

Berkeley Study Abroad



Auyeung, P. 2016. *Reaching New Heights*. Ben Lomond Saddle, New Zealand.

Sustainable Study Abroad Guide

What is sustainable travel?

“ I believe that for travel to be sustainable, there must be a harmonious interaction between travelers, host communities, and the planet, with respect to many physical, sociopolitical, economic, and other factors.”

- Alissa Murray, [Sustainable Travel Manifesto](#)

Sturma, M. 2019. *Las Salinas Grandes*. Argentina.

Sustainable travelers...

Engage in eco-friendly material practices

Match resource use with the availability of resources in the local community, limit waste and transportation-related carbon emissions, and support sustainable businesses.

Contribute to a sustainable economy

Support locally-owned restaurants, shops and businesses, pay fair price for goods, and donate to local organizations.

Responsibly engage in biodiverse ecosystems

Leave no trace, stay on marked trails, avoid exploitative wildlife activities, and support ecotourism experiences rooted in conservation.

Seek out meaningful connections

Build mutually beneficial relationships, respect local customs and practices related to sacred sites, learn about the local history, languages, religions and cultures that they engage with, and support marginalized communities.

Act as mindful responsible guests

Recognize the value of each culture without judgment or stereotypes, respect local knowledge, aim for personal growth and self-education, share uplifting, balanced and well researched documentation of their travels on social media, and practice gratitude for the privilege of travel.

Power, Privilege and Identities Abroad

Each of us have multiple identities, such as gender, race, and nationality, that are salient and relevant to our lived experiences. Studying abroad can present you with an opportunity to learn about yourself and navigate shifting identities.

As you step into a new culture abroad, some identities may have a greater or lesser impact on you and how you are perceived abroad. You may notice that how locals see you provides you with certain benefits, such as being catered to above local patrons because of your status as a US-based student, or negative experiences, such as having people question your gender identity in a way that you do not like.

A person's level of privilege will always be linked to systems of power within their lived environment. This is why it is important for you to have some understanding of the history and culture in your host country, and what role the United States has played in its history. No matter what country you consider home, there will be power dynamics to navigate as a student who attends college in the U.S.

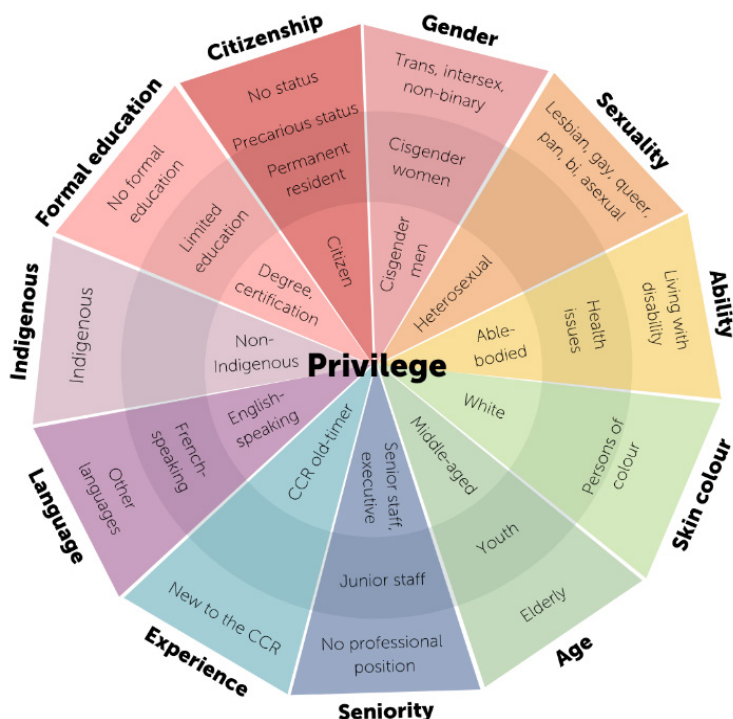
When negotiating your intersecting identities in your study abroad location, you may start to see yourself differently. We encourage you to lean into the discomfort that comes with being seen as different from what you are used to, and start to notice the changes within yourself.

“I’m queer-identified, but I’m also Southeast Asian, Filipino, and Latino—Mexican and Puerto Rican. Before I go to any country, I always try to locate the queer community, Filipino community, or Latinx community because it helps me transition into my host country more easily. When you’re experiencing and learning from a new culture, having a sense of familiarity in any capacity will help you adjust and give you a sense of safety.” [Ramil Mercado](#)

How can you prepare to navigate power, privilege and identity abroad?

1. Research the culture, politics, and history of your host country.
2. Reflect on the [privilege your passport holds](#), and how you can practice awareness as you travel across borders in an unequal world.
3. Find communities you identify with in your study abroad location.
4. Learn about what it may be like to study abroad while navigating different identities

[I am a Student with a Disability](#)
[I am a Student Parent](#)
[I am an Undocumented Student](#)
[I am a LGBTQ+ Student](#)
[I am a First Gen Student](#)
[I am a Heritage Seeker](#)



Meaningful Connections & Mutually Beneficial Relationships



Chow, D. 2020. *Neighborly Dinner*. Netherlands.

To practice sustainable ways of living, we must root ourselves in mutually beneficial relationships.

Learn about and support the Indigenous cultures of your host community.

How do the Indigenous people of your study abroad location view their physical, spiritual and cultural relationship with the land? What are their values? What practices can you engage to respect their customs? Are there sacred areas that may not be appropriate or open for visitors? Are there Indigenous-led culturally significant destinations or experiences that are open to visitors where you can learn more? For example:

Canada - [Destination Indigenous](#)

México - [Red Indígena de Turismo de México A.C. \(RITA\)](#)

New Zealand - [Kia Ora](#)

Sweden - [Adventures in Sápmi](#)

Respectfully seek out teachers in cultural practices, while being mindful of appropriation.

For example, studying Tai Chi in China may enable some students to deeply connect with their heritage and provide culturally rooted frameworks that may influence their approach to movement building and sustainability.

Learn the local language.

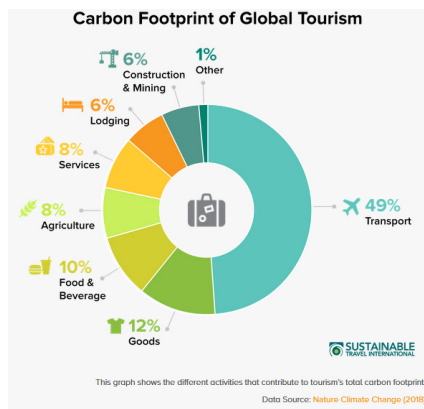
Language and cultural immersion can at times be an unlearning process, providing you new skills, ways of thinking, and frameworks that can influence and root you deeper into sustainable mindsets and social justice work.

Connect with student clubs or local organizations that share your values.

Support these organizations by attending their public events, asking if they are open to you volunteering so you can better understand an issue from the perspective of your host country, or donating. Observe how communities are cultivating sustainable ways of living.

If you volunteer, consider how you can avoid replicating power dynamics and act from a place of solidarity. Recognize the dignity and agency of those you are working with, and learn about the conditions and causes of structural inequality in your host community. Reflect upon your experiences by leaning into discomfort, challenging your own assumptions, and actively listening to people's stories. Consider links between your home country and your host community, so you can bring learnings with you and take action when you return home.

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint & Support Front-Line Communities



“Tourism is responsible for roughly 8% of the world’s carbon emissions. From plane flights and boat rides to souvenirs and lodging, various activities contribute to tourism’s carbon footprint. The majority of this footprint is emitted by visitors from high-income countries, with U.S. travelers at the top of the list.” [Sustainable Travel International](https://sustainabletravel.org)

Most global-travel related carbon emissions come from transportation, so we encourage you to consider sustainable modes of transportation in your host country. In addition to carbon emissions, global travel can negatively impact local and regional environments’ water and waste systems, agriculture, fishing and food systems, energy systems, as well as natural resources.

Take Action

- When possible, travel via train or bus instead of plane.
- Use a bike to get around your host community.
- Purchase what you need on arrival from secondhand shops and sell what you don’t need before you depart.
- Adapt your water and energy consumption patterns to your local environment.
- Follow a [sustainable packing list](#), including a reusable water bottle, non-toxic beauty products, and solar powered chargers.
- Buy locally grown food from your neighborhood market.
- Take a course about sustainability or climate change.
- Look into your host city’s sustainable planning practices.
- Learn about front-line communities in your host country.



While climate change is the result of an extractive economy driven by the most wealthy countries and corporations, across the world, lower income people and areas that are more at risk of natural disasters are the most vulnerable to climate change. In every country, communities are fighting back against environmental injustice, such as [refinery community members in Richmond, CA](#) and [residents of East and West Oakland fighting air pollution](#). As a sustainable traveler, identify those communities, learn about them, and support their efforts to resist climate change. [The EJAtlas - Global Atlas of Environmental Justice](#) documents cases of environmental justice struggles around the world.

Be A Sustainable Tourist

Infuse your values into your travel practices. When planning regional travel, ask transportation and accommodation companies about their accessibility and sustainability policies, support businesses that are committed to accessibility, equity and inclusion, and owned by indigenous and under-served communities. When purchasing goods to bring home with you, ask about who made them and whether or not you can meet them. Ask about how the product is made and consider if anyone is harmed in the process. Speak up when you notice inaccessible practices.

Inclusive Travel Sites

[Black & Abroad](#)

[Muslim Travel Girl](#)

[Fat Girls Traveling](#)

[Travel Noire](#)

[Two Bad Tourists](#)

[Traveling While Deaf](#)

Lai, E. 2019.
Chasing Waterfalls.
Karekare Falls,
New Zealand.



One of the most awesome things about traveling is being able to experience the wonders and natural beauty of the diverse ecosystems on Earth. Unfortunately, climate change is causing biodiversity loss and making some habitats, especially coastal areas and marine protected areas, more vulnerable. Sustainable travel appreciates the natural environment, invests in conservation, respects the well being of animals, and supports local economies and livelihoods. Ask yourself these questions before visiting a natural area:

Is the destination heavily trafficked? If so, what other areas may be available?

Is the destination not visited often? If so, what impact will human visitors have on the environment?

Does the tour operator support conservation projects, local communities, and animal welfare?

Are animals in their natural habitat? Do they have food, water, rest, and shelter?

Are animals expressing signs of distress? Are they demonstrating healthy physical and mental behaviors?

Are animals being used to entertain people?

Do visitors harm wildlife in any way?

Is the tour operator committed to fair trade and secure employment?

If you are not sure of the answers, ask the tour operator and seek out tour providers that demonstrate a commitment to conservation, local economies, and animal welfare.



Barber, J. 2020. *An Elephant Never Forgets.* Mole National Park, Ghana.

Intentional Photography

You will return from study abroad with amazing photos and videos of your journey. You may be sharing these experiences with your friends and family on social media during your program. How can you capture images and videos and share your experiences in an intentional and ethical way?



Santiago, L. 2019. *A Golden Bear in a Museum*. Deutsche Kinemathek, Germany.

1. Research

Learn about the places you will travel to so that you are familiar with the local laws, customs, interpersonal dynamics and political hazards you may encounter.

2. Obtain Consent

Ask people if you can photograph them without coercion or manipulation. Ask the subjects of the photos, and not just the community leader, prior to taking out your camera. When taking candid shots, ask the subject for permission to keep the photos and share them after you have taken the photograph.

In addition to asking if you can take photos, be sure to ask if you can share them in specific ways, such as on social media. If consent is not provided for sharing, then keep these photos private for your own personal memories.

3. Be mindful of the narrative behind your photos and videos.

Who is in them? What are they doing? Why are they doing it? Where and when is it taking place? How is the story unfolding?

4. Compose your photos intentionally.

Are you showing the whole scene, or just a portion? Are you aiming the camera from a low angle, or from a high one? Are you up close or far away? How do these choices change the way the people in your photos appear empowered or dis-empowered?

5. Engage with the people you are recording or photographing.

Get to know them and their stories. Whenever possible, avoid images that objectify or stereotype and aim for dignity.

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