

## SUGGESTED BLOG POST TOPICS

Posts should be oriented around the excitement and/or challenges of studying abroad – the new places you are visiting, the things you are seeing, the people you are meeting, the classes you are taking, the things you are learning, the cultural differences you are encountering, the challenges you have faced and how you have resolved them, etc.

You want to give people back home, or other students who are considering going abroad, an inside perspective to connect with your experiences.

### **BEFORE YOU GO**

Why did you choose to study abroad? How did you go about deciding whether, where, and what to study abroad? (country, culture, academics or something else altogether?)

What do you hope to get out of this experience?

What are you most looking forward to? What are you most nervous about?

How are you preparing for your study abroad experience? What to pack and what not to pack?

### **WHILE IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY**

**When You Arrive:** What are your first impressions of your host country? Consider the landscape, the people, the food, the academic system (if you've started classes already).

**Academic:** What are you learning outside the classroom (about your host country/culture, about yourself)? How is it different or the same from back in the U.S. or your home country? What is it like studying topics from a different world view?

**Trips or Excursions:** Where did you go and what did you see? Is there a secret spot only locals know about? A landmark of personal, cultural, or historical significance to you? Where will you go next weekend?

**Challenges:** (for example: navigating a completely new city, buying groceries when you can't read the language, being on your own for the first time, or being homesick). How did you overcome the challenge? What advice would you give to others facing similar challenges?

**Culture:** What is a favorite or most interesting cultural experience you've had? (festival, sports game, concert, holidays, celebration). What are some local social norms you have witnessed? Think of classroom etiquette, life with your host family (if you have one), customs while in public, etc. Have you experienced any culture shock?

**The Locals:** How are students at your host university different from or the same as your peers at home? How did you make local friends? How do you share your home culture with your local friends? How do people dress in your study abroad location? How did you expect people to dress? Have you changed the way you dress? Does your host culture have a different concept of time or space than you're used to?

**Food:** What local dishes have you tried? What are the traditional flavors and ingredients cultural significance? Are there other issues around food, such as food scarcity or security, nutrition, industrialization of food products, eco-friendly farm practices, etc.? Do you have a favorite café?

**Daily life:** What is a typical day like? How do you spend your free time? Is it different from what you would do in the US? Who do you spend your time with? Are you meeting new people? Have you seen people from Colby while studying abroad? What have you done abroad that you don't do at home?

**Language:** How do you work at improving your language skills? Are you making progress with the language? Any funny stories of language gaffes? What are your favorite words from your host language?

**The Arts:** Have you discovered a favorite local art form? (art, music, dance and other forms of artistic expression).

**Your living situation:** Where are you living and with whom? If you live with a host family, what it is like? How is living situation abroad different from your home in the U.S. or your home country? What's your commute like from home to class? What are your favorite sights, smells and sounds of your study abroad neighborhood?

**Reflecting on "home":** Now that you've had some time to settle in and you are likely past the "honeymoon" phase, how has homesickness presented itself? What do you think of when you think of "home?" How are you coping with the challenges of cultural adjustment?

**Advice and Tips:** What did you pack that you wish you'd left behind? What do you wish you'd packed? What tips would you give a student who wants to meet the locals and get out of the "American bubble"?

**Identity:** What aspects of your identity are more or less apparent in your daily life? How has studying abroad change your academic, career, or personal goals? If so, how? What have you accomplished while abroad that makes you proud? Does being abroad make you think any differently about what it means to be "an American"?

## **RETURNING HOME**

**Preparing to leave your host country:** What preparations are you making to return home? What things in your host country might you miss? What are you looking forward to upon return? How have your initial perceptions of your host country changed? What has surprised you about what you've learned and experienced?

**Getting home:** What's the best thing about being home? What's the hardest? How was your experience different from what you expected? What surprised you most about study abroad? What stereotypes did you have about your study abroad destination? Were those confirmed or destroyed? What's your favorite souvenir from abroad? What do you miss most from abroad? What does "reverse culture shock" mean to you?

**Reflections:** How do you feel you have changed? Did traveling/studying abroad make you think any differently about your identity or your place in the world? What did you learn about yourself? What do you wish you had known before going? What do you wish you'd done differently?

**Keeping your experience alive back home:** How do you plan to get involved in other international activities in campus and beyond? What's your general advice for students preparing to go abroad? How about for students going on your study abroad program?

While we encourage you to write about the topics we suggest above, you are more than welcome to write about other topics that you wish to share.

If you currently have a blog of your own, please share a post from it and include the link to your blog in your post.

### **Tips for writing a good blog post:**

- Keep your posts brief, conversational, and fun!
- Be honest and authentic.
- Try to write about a single experience (trying a new dish, going to a concert or festival, an encounter with a local, or any of the topics listed below) instead of cramming your entire study abroad adventure into 500 words.
- Reflect on your experience. What you did that day or that week is always a good starting point, but try to go deeper. Instead of just documenting your adventures, ask yourself what surprised you or what you learned. Writing can help you digest your experience as you live it. And who knows — once you've returned home, your thoughtful blog could allow you to better articulate what you learned to a future employer.
- If you're stuck, try writing a list — they are a helpful way to organize your ideas and share them with others.
- Share photos. Photos are a great way for your readers to get an inside look at your studies abroad, and could even [help you boost your resume](#) (really!).
- And remember, HAVE FUN!