

Students awarded an IWU Study Abroad Scholarship or an IWU Freeman Asia Internship commit to documenting and sharing their abroad experiences with the wider IWU community using social media, which will be posted on the IWU website and FB page. **To help you plan for and execute your project, we offer the following guidelines and tips.**

Requirements

- Details on the social media platform(s) you will be using to post from abroad (e.g., blog addresses, URLs, user names, etc.) are to be submitted to and approved by the International Office before the end of the semester prior to studying abroad. While we are open to the use of various forms of social media, the project must be in a format that we can share with a wide audience; if you are thinking of something other than a traditional blog, please consult with us.
- Projects and posts must adhere to IWU's [Social Media Guidelines](#). In particular, we would like to emphasize the need to be respectful, professional, and a good ambassador of the University.
- Students must post at least 10 entries per semester; students on summer programs or IWU Freeman Internships must post at least once per week.
- Remember that your commitment is to promote study abroad and Illinois Wesleyan University. While you will certainly want to post about your extracurricular activities while abroad, you need to balance those posts with information about the educational aspects study abroad. This may include your classes and/or internship, but also includes what you are learning about your host culture.

Guidelines

- The less often you post, the more substantive your entries should be. If you post only 10 times in the semester, each entry should be at least 300–500 words; if you post more often, then your entries can be more like quick snapshots.
- Include titles for each post.
- Include photographs and videos.
- Keep your audience in mind as you work. While you may want to use your project to keep family and friends informed, your main audience is the IWU community — fellow students, prospective students, faculty, staff and alumni. Remember, too, to keep your blog both professional and child-friendly.
- Take advantage of our existing hashtags to help the University promote your work.
 - #AskMeAboutStudyAbroad
 - #IWUStudyAbroadLife
 - #IL_Wesleyan
 - #illinoiswesleyan
 - #iwu
 - #IWUFreemanAsia
 - #IWULondonProgram
 - #IWUSpainProgram
 - #IWUStudyAbroad

Tips/Suggestions

General

- Create and follow a posting schedule. Without one, it is too easy to say, “I’ll do it tomorrow.” You also want people to expect and anticipate your posts! If you don’t post regularly, people stop checking.
- Set some goals for yourself before you start. Identify several subjects you want to tackle in your posts (e.g., packing, local food, public transportation, and classes). Set some personal goals: “I am going to learn a new word each day”; “I am going to join a sports club/volunteer organization/be involved in the

community”; “I am going to try new and unusual foods....” Note: you can share these goals in one of your early posts and then update your progress over the semester. Doing so is a good way to hold yourself accountable.

- Remember to explore all 6 Ws of journalism: who, what, where, when, why, and how. Instead of saying, “I went to Paris over the weekend and saw ...” think about telling your audience *why* you wanted to travel to Paris, *how* you went about planning the trip, *who* some of the local people were that you met, and *what* you learned about French culture.
- Carry a pocket notebook and a pen with you so you can take notes. Write down any sayings you hear or words you don’t understand; make notes about cool things you see or places want to explore later; jot down information about photos you take. Doing this will make creating entries much easier and will also help you remember both what you have done/seen and things that you want to do/see later.

Types of Posts

As you think about how you want to document your experiences (through a written blog, a visual vlog, a dedicated Facebook page, using Instagram, etc.), you should also think about the various formats you can use within your project. Below is a list of different types of posts or entries - experiment with them.

- Reflection: These posts might involve self-reflection on what you have experienced or learned, or how you are changing as a result of your time abroad.
- How-to: For many students, some of their initial anxiety about going abroad is tied to questions of how-to: How do I book a plane ticket? How do I use public transportation in Tokyo? How will I communicate when I don’t know the local language? As someone tackling these challenges, you are in the perfect position to write up a how-to guide.
- Journal, Diary: These kinds of posts usually recount an event or series of events. Remember both to document *what* you did and also to include reflections on the experience.
- Current Events: Even if you aren’t a political junkie or a newshound, write about current events in your host city/country. Help your friends, family, and the IWU community understand the issues most on people’s minds where you are. Take an educated political stand.
- Review: As with the how-to post, you can provide valuable advice to prospective study abroad students through reviews. Compare different bookstores, review the most popular restaurants in your neighborhood, and evaluate different travel guides dedicated to your host country.
- Series: If you prefer doing short but frequent posts, think about creating a recurring series within your project: “Word of the Day”, “Street Art”, “Local Customs” etc. This is a way in which you can pursue a topic of particular interest to you, express your personality, and create a sense of unity throughout your project. You can also use the series format to update readers on the progress you are making toward your goals.
- Listicle: Think David Letterman’s “Top 10” or all those BuzzFeed “Life Hack” articles. Choose a theme and use the list format to structure your post.
- Photo Essay: Not all posts have to be word-based. Tell a story using only visuals. Be careful, though, not to just throw a bunch of photos together - construct a story. Maybe it’s a “day in the life.” Or, maybe, you do a photo collage of the various people who are an important part of your life abroad: your host mother, your favorite teacher, the barista in your favorite coffee shop, the man with the fruit stall on the street corner that you wave to each morning.

Possible Topics

The possible topics open to you are endless! Here, though, are some subjects particularly well-suited to study abroad. But don’t limit yourself - be creative, and vary your topics.

- Autobiography: A good way to open your project. Introduce yourself, share information on where you will be studying and how you selected your program, talk about your family and how they feel about the adventure you are setting out on.
- Pre-departure: Chronicle the hours and days leading up to your departure. What tasks are you taking care of? What are you packing (and what are you leaving at home)? What are you excited about and what are you nervous about?
- Fun Facts: Do your homework before you go and put together a list of fun facts about your host country/city. You can write this up early and then post it later, when you are feeling stressed.

- Goals: As with fun facts, you can write up a post about your personal and academic goals before you leave and post it later. Then, you can circle back to those goals in other posts throughout your time abroad.
- Holidays/Celebrations: Post about a holiday or celebration in your host country. Maybe you're in London for Guy Fawkes, or in Barcelona for the festival of Sant Jordi, or Morocco for Eid al-Fitr. How do people in your host culture celebrate birthdays or weddings? Or what is it like celebrating Thanksgiving when you are in South Africa or the Fourth of July in the Philippines?
- Food: Always a popular topic – but be sure to do more than just document what you eat. Talk about how the food you eat is connected with the culture. Are meals less about nourishment and more about community? Is it acceptable/rude to eat in the street? What are people's attitudes toward American fast food chains where you are studying? Share recipes for local specialties.
- Cultural Differences: Chose an aspect of your host culture and reflect on how it is different from or very much like what you know. Maybe you compare how people get around in your host city with how you moved around at home. Perhaps you write about attitudes toward nature, the family, work, etc. Just be careful about judging one culture as being better or worse than another.
- Academics: Again, remember to write about the *study* part of study abroad. What classes are you taking and why? If you are at a foreign university, how does it compare with IWU? Tell your audience about your teachers and the kind of work you are doing. If you are doing an internship, write about your placement and responsibilities. Share information about any field studies you do with your classes. Take pictures in the classroom and work space!
- Language: Even if you are not studying a foreign language – or even if you are studying in an English-speaking location – you can write about language. Do a “new word of the week” series. Create a post about local slang. Compare the Spanish you learned in class with the Spanish spoken in Argentina.
- Interviews: Interview other students on your program or locals in your host community. Put together a list of 5–10 questions that you can ask of multiple people. You can then either post each interview separately in a series, or aggregate the answers to individual questions into separate posts.
- FAQ: Take those questions you get a lot from family and friends, and turn them into a FAQ.
- Future Me: Write a message to your future self. What do you want to remember about this time in your life? How do you think your time abroad will shape where you are in 5–10 years?
- Maps: In this world of GPS, we often forget the pleasures of looking at and creating maps. Post a map of your host city and pick out the landmarks that are important to you (your favorite sushi shop, the Metro stop you use every day, where you play soccer on Saturdays...). Use pictures to map your walk from home to classes. Exercise your creativity and draw your own map!
- Firsts: Write about the first time you met your host family, your first day in your internship, first trip on a bullet train, the first time you ate a real Indian curry. Your time abroad will be filled with firsts!
- Money: Other students are curious about how much studying abroad costs and are eager to learn how to make the most of what money they have. Share tips on managing your money and on how to find the best deals where you are.
- City Secrets: Everyone can find the tourist attractions in your host city, so there is no need to write about them. Instead, share your city secrets: the hidden attractions, the off-the-beaten-track places that only locals know about. Perhaps this is your favorite park in Berlin, favorite picture in the Louvre, the best ramen shop in Shinjuku.
- Humans of: Create a series in which you post about the people in your host culture. Talk with, interview, and take a picture with people you meet.
- Fails and Regrets: Too often, the picture painted of study abroad is one of endless fun and excitement. Why not share some more honest moments: the time you got on the wrong train; the special American dinner you tried to cook for your host family but ended up burning; the time you thought you were telling your French friends that you were full, but instead said you were pregnant. As for regrets, you'll have some of those as your time abroad draws to a close. Maybe you regret not pushing yourself harder to learn the language, or not doing that internship, or packing those high-heeled shoes. Be able to laugh at yourself.