



PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

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Who's who at SBC JYF

VIRGINIA	PARIS
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PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Complete any outstanding JYF application requirements
- Follow the pre-departure procedures required by your home institution.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS AND PLANS

- Check that your passport and visa are in order
- Inform JYF of your travel plans, itinerary and arrival in Paris
- International Students: check with your Dean to ensure your U.S. visa and other U.S. immigration papers are in order for leaving and re-entering the U.S. after you complete the program. Your U.S. visa must be valid for at least three months beyond the intended departure from the France and the Schengen area.
- Personal and holiday travel planning: *Please check the academic calendar before making travel plans.*

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Studying abroad is an exciting and rich educational experience that can also, at times, be quite stressful and challenging emotionally. A healthy mind and body are essential to a successful study abroad experience. The stresses that often accompany studying abroad may exacerbate ongoing physical or mental health conditions, trigger pre-existing ones, or, in some cases, cause new health conditions to emerge.

You will have access to medical professional and mental health counseling in Paris but it is important that you **be proactive, disclose, and plan ahead:**

- Talk to your health professional about bringing the medications you need for the duration of your stay (in the original container and with a prescription with your physician's explanation of the condition, as well as the generic and brand names of the medication and dosage information.)
- Review potential side effects of your medications with your provider, as your body may react differently because of adjustment to new sleep habits, time zones, activities, and diet.

- Do not plan on shipping medications abroad since it will require customs paperwork and may be delayed in delivery.
- Take a copy of vision prescriptions, and an extra pair of glasses or contacts.
- Although you will be covered by JYF's Group Medical Insurance we strongly recommend that you continue your other health insurance policies in order to be more adequately covered, especially for pre-existing conditions.

For your safety and well-being, it is vital that you inform your program of any of any physical, dietary or psychological difficulties or special needs you have or may have experienced in the past.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Watch this 5 min ["Culture of Safety"](#) video
- During orientation you will be provided with detailed information on safety during your semester or year in France. You are expected to cooperate with the efforts of the Sweet Briar staff to assure your comfort and security. Students must inform JYF administrators in Paris of all travel outside of the Paris area.
- **Emergency Contacts:** In order to be prepared in case of emergency, prepare a list of emergency names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of people with whom you might need to have contact while abroad. Talk with your family about potential safety issues and make sure they know how to contact you in case of emergency.
- Make copies of the first page (and visa page) of your passport. Also make copies of your credit cards and other important info (leave them at home or email them to yourself in case of loss)
- Collect any documents you need to take with you, such as medical records, prescriptions, entry documents, *Attestation* letter from JYF.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Accessing money from abroad:

- Make arrangements for accessing your money from abroad. The easiest way is to use a credit cards and/or a bank card. Before leaving **notify your bank and verify** that your checking account ATM card will work overseas, be aware of what fees they will charge, and

have them tag your account so that overseas charges won't be seen as suspicious.

- Keep your bank contact information handy should you need to report a lost or stolen card.
- Arrange to have €50-100 with you when you leave (if possible)

Estimating spending Money:

In addition to lunches and one evening meal per week, books and school supplies, postage, movies, etc., how much money you will spend will depend a lot on your spending habits, cost of living where you are, how much you eat out, travel, or buy things. Students report having spent about \$1,500-3,000 or more per semester.

Please note: during the winter and spring vacations, your room is covered by JYF, but not your board. Students usually can make individual arrangements with their host family if they intend to stay in Paris during the vacations.

PACKING

What to bring:

- Bring less than you are tempted to. Keep in mind airline baggage limits and that you will buy things you need and/or want to bring back at the end of your stay.
- Pack a few small personal items that will remind you of home, friends and family. They will make a big difference if you get homesick.
- Bring some gifts for your host family or new friends you hope to meet.
- Keep all of your documents in a safe place for travel.
- Make sure you can carry your luggage on your own.
- Computers: You should bring a laptop computer or tablet with you. Make sure your computer has a power adapter and bring a plug adapter. Make sure that your computer is insured under your parent's home owner's insurance policy.
- Plan to keep a journal/blog/scrapbook.

Prior to departure JYF will send you detailed arrival information. It is very

important that you send us your complete flight itinerary and arrival in Paris information.

What not to bring

- Do not bring more than you can carry on your own.
- Do not bring anything with you that has great sentimental value—you will most likely not use it, and it may be lost or stolen.
- Avoid bringing unnecessary electrical appliances (hair dryers, etc.) since the electrical current and plugs will be different. If you do need to bring an appliance, make sure it is rated for both 110V (US) and 220V, and that you have a plug adapter.

MAILING PACKAGES TO PARIS

It is preferable that family and friends NOT SEND packages to JYF students. The cost of postage for the sender and the customs duties that students have to pay upon receipt can be quite high. Shipments from non-European Union countries with declared value exceeding 50€ are subject to customs duties and Value-Added Tax (VAT), both of which can be hefty (around 33% of the value). It is often less expensive for students to buy the needed items in France.

If sending items from the U.S., please note the following:

- SMALL packages may be sent to the JYF office in Paris (see address below). Regrettably, the Paris office cannot accept large parcels insured for over \$55 sent from the U.S. via FedEx, UPS, or similar companies. Again, students often have to pay huge customs duties and VAT.
- Ensure family and friends fill out the customs forms correctly.
- Clothing should always be declared as “used personal effects,” with no commercial value. (Declaring it as such means you cannot insure it.)
- DO NOT mail medications or valuables (i.e. laptops, cell phones). Medications will be blocked at the port of entry and valuable items will require students to pay exorbitant customs duties and VAT.

Packages may be mailed to you at:

Your name

s/c Sweet Briar College, JYF in Paris

Columbia Global Center, Reid Hall
4 rue de Chevreuse, 75006 Paris, France

CELL PHONES

JYF requires students to have a working cell phones during their semester or year in France, both for convenience and to enable students to be contacted quickly in case of an emergency. You will be required to inform JYF of your phone number.

Things to note:

- Non-French citizens are required to have bank accounts in order to utilize a cell phone plan in France. Otherwise, students can select a phone where minutes are recharged by card. Year students may wish to consider opening an account as it will be best in the long run.
- Upon arrival in Paris, you'll be given addresses of the various cell phone companies (in the Reid Hall neighborhood) and will be given a tour of the neighborhood.
- Students opting to use their "unlocked" American cell phones often have problems either getting the French SIM card to work or being unable to receive calls from those with French cell phones, as it costs too much.
- Students often choose to purchase an inexpensive French phone and SIM card.
- While many American cell phone companies now offer "global plans," these may be less convenient and more expensive for communications within France and may have stricter limits on calls, messages, and especially, data usage with high fees for exceeding limits. You can check with your provider for the best options.

ACADEMIC ISSUES

- It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with your college's policies and requirements on enrollment and credit transfer to be sure you receive full credit.
- Learning differences: If you plan to request accommodations for learning differences for your studies in Paris you need to bring the appropriate documentation with you.

CULTURE SHOCK AND CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT:

Homesickness and culture shock are a difficult, but natural part of international travel. Culture shock is the "psychological disorientation most people experience when they move for an extended period of time into a culture markedly different from their own" (L. Robert Kohls, *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, 1979; p. 62). You may find yourself missing family and friends, hating your new host culture, and wanting nothing more than to return home. Though difficult, these feelings are normal and will pass if you hang in there. Just remember that it will get better.

Symptoms of culture shock:

People differ greatly in the degree to which culture shock affects them, but almost everyone is affected by it in one way or another. Symptoms vary, but can include:

- boredom
- withdrawal (e.g. spending excessive amounts of time reading; avoiding contact with host nationals)
- feeling isolated or helpless
- sleeping a lot or tiring easily
- irritation over delays and other minor frustrations
- suffering from various body pains and aches
- longing to be back home
- unduly criticizing local customs or ways of doing things

For most of us, there's really nothing more important to an overseas experience than reaching out to others and integrating oneself into one's host culture. Breaking out of your safe, secure world and meeting the people of your host country, though difficult at first, will

undoubtedly be the most enlightening and rewarding part of your stay abroad.

HOMESICKNESS AND KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH HOME

Homesickness is normal and, for most students, the first two weeks are typically the hardest but it will get easier, especially if you try to focus on adjusting to your new life, making new friends, and staying busy. Remember that you are not alone and don't hesitate to reach out to someone in your group or the program staff.

Of course, you will keep in touch with home, but too much contact with home can have negative effects on your experience abroad. The temptation to reach out to your friends and family at home on Skype, Facebook, chat, etc. is great but if your mind is always thinking of your family and friends in the U.S., you will scarcely have time to absorb your new life in a new country. If your mind is always back in America, if you withdraw from engaging with your current environment, or you spend all your time with Americans you will stay stuck in the "irritation and hostility stage" of culture shock.

Try to **maintain a balance** between keeping in touch with folks at home and interacting with your host culture, including new friends, new classmates or roommates, and possibly a host family.

- Plan to stay in touch with your family and friends on a regular basis and reassure them of your safety but try to restrict your calls to once or twice a week, rather than every day (or multiple times a day). You can catch up on other news by e-mail.
- If you tell your family/loved ones that you will call, please call them.

HOST FAMILIES

Living with a host family overseas is a special opportunity and can be an intensely rewarding experience. However, students need to be prepared for a period of challenging intercultural adjustment. The family has a different way of life (and a different set of rules) from what

you are accustomed to at home or on campus. It will likely take you some time to feel “at home” in this new environment.

The JYF housing coordinator attempts to match students and hosts who will be compatible and makes sure that particular privileges and/or conditions of stay (shared meals, laundry, etc.) are agreed upon in advance. The extent and quality of the relationship between the host and the student will vary depending on personalities and lifestyles as well as personal investment. No two families are alike; habits and traditions differ considerably from one family to another. Some families may invite their host students to family events or outings; others will not. Some families may allow students to use the kitchen and serve themselves from the refrigerator; others will be more private and protective of their space. The most important quality you yourself can have is adaptability. Be as flexible and as positive as possible.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT WHILE STUDYING ABROAD

While study abroad may seem like a break from your “real” life, it can be a valuable part of your career exploration and development.

Whether or not you hope to work abroad in the future, being able to articulate your international competencies can be extremely valuable to a potential employer.

Before you leave

- During the semester before you are away, meet with your Career Center advisor to identify and clarify your career goals, discuss future plans (e.g., internships, jobs, graduate school) and review and discuss your resume and cover letter.
- Plan ahead for any graduate school, internship and employment application procedures and timelines so that they don’t miss any important deadlines and will be fully prepared for senior year.
- Network with personal and family contacts, alumni and other professionals in your field of interest, and search and establish contact with any individuals living where you will be studying.

While you are abroad

- Make career awareness part of your experience, especially if you are doing an internship. Conduct informational interviews and explore other career resources.
- Establish contacts in your new location.
- Contact any alumni that are living or working where you are, and maintain a record of all interesting professionals you meet. In addition to alumni, other references could be a professor, a host family member, or a supervisor where you volunteered, worked or interned.
- Explore opportunities for post study experiences or graduate school in the country, including assessing the local economy and cost of living.

When you return

- Meet with a Career Center advisor to discuss your study-abroad experience, how it has impacted your skills and career direction, and how you can communicate the value of the experience in your written and verbal communications with potential employers.
- Update your resume summarizing your experience abroad, and plan ahead for senior year and your life after graduation.
- Be sure to keep in touch with new contacts you made abroad on a regular basis.

PRELIMINARY READING:

- Continue learning about France. Some suggested readings include a website maintained by Professor Guy Spielmann at Georgetown University:
<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/spielmag/docs/index.htm>
- Go first to the section “France, a cultural primer” for an excellent discussion of many do’s and don’ts in everyday life, and “La phrase complexe” and “Les pratiques textuelles” for a presentation of various exercises required in French universities.
- If you own a good French/English dictionary, you should bring it with you.

- If you have a good French grammar book, bring it with you, as well as “Larousse de la Conjugaison” or “Bescherelle, L’Art de conjuguer.”
- Good online dictionaries include:
- WordReference (wordreference.com) and
- Lexilogos, which lists a number of online dictionaries.

BON VOYAGE!