

ERASMUS · EXCHANGE · INTERNSHIP · AU PAIR

The Study Abroad Departure Checklist

Everything worth sorting out before you leave, and the few things that make your first week easier. Tick as you go, skip what does not apply to you, and keep this somewhere you will see it.

2 to 3 months before

Documents, visa, insurance and housing. These take the longest.

The last 3 weeks

Bank, phone, health appointments and packing.

Your first week

Settle in, meet people, and write down how it all feels.

1 Documents

- ☐ **Passport or ID card** valid for your whole stay. Some countries want several months left after your return date.
- ☐ **Visa or residence permit** if your destination needs one. Book the appointment early, slots go fast.
- ☐ **Acceptance letter** from your university, company or host family.
- ☐ **Learning or internship agreement** signed by every party.
- ☐ **Scans of everything** in a cloud folder, shared with someone you trust at home.
- ☐ **4 passport photos** for student cards, transport passes and the gym.
- ☐ **Driving licence**, plus an international permit if you will need one.

2 Money and bank cards

- ☐ **Tell your bank** where you are going and for how long, so your card is not blocked.
- ☐ **Check the fees abroad** for card payments, cash withdrawals and currency conversion.
- ☐ **Carry two cards** on two different networks, and keep them in different places.
- ☐ **Local account?** Worth it for a long stay. Some landlords and employers ask for one.
- ☐ **A little local cash** for day one: transport, food, a SIM card.
- ☐ **Note your bank's emergency number** to block a card, somewhere other than your wallet.
- ☐ **Know when your grant or pay arrives** so your first month is covered.

3 Phone and SIM

- ☐ **Unlock your phone** so it works with a foreign SIM.
- ☐ **Check your plan.** EU roaming is like home for short trips, but long stays can hit fair use limits.
- ☐ **Compare a local SIM or an eSIM** if you stay more than a few weeks.
- ☐ **Keep access to your home number** for bank and login codes. Losing it can lock you out.
- ☐ **Download offline maps** of your city, a translation app with the language pack, and local transport apps.
- ☐ **Save emergency numbers.** 112 works across the EU.
- ☐ **Plug adapter and power bank** in your hand luggage.

4 Health and insurance

- ☐ **In Europe,** order your European Health Insurance Card before you go.
- ☐ **Outside Europe,** check what your insurance covers. Students often need a dedicated policy.
- ☐ **Your university or visa** may require specific cover. Keep the certificate with you.
- ☐ **See your doctor and dentist** before leaving.
- ☐ **Prescriptions** with the generic names of your medicines, and enough for the first weeks.
- ☐ **Vaccines** recommended for your destination.
- ☐ **Liability and home insurance,** often required to rent a room.

5 Housing

- ☐ **Never pay a deposit** before you have seen the place, in person or on a live video call. Scams target students.
- ☐ **Ask what is included:** bills, internet, furniture, kitchen.
- ☐ **Read the contract:** notice period and how the deposit comes back.
- ☐ **Take dated photos** of every room when you arrive and send them to your landlord.
- ☐ **Register your address** with the local authorities if your country asks for it.
- ☐ **Book a backup first night** in a hostel, in case the keys are not ready.
- ☐ **Plan the trip to your door** from the airport or station, with the address saved offline.
- ☐ **Ask your future flatmates** what is already there, so you do not pack a second kettle.

Good to know: for an Erasmus or exchange, the international office of your host university often has a list of trusted housing. Ask them first.

6 Packing essentials

- ☐ **A folder with all your documents** in your hand luggage, never in the hold.
- ☐ **Glasses, lenses and medicines** in your hand luggage too.
- ☐ **Clothes for two seasons:** the one you arrive in and the one you leave in.
- ☐ **One smart outfit** for interviews, presentations and events.
- ☐ **Something from home:** photos, a small object, a family recipe.
- ☐ **A small gift** for your host family or flatmates.
- ☐ **Weigh your suitcase** and check the airline limits the day before.

7 Your first week abroad

- ☐ **Message home** when you land.
- ☐ **Go to orientation**, even if you are tired. It is where friendships start.
- ☐ **Get your student card**, transport pass and local SIM.
- ☐ **Walk your neighbourhood:** supermarket, pharmacy, nearest doctor.
- ☐ **Join the groups:** student associations, class chats, the international office.
- ☐ **Say yes to invitations.** You can slow down later.
- ☐ **Write down your first impressions.** In a few months you will not remember them the same way.

My own list



Somewhere to keep the whole story

This list gets you out the door. The Study Abroad Journal is for everything after: a guided journal to write before you leave, while you are there and when you come home. I made it after my own Erasmus, for the people leaving next.

[See the journal](#)

Safe travels, Sullivan