Key Strategies for Avoiding an Emergency While Studying Abroad:

Foreign travel and especially studying abroad is an exciting way to learn about the world. You are up close and personal to diverse cultures, new relationships, and different environments. However, whether in the US or overseas, no semester can be guaranteed free from harm’s way. A little planning and taking precautions can help to make sure you are doing your part to safely experience your time abroad.

1. Do your homework.
   Orientation is an important part of any program. Listen and take in information – from culture shock to homesicknesses to study practices to what to pack – since this is all material you will want to know when you are abroad. During your time away, use Facebook or other online blogs for continued discussion with your peers.

2. Stay out of dark alleys.
   When you are in an area that is unfamiliar to you, be smart about where you find yourself and what you do. If you have an idea that a place may be dangerous, keep away. Stay informed about neighborhoods around you, and in that way, you will have as much knowledge as you can beforehand.

3. Mind your manners.
   Because you are foreigners in another country, it is important to act like guests. Refrain from trying to draw attention as an overt “American,” such as wearing branded clothing. Sometimes there is concern about anti-American sentiments abroad, but for the most part, people distinguish between an American person and the American government. Nevertheless, continue to be tactful and diplomatic.

4. Travel with a wiser friend.
   Take advantage of the time spent with your professors, especially those of the local institutions. Build relationships with those you learn from. Faculty are seasoned veterans in the field and the territory you are in.

5. Make new friends.
   Make friends with people in the local culture. Build relationships with people who know the local surroundings. They know the place and the people. Who better to learn from than those who call the place home?

   It is a good idea to keep laminated wallet cards listing emergency contact numbers at all times. Stay in touch with the school staff around you and with those at home. Know the chain of communication if there is an emergency either in an individual situation or in the national news.
7. Take care of your health.
   Most overseas incidents are mundane rather than radical events. Your health is essential and therefore it is necessary to take health precautions. Maintain a proper diet. Use proper judgment, such as not drinking the water. Make sure you know about your insurance when you are abroad.

8. Listen to Mom and Dad.
   Parents can be a big influence in the life of a student. Parents can have concerns about students being abroad for a few months. Because they may not have as much information as you about the places you are going, keep them informed.

Study abroad is changing as the world becomes more complex. The world today is not any more dangerous than it was. It is, however, growing increasingly more connected and accessible. Preparation and planning are key ingredients in helping a semester or summer abroad turn into an impressionable, but safe, experience to remember.

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