



Panama Program Packet

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Important Contacts & Addresses

Florida State University International Programs- Tallahassee Office



A5500 University Center
282 Champions Way
P.O. Box 3062420
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2420

Hours: 8: 00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. EST
Monday – Friday



850-644-3272



IP-Info@fsu.edu



international.fsu.edu

FSU Panama



Calle Jacinto Palacios, Building 227
Ciudad del Saber (City of Knowledge)
Clayton
Panama, Republic of Panama

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST
Monday – Friday



011-507-317-0367



<https://international.fsu.edu/studycenterpanamacity.aspx>



[Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)

Panama Staff Contact Information

General Questions: fsupanama@fsu.edu

Dr. Carlos Langoni, Resident Director: clangoni@fsu.edu

Dr. Alexandra Anyfanti, Vice Rector: aanyfanti@fsu.edu

Adam Tratner, Director of Student Affairs: atratner@fsu.edu

Hector Miranda, Housing/International Programs Coordinator: hamiranda@fsu.edu

Local Authorities

Emergency Services 911

U.S. Embassy

Address: Building 783, Calle Basilio Lakes, Clayton, Panama, Republic of Panama

Phone 011-507-317-5303

Website <https://pa.usembassy.gov/>

Making International Calls: Making international calls from the U.S. to Panama: First dial “011” (for international call), followed by “507” (the country code), then the location number.

Time Differences: Countries adhere to varying time zones. [Learn about time differences between locations worldwide.](#)

Student Perspectives

Learn more about what to expect in Panama from current students!

Check out student-created videos and posts from current and recently returned study abroad on [Instagram @fsuip](#) or reference the [Panama YouTube Shorts playlist](#) or [Panama Branch Campus playlist](#).

"Studying abroad is an experience that everybody should do. Find a place, go abroad, learn something new, learn a different perspective, practice another language. It really does shape the way in which you can open your mind."

- Panama City Program Participant

Academics



Your program is first and foremost an academic experience, so prepare to invest as much time, effort, and thought into coursework abroad as you do on main campus. Class sizes abroad are small and facilitate interaction with fellow students and faculty. A greater emphasis is placed on participation in class discussions, and some courses may require you to attend organized excursions. Prepare to be an active and committed class participant. **Your attendance and participation are mandatory for each class, regardless of the setting and mode of teaching.**

Consult the garnet *Courses* tab of your Program Page on the [IP website](#) for course descriptions, and the [Academics webpage](#) for IP Academic Policies. IP Course registration typically occurs within 60 days of departure; registration instructions will be shared in your [IP Student Portal](#).

Academic Resources

Many academic resources at FSU are available virtually to students in Tallahassee and abroad:

- [Tutoring Resources at FSU](#)
- [Reading & Writing Center \(RWC\)](#)
- [Academic Center for Excellence \(ACE\)](#)

Office of Accessibility Services (OAS)

OAS provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. We do our best to accommodate all students based on their documented needs. If you anticipate needing to request accommodations for a documented disability, you must:

- Contact OAS at 850-644-9566 (Voice) or 850-644-8504 (TDD) **as soon as possible** so we can assess our ability to provide appropriate accommodations.
- **Ensure FSU IP obtains a copy of your OAS Eligibility Letter.**

NOTE: Accommodations provided on FSU main campus may not always be feasible at an FSU IP facility or study abroad location. Visit the [OAS website](#) for more information.

Immigration

Passport Requirements

A valid passport is required for international travel. Many countries require your passport to be:

1. Valid for at least 6 months **after your date of return to the U.S.** Programs requiring more than 6 months of passport validity will be notified by our office.
2. Have at least 2 blank visa pages. Programs requiring more than 2 visa pages will be notified by our office.



If your passport does not meet these requirements or you do not have a passport, you should apply for one AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! Current passport processing times are listed on the [U.S. Department of State website](#). **Failing to obtain a passport**—and consequently being unable to participate in your program—**does not release you from the liability of program fees.**

FSU International Programs is a U.S. Passport Acceptance Facility. Therefore, you can apply for your passport and have passport photos taken in our office. For details, call 850-645-9714 or visit [our website](#). Most students cannot renew their passport online or by mail using the DS-82 form, as it requires your previous passport to have been issued at age 16 or older. If you don't have a valid passport, plan to apply in person using the DS-11 form at a local acceptance facility.

Visas

Determine whether your program requires a visa by visiting your program page on the [International Programs](#) website and navigating to the garnet "Visa" tab.

If your program requires a visa:

- You will formally apply for your visa in the Republic of Panama after your arrival to your program with the assistance of Florida State University Republic of Panama staff.
- Therefore, you should not plan any international travel in the 1.5 months leading up to your program.
- Further visa information & instructions specific to your program will be provided via the [IP Student Portal](#) when available.

Contact IP-Visas@fsu.edu as soon as possible if you have international travel plans prior to the start of your program or currently reside outside of the United States.

Non-U.S. & Dual-Citizens should contact IP-Visas@fsu.edu as soon as possible since visa requirements for non-U.S. citizens are different from those of U.S. citizens. Non-U.S. citizens must possess a Permanent Resident Card or a U.S. visa to re-enter the U.S. after their program.

Airfare

Do not purchase airfare until you are notified by International Programs to do so.

Permission to purchase airfare will be distributed via the [IP Portal](#); you will receive a copy of these instructions via email if admitted when permission is given. If admitted later, reference the "Notifications" or "Announcements" area of the IP Portal for those details. Some programs may not be notified until after the commitment fee deadline.

When in doubt, check the "Notifications" or "Announcements" area of the [IP Portal](#) to review all sent messages for your program.

There is no group flight, and your program fee does not include airfare. International Programs is not responsible for any fees associated with flight changes, delays, or cancellations.

Keep in mind, you MUST arrive in Panama on your program's official arrival date and depart on the designated departure date. For exact dates, reference the [International Programs website](#) and [IP Student Portal](#). Late arrivals and early departures are not permitted.

Your travel plans may change before or during your program. Purchase changeable or refundable tickets to maximize flexibility and minimize airline fees. Travel insurance may also cover flight cancellation/change fees, lost luggage, etc. Speak with your airline for specific details.

Once approved to purchase airfare, you will be instructed to upload your travel plans to the IP Student Portal so staff can plan for student arrivals.

NOTE: Airlines may not permit passengers to board international flights if traveling on a one-way ticket without 'proof of onward travel'. If you're not ready to finalize your plans after the program, we recommend booking a roundtrip flexible/changeable ticket using a tentative return date that can be changed later if needed. Contact your airline about 'proof of onward travel' requirements.

While you're in Transit

- Consider putting an AirTag or Tile tracker in your checked luggage in the event it is misplaced in transit.
- Have your passport accessible in your carry-on luggage, as well as 1 or 2 outfits in case of flight delays/cancellations or lost luggage, electronics (i.e. chargers and outlet converters), medications, and toiletries.
- Most international airports have free Wi-Fi.
- Drink lots of water to stay hydrated and get up to walk around often to help your circulation. Wear layers, as the temperature on the plane and in airports can vary.

Arrival & Transportation

Upon arrival in Panama, you will fill out a Travel Declaration Form with the address located on the Contact Information section of this packet. It is recommended to complete the form [online](#) 24-48 hours prior to arrival. You will then go through immigration to show your passport and returning plane ticket to the U.S.



Airport pick-ups are provided at Tocumen Airport on the arrival date for the program. Pick-up times are coordinated according to each student's flight itinerary. **You are strongly encouraged to arrive between 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM local time.** Prior to departure, FSU Panama staff will reach out via email to confirm your flight details and arrange your pick-up time.

If you encounter **flight delays, cancellations, or missed connections** while traveling, notify the FSU Panama team of your new anticipated arrival time as soon as possible: hamiranda@fsu.edu; after 8:00 p.m. call 011-507-6949-5875.

Program housing will begin on the arrival date for your program and end on the departure date. If you plan to travel before or after program dates*, you must make other housing arrangements; [view our list of recommended hotels](#).

*Independent travel before/after the program may not be permitted if studying abroad for 12 or more weeks during the fall, spring, or summer. Review the immigration information provided in this packet when available or contact IP-Visas@fsu.edu prior to planning independent travel outside of your program dates.

All on-site orientation programming is mandatory for all students.

Transportation in Panama

FSU Panama is located within the City of Knowledge. It is recommended that students use the car share app, [Uber](#), for transportation throughout Panama City as it is the safest, and often cheapest way to travel to other areas of the city. The fare from FSU-Panama to the heart of downtown Panama City should be no more than \$10-\$12 (one-way).

Most flights within Panama depart from Albrook Airport, located only two miles from FSU-Panama. Daily express buses leave from downtown Panama City to all areas of Panama. The Bus Terminal is only a 10-minute drive from FSU Panama.

Riding the local buses (Metrobus) is also a great local experience and a very economical method of transportation. Speak to FSU Panama staff for guidance on how to purchase a Metrobus card and use the Metrobus to travel. We suggest riding the city buses only when you are familiar with the different areas of the city and have a better sense of the distances. Avoid riding the bus at night unless you know exactly where you are going, and you are certain about the bus routes.

Use the following apps to help you navigate like a local:

- [MiBus Maps Panama](#) (Metrobus)
- [Metro de Panama](#) (Train)

Personal Travel

Wait until you receive your program calendar and finalize your class schedule before booking any trips away from Panama during program dates.

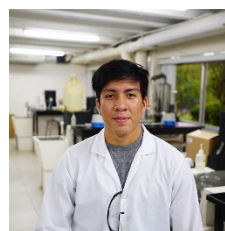


Be advised that travel outside of Panama may not be possible during the first 3-4 weeks of your program due to the visa application process. You should not plan travel that will cause you to miss classes; strict academic standards will be maintained on the programs. Class absences due to personal travel are unexcused and may result in academic repercussions, such as grade deductions.

Excursions are included in your program fee, and there will also be time for independent exploration. For safety purposes, you must fill-out IP's [online independent travel form](#) each time you travel outside your host city. You are advised to thoroughly research your travel destination(s) and consider associated risks. Ensure you have your CISI international health insurance card, and emergency contact card with you when traveling independently. More information will be provided during pre-departure and on-site orientation sessions.

The Campus

The FSU Panama campus is located within the [City of Knowledge](#), only a few blocks from the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal. It serves as a place where you can gather to meet peers, attend classes and study, receive tutoring, or participate in student and staff led activities. You will take classes with hundreds of Latin American & Caribbean students who are directly enrolled at FSU Panama. [Learn more about FSU Panama.](#)



Housing

Students live in double rooms in a dormitory style complex within the City of Knowledge. The residence includes bed linens and towels, access to furnished living, kitchen, and dining space, as well as coin-operated laundry facilities, Wi-Fi, and security measures. The FSU Panama campus is located within a 15-minute walk and shuttles are available during weekdays.



Housing Check-In: Begins as early as 8:00 a.m. on the arrival date for your program.



Housing Check-Out: Morning/afternoon on the departure date.

Housing assignments, including roommate details, will be announced upon arrival and cannot be changed.

Information provided by students on the housing questionnaire in the IP Student Portal is considered for housing assignments, along with many other factors. Overnight guests are not allowed in program housing.

Housing Rules & Regulations will be reviewed by staff during on-site orientation. You must familiarize yourself with these rules & regulations because any violation is grounds for dismissal from the program. Housing facilities will be inspected at the end of the program. Any damages will be assessed to your FSU account. For more information, refer to the [Housing Terms and Conditions](#) and the FSU International Programs Contractual Agreement, which all participants are required to sign in the [IP Student Portal](#). The agreement outlines your contractual obligations as a participant on our program.

Packing & Climate

Research the seasonal weather and local climate trends for your location and pack accordingly:



Panama City is warm; temperatures average 80-85 °F year-round.

Late spring through fall is the rainy season. Bring rain boots, rain jacket, and an umbrella.
Winter through early spring is considered the dry season.

Pack lightly, review the [Packing List](#) for guidance, and remember you can buy most items locally if you discover you need something!

Do not bring:



Electric hair tools from the U.S. (ex: straighteners, hair dryers, curling irons, etc.); it's best to buy these items locally and share with roommates to avoid problems with incompatible voltage.



Do not purchase any textbooks or course materials prior to departure. Wait until you meet with your FSU Panama professors on the first day.

-  Any valuable or sentimental items such as jewelry, expensive watches, expensive cameras, or keepsake items you would regret losing.
-  Additional furniture or large furnishings, such as couches or TVs, are not permitted.

Don't Forget

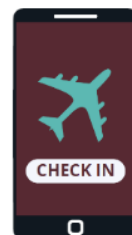
- Comfortable walking shoes are a MUST.
- Make copies of your passport pages that contain the issue date, your signature, and your photograph. Leave copies with family and bring copies with you while traveling (stored separate from your passport) in case your passport is lost or stolen.

Cell Phones & Laptops

It's important to establish a communications plan prior to departure & stay connected to family and friends while abroad. Reliable cellphone coverage is essential for your program, especially in emergencies – do not rely solely on Wi-Fi.

Cell Phones

Research which option below is the best fit for you.



NOTE: If you choose an option that requires you to unlock your phone, contact your network provider **BEFORE** you depart for details about this process as it varies by provider.

Option	How it Works	Program Length	Notes	Estimated Cost
Purchase an international eSIM data plan	Newer phone models may be compatible with embedded SIM cards (eSIM) for international data. Learn more.	Any	Regional or global packages available. May be compatible with U.S. numbers. Only compatible with unlocked phones. Can purchase before travel but cannot activate until abroad.	Relatively affordable, depending on plan/ carrier
Purchase a physical SIM card & data plan from a provider abroad	Sign-up for a monthly or prepaid data plan with an international carrier, receive a new number.	Any	Cannot purchase until abroad. Only compatible with unlocked phones. Program staff abroad may be able to provide more information after orientation.	Relatively affordable, depending on plan/ carrier
Use an international data plan from a U.S. provider	Pay per day or as you use data, depending on your carrier.	Short periods or during travel/arrival	Often the most expensive option, unless your U.S. carrier provides free international data roaming.	Expensive
No data plan, rely on Wi-Fi	Keep phone in airplane mode, Wi-Fi required to call, text, or use apps.	Short periods or during travel/arrival	It is inconvenient to rely on Wi-Fi spots only as it will cause issues navigating your new city; not recommended.	No charge as long as data roaming is turned off

Laptops

Most students bring a laptop or tablet abroad for convenient computer access. We recommend doing the following prior to departure:

- Check if your homeowner's insurance covers computers when away from your primary residence. If not, consider purchasing laptop insurance through [Safeware](#), a worldwide insurance provider for all electronic devices.
- **Do NOT pack your laptop or laptop charger in your checked luggage.**



Mail



Share the following information with those in the U.S. who are interested in sending you mail abroad:

Letters

Letters can be sent to the FSU Panama campus address, as listed in the contact information section of this packet, using DHL or FedEx. Priority mail between Panama and the U.S. may take from 6 to 10 days. Do not use USPS as this will cause delays.

Packages

Avoid sending packages from the U.S. to Panama whenever possible. Students can be charged up to 30% customs duty on the declared value of international packages. Instead, students can purchase needed items locally for much less than it would cost to have it shipped from the U.S. Students who fail to follow these instructions are financially responsible for all customs fees; the amount(s) will be added to their myFSU account. FSU Panama is not responsible for failed deliveries or lost items.

Currency & Banking

Your program description on the [IP website](#) outlines the costs that are/are not included in your program fee.

When estimating your financial needs abroad, create a budget based on how much you plan to spend on meals over the duration of your stay as well as on your personal entertainment, independent travel, and social activities. Don't forget to factor in the [exchange rate](#). **Students who recently studied in Panama reported spending \$2,000-\$4,000 during their program (excluding program fee & airfare).**

Tips to Save Money

- **Adapt a residential mindset.** Shop for food at nearby markets or grocery stores and cook in your residence.
- **Stay local.** Spend weekends exploring more of the city or host country instead of traveling elsewhere.
- **Do research BEFORE booking independent travel.** Determine the currency and exchange rate, how much lodging and food costs, as well as any activities of interest. Some countries or activities will be vastly more expensive than others, which will impact your budget.

Currency

The U.S. dollar is one of Panama's national currencies, along with the Panamanian Balboa. Bills larger than \$20 are rarely accepted by small businesses. Don't travel with lots of cash, you only need enough to arrive safely at your destination.

Banking & International Purchases

Set-up online banking prior to departure to monitor your U.S. bank account(s) while abroad. You should have multiple ways to access money while abroad, including credit/debit cards (make sure they don't charge foreign transaction fees). **Unless advised otherwise during the pre-departure process, DO NOT plan to rely solely on cash during your time abroad; always bring a credit and/or debit card with you.**

Debit Card	Credit Card
A debit card can be used to withdraw funds from your U.S. bank account in the form of local currency at ATMs abroad.	Credit cards are useful for everyday purchases and offer excellent exchange rates (always pay in local currency, not U.S. dollars, if asked during check-out).
Contact your financial institution about ATM transaction fees. You can limit the fees if your U.S. bank has a 'sister' bank in the host country and/or by limiting the frequency of withdrawals, though you should not keep large sums of money on your person or stored in your residence.	Consider applying for a credit card with no foreign transaction fees/international fees. Mastercard and Visa are the most widely accepted credit cards overseas. Not all vendors will accept American Express or Discover Cards.
Cards must be linked to a checking account (other prepaid/reloadable cards are not always accepted abroad).	Credit cards are also useful for large purchases or in the event of an emergency.

 **Contactless Payments** (e.g., Apple Pay, Google Pay): Set-up contactless payment by linking credit/debit cards to your mobile device prior to departure. Contactless Payments are heavily used in many large cities abroad, but you should always carry other sources of funds too.

Before departure, don't forget to:

- Notify your financial institution(s) of international travel plans & dates to avoid cards being declined abroad.
- Keep a record of all card numbers and know how to contact your bank if they are lost or stolen.
- Change pins longer than 4 digits, which may not be accepted abroad.



Health & Wellness

Before Departure

FSU requires all students to show proof of certain immunizations prior to registering for courses in the U.S. or abroad. If your immunization records are in Florida SHOTS and meet the immunization requirement for the University, you are not required to submit additional documentation. You will be notified if any action is needed via a To-Do item or an immunization hold placed on your [myFSU account](#). If neither is present, you are considered cleared for immunizations and no further action is required. You can review the status of your immunization clearance at <https://studentinsurance.fsu.edu/>.

Familiarize yourself with the entry requirements and health matters in your program location. Some countries have specific requirements for inoculations based on previous travel or vaccination history. More information is available through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [website](#). The FSU Health and Wellness Center also offers a travel clinic which provides immunizations. It is the student's responsibility to confirm whether their previous travel or vaccination history requires additional inoculations. Recommended vaccinations for Panama may include: tetanus booster (if not received within the last 10 years), Hepatitis A & B, Typhoid, and Yellow Fever.

Bring enough of your prescription medication to last for the duration of your stay, if possible. This is often referred to as a 'Vacation' or 'Extended' prescription. Travel with medications inside your carry-on luggage, and make sure all medication is in the original container(s) with clearly legible prescriptions.



Not all U.S. prescription drugs are available abroad. Adderall & Concerta are examples of drugs not available in all countries. Don't postpone discussing your medication needs with your doctor. If you have questions about medication availability in your program location, or experience difficulty obtaining a prescription for your time abroad, [contact our office](#) for assistance as soon as possible.

Other Recommendations:

- If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take an extra pair and/or a copy of your vision prescription. Bring enough contacts to last the duration of the program as you may not be able to receive more via mail.
- Complete routine or preventative medical & dental care before you leave.
- A tetanus booster shot is suggested if you have not had one within the past 10 years.
- A flu shot is also suggested prior to departure.

While Abroad

Proactively maintain your health & wellbeing. Your physical, mental, and economic health are highly intertwined. Seek support as soon as the need arises to limit unnecessary stress.

Program fees include international medical & evacuation insurance coverage through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI); [access the policy online](#). Participants are covered from the day the program starts until the day the program ends. **This policy is NOT intended to replace your domestic insurance coverage, which we advise you to maintain while studying abroad.**

Mental health appointments are covered by your CISI insurance and many of our program locations have identified in-person mental health providers. Online counselling is also an option if that is your preference or can be utilized if on an excursion or independent travel. [See list of online providers](#). Please speak to your on-the-ground support staff if you would like to make an in-person appointment. **If you experience a mental health emergency and need to speak to a professional immediately, a 24/7/365 hotline is available through CISI and their assistance provider, AXA, by calling +001 (312) 935-1703 (from outside the US). This number is also located on each student's CISI card.**

Alcohol Awareness & Illegal Drugs

The legal age to drink alcohol in Panama is 18. Should you choose to exercise this right, you must do so responsibly. Should students violate the FSU Student Conduct Code with behaviour related to alcohol consumption, they will undergo a student conduct code process, after which outcomes are appropriately assigned. In short, know your limits and drink within moderation, never to excess. Drinking before or during class or class excursions is prohibited unless it is part of the curriculum (e.g., a wine tasting). Drinking to excess during FSU sponsored activities and trips is also prohibited.

Florida State University does not tolerate the possession, use, manufacture, production, sale, exchange or distribution of illegal drugs by students participating in FSU study abroad programs. For complete information on student conduct processes, victim rights, and appeals see the [Student Conduct Code](#).

Policies

All program participants are bound by the rules, policies, and procedures set forth in the FSU [General Bulletin](#), [Student Handbook](#), and [Student Conduct Code](#). It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these policies before you leave.

Title IX policies and reporting requirements apply to all FSU IP study abroad programs and must be adhered to by all FSU IP participants and staff. FSU IP faculty and staff are considered mandatory reporters and are legally obligated to report incidents of discrimination based on sex and sexual misconduct.

Incidents are reported to the FSU Title IX office and the student's home institution (if they differ). Students may report information on their own behalf, or on behalf of another to the FSU Title IX office through report.fsu.edu. For more information, please visit [FSU Title IX and Know More](#).

Safety & Security

Our highest priority is the welfare and security of our students, faculty, staff, and facilities. We have emergency plans in place for each location and work closely with our insurers and 24/7 emergency response providers to monitor and respond to all situations worldwide. We follow guidance from the respective U.S. Embassies, U.S. State Department, as well as local officials and keep students apprised of any new information. For more information on IP's security policies and procedures, please contact our Director of Emergency and Risk Management, Brianna Ratkiewicz, at 850-644-1927 or bratkiewicz@fsu.edu.

- You are subject to the laws of the country in which you are traveling.
- **Resources:** Even though you are not on the main campus, you have access to many resources while abroad. Program staff are available to support you in a variety of ways, including connecting you with professionals locally and/or on main campus.
 - **Victim Advocate Program:** the University takes all types of victimization seriously, including sexual violence, relationship violence, and domestic violence. Advocates are available and on-call via call, text or WhatsApp, 24/7 to provide confidential support services, even for students abroad.
 - **Counseling & Psychological Services** at FSU: Due to licensing restrictions, the Office of Counseling and Psychological Services are unavailable while students are abroad but may be utilized upon return. The Office of Counseling and Psychological Services is a welcoming and confidential place to discuss questions and concerns such as reverse cultural shock, reentry adjustments, homesickness, struggles with relationships, sexual identity, cultural issues, and more.
 - [TalkCampus](#) is an anonymous platform for FSU students to connect and receive support from fellow peers. The mental health service app is free, with 24/7 access and available in multiple languages. FSU Students can [sign up online](#).
 - **Center for Health Advocacy & Wellness:** encourages you to make healthy lifestyle decisions that facilitate academic success and lead to life-long health and wellness.
- The **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to citizens traveling or living in a foreign country. For eligible U.S. citizens, we strongly recommend [registering your upcoming trip](#) so the **Department of State (DOS)** can assist you in an emergency. Non-U.S. citizens are encouraged to seek travel advice from the Embassy or Ministry of Foreign Affairs of your country of citizenship and inquire about similar traveler registration programs that may be available to you. The DOS also maintains information for Americans studying abroad, including current travel advisory warnings, at: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

- **Waiver:** All IP participants must sign and submit a general Waiver of Liability through the IP Student Portal. The waiver contains valuable information regarding risks in your foreign location and resources that you are expected to utilize.
- **Valuables:** Students should not take sentimental valuables abroad or leave cash, passports, or other items of value unattended in their residences. If in need of cash in the local currency, students should plan regular visits to the ATM rather than store large amounts of cash in their rooms. Students are responsible for ensuring their residences are always left secure – do not prop open doors, leave doors or windows unlocked, or give keys to anyone. If students notice others in the building leaving the main entrance door unsecured, they should notify the IP staff immediately, even if there are others living in the building who are not FSU program participants. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase insurance that will cover their belongings while abroad. The International Programs insurance policy does not cover loss or theft of participants' possessions.
- **Pickpocketing:** In many large cities throughout the world, pickpocketing is the most common crime and can happen anytime, anywhere! We caution you to always be aware of your surroundings. Beware of anyone who may try to distract you with papers, boxes, or excessive body movements. Coats, purses, phones, jewelry, and wallets are often stolen in crowded areas. Keep these items close to you. Always secure your valuables, especially on overnight ("sleeper") trains or in hostels.
- **Weapons:** You are strictly prohibited from keeping or using firearms, knives, weapons (including pellet, air guns, paintball guns or other dangerous articles or substances). Furthermore, mace and/or pepper spray may be illegal in the countries you visit. It's your responsibility to know weapons laws in the host country if you intend to bring self-defense items.
- **Cybersecurity:** The prevalence of cybercrime is a growing concern worldwide. Travelers are often targets for travel scams and cybersecurity risks. Review the following guidance and resources to educate yourself on potential cyberthreats you may encounter and take action to secure your devices and personal information before you leave home:
 - FSU's Information Technology Services resource for how to [Protect Yourself while Traveling](#).
 - U.S. Department of State's website for guidance on how to [Protect Yourself from Scams](#).
 - Perpetrators may compromise public Wi-Fi networks, charging ports, or use other tactics to steal credit card or personal information.
 - Avoid using public Wi-Fi and making purchases on unsecure websites or unknown links.
 - Use a portable power bank for your electronics and avoid public charging ports, especially at airports.
 - Be cautious when sharing personal information online or on social media.
 - Never click suspicious links in emails or texts about personal or payment details.

Students are advised to adhere to the following guidance while abroad:

- **Practice Awareness:** Stay alert and aware of your surroundings. Use your best judgement to stay away from unsafe situations.
- **Use the Buddy System:** Always travel in pairs or in a group. Avoid going off on your own, especially at night.
- **Share Your Plans:** Communicate with others about your plans. Let your friends know when to expect you home.
- **Set Boundaries:** Communicate your sexual desires and limits. You have the right to change your mind at any time; communicate that clearly, too.
- **Secure Your Residence:** Keep the doors and windows of your housing locked at night and any time you leave the residence.
- **Exercise Moderation & Caution:** Alcohol and substance use are often connected with incidents of sexual assault.

- Do not accept drinks from people you don't know or trust.
- Monitor your drink at all times – never set it down or leave it unattended.
- Drink responsibly and avoid intoxication. Being incapacitated makes you more vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Utilize report.fsu.edu:** Students can report information regarding incidents or concerning behavior on behalf of themselves or others through report.fsu.edu.

Tips & Resources

The following comments came from students who recently attended our study abroad program in Panama:

- Comfortable shoes are a must since you will be walking a lot during excursions.
- Leave extra space in your suitcase for souvenirs.
- Research the weather in Panama before leaving.
- Bring a reusable water bottle with you, along with any favorite over the counter medication in the event you get sick (Vitamin C, DayQuil/NyQuil)

Do your Research

The more information you find out about the country beforehand, the better off you will be once you get there. The resources and apps listed on [this linktree](#) may be helpful as you begin your information search.

(Note: Florida State University is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.)

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