrive early enough at the airport and are stuck in security, etc. and you know you will miss your plane, the first thing to do is call the airline ASAP. Most airlines will help you change you to another flight, though if you are on the last flight out that day, this would not work. Also, some airlines may have options to put you on standby for the next available flight, or other options, but often there is a change fee to do so.
- **If its the Airline's fault:** if your first flight is delayed, and you end up missing your connecting flight as a result, the airline will book you on the next flight for free. In that case, once you arrive in the airport where your connection is supposed to take place, find the nearest help desk for your airline and explain the situation, and they will help rebook you.
- In any case, be sure to notify your program as well as the OSA of any missed flights
- Often you are at the mercy of the airline service agent, so despite the frustration and anxiety, keep a friendly demeanor as alienating the agent would not bode well.



# WHAT IF...

## YOUR FLIGHT GETS CANCELLED

- When your flight is canceled by the airline, it is on them to reschedule you for free. That could be for the same day or for a later date, but the airline will cover the change fee.
- The issue would be if there is a connecting flight with another airline that you miss as a result, in which case you would call that airline and explain your situation, and they will change your flight also (though sometimes there is a change fee)

## YOUR BAGS MISS THEIR CONNECTION

- If your bags miss the connection, either because the layover was too short or some other reason, the airline will have a courier service send your bags to your final location. However, this needs to be set up either through calling the airline or seeking a help desk when you land in your destination.
- Often in the baggage pick-up areas there is a baggage help center where you can talk to someone to figure out what happened. Regardless it is important to call the airline and make sure that everything is arranged and your bags will be shipped to you.

## FLIGHT IS OVERBOOKED AND THEY OFFER YOU MONEY TO TAKE A LATER FLIGHT:

- Sometimes a flight will be overbooked, and the gate agents will offer passengers money or a flight voucher if you offer up your seat and decide to take a later flight.
- This is generally not worth it unless you are on the last leg of your returning trip back home, as flights to your abroad location often have a connection and your host program is waiting for you in your destination.



# GENERAL INFO

- **When in doubt there are help desks everywhere** that are very understanding and most airport staff speak english or can direct you to someone who does.
- **Most airports have an online map** that you can find via google → these are helpful in navigating which terminal to go to, where your gate may be and where there is food
- **Here is another general travel tips article:**  
<https://www.travelzoo.com/blog/20-tips-before-traveling-internationally/>

## OTHER USEFUL TERMS

- **Terminal:** airports are generally divided into one or more buildings where passengers move from ground transportation to areas where they can board the planes. Each terminal is divided into gates.
- **Gate:** Your gate is the specific area where passengers board, or get onto the plane. There are generally seats where passengers can wait until boarding time.
- **Stopover:** a long layover, often overnight, where you may grab your luggage, go through customs and a security checkpoint if you have entered a new country, and leave the airport if you so choose. If it is an overnight stopover, be sure to plan where to stay that night in advance, as it can be difficult to navigate a new area when exhausted from travel. If it is a daytime stopover, where you have hours to explore the city there are a few things to keep in mind, including having a safe place to store luggage while you explore, as well as having some local currency on you to get around efficiently.

