

Wellesley Sustainable Study Abroad Resources



Here, we have compiled a list of suggestions for a sustainable study abroad experience. See how you can reduce your carbon footprint throughout your journey, from before you leave to after your return. We have also compiled a list of projects to support, and articles that may be of interest to you for further reference.

Before packing

- Packing with sustainability in mind reduces the number of bags you'll have to take and reduces the waste you'll have to dispose of when you reach your destination
- Extra weight requires more fuel and produces more carbon dioxide emissions. Packing light can be a challenge if you're not used to it, but ultimately you'll find that not only is it more eco-friendly, it's also more convenient!
 - **Multipurpose items:** Cut down on bulk and weight by bringing items that can be used for a variety of things. For example, bring sandals that you can hike in, use on the beach, and wear in the shower. Bring convertible pants that (depending on the weather) can be used as trousers or shorts
 - **Reusable items:** Create less waste in your destination by bringing these items with you: a reusable water bottle, reusable batteries (and a charger), a reusable shopping bag
 - **Paper weight:** When possible, reduce paper weight by downloading books, articles, maps, etc. on an electronic device and leaving the hard copies behind. If you only need a few pages from your guidebooks, tear out those pages (or make copies of them). If you make notes on those pages as you travel, you'll have a handy mini-journal
 - **Pre-trip recycling:** Remove packaging materials from new items and recycle those materials before you leave.
 - **Natural, non-toxic products:** Depending on your destination, consider bringing small quantities of natural, non-toxic items- toiletries, cosmetics, laundry soap, etc. - because, in some places, such products can be difficult to find or prohibitively expensive.
 - **Travel clothes:** Laundry services are almost always available. And when they're not, you can use the sink! For easy laundering, bring quick-drying clothing.

- **Nonessentials:** Train yourself to take as few non essential items as possible. In most cases, you'll find that you can function without them. If you find that you really need them later, you can probably borrow them or buy them locally as you travel.

Offsetting your carbon footprint

- The first step in calculating the amount of CO₂ that will be generated by your travel to your study abroad site. Many travelers choose to purchase carbon offsets to compensate for the CO₂ emitted by their flights.
- In a nutshell, offsets are monetary contributions to projects designed to reduce greenhouse gases in proportion to the amount of carbon generated by an individual activity (in this case, flying to an overseas destination).
- Projects supported by offsets may be dedicated to the development of biofuels, wind farms, and solar power projects; reforestation, which helps reduce CO₂ concentration since plants build their biomass from atmospheric CO₂; and methane gas collection (produced by landfills and farms, methane is less abundant in the atmosphere than CO₂, but it is a more potent greenhouse gas).
- The carbon offset industry has grown rapidly in recent years, and the efficacy of some offset programs is under debate. However, many offset providers have been carefully reviewed and sanctioned by well-known environmental groups (Georgetown University, 2014).
- We recommend using these sites to calculate your carbon emissions and consider purchasing carbon offsets from highly respected programs:
 - Sustainable Travel International
 - TerraPass
 - Native Energy

Once you arrive

- **Transportation:** Try to use transportation with low to no carbon emissions. For example, walking or biking in places with good cycling infrastructure, like Europe. You can carpool, ride-share, or use electric vehicles when possible. If available, make use of public transportation options, such as busses or trains.
- **Eating:** Opt for locally produced food to reduce the carbon footprint of your food's transportation and production. Try local vegetarian dishes as well, because raising domesticated animals for meat production is also a significant source of carbon emissions (CIS Australia)
- **Shopping:** Plan food shopping in advance to minimize waste. Try to buy bulk items to reduce waste from packaging.
- **Community involvement:** Familiarize yourself with local climate change issues, and volunteer with local climate action initiatives.

When you return

- Your experiences overseas and your actions when you return to the U.S. may be the most important offset of all. If you make new discoveries about environmental sustainability while abroad and begin to challenge your local community to develop more ecologically sound practices after your return, the environmental costs of your travel will become a valuable investment in our collective future

- We hope, therefore, that in addition to purchasing carbon offsets and volunteering your time, you will begin as soon as possible to consider how best to maximize your learning about environmental sustainability while studying overseas.
- And when you return to Wellesley, we ask that you continue working with the Office of Sustainability and to promote sustainability issues on campus and in our community (Georgetown University, 2014).

Projects to support

- [Middlebury](#) has numerous projects aimed at increasing the sustainability of studying abroad. Those interested in pursuing a program with Middlebury may consult their website to learn more.
- [EarthDeeds](#) assists institutions of higher education in reducing their carbon footprint by providing local and community-based solutions to global warming. They provide tools to track emissions from study abroad travel, and allow you to donate funds to a project of your choosing based on the social price of your carbon footprint. Project areas include poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, and green building & infrastructure.
- [The Forum on Education Abroad](#) has developed guidelines for studying abroad according to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They promote the holistic incorporation of SDGs into education abroad programs. They advocate for responsible consumption, sustainable cities, affordable clean energy, and many other causes.

Further reading

- International Education in the Era of Climate Change:
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/12/19/international-educators-begin-confront-climate-crisis>
- CIS Australia's Green Book:
<https://www.cisaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CISaustralia-Green-Book.pdf>
- Time to Cut International Education's Carbon Footprint:
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200108084344396>