



District of Columbia
International School

Voyager Student/Family Handbook

Welcome

Dear Voyager Students,

Congratulations on being accepted into the Voyager Exchange Program!

In the following handbook you will find a series of expectations you will need to follow as participants in the program, as well as some tips and tricks for getting ready to travel.

****Please note that this is a living document! There may be revisions and additional content added leading up to your trip. If you have any suggestions of things to add, please contact the Voyager Team****

If you have questions at any point, do not hesitate to reach out to the Voyager Team or your trip chaperones.

一路顺风,
Bon voyage,
Buen viaje,

DCI Voyager Team

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General Information

Behavior expectations

You are expected to follow all regular DCI rules while you are on your trip as well as the trip-specific behavior expectations detailed in the link above. You must read these behavior expectations fully before you leave for your trip.

Behavioral Expectations

DCI Voyager Exchange trip participants are expected to behave in a caring and principled manner and to communicate in the target language at all times.

Non-Negotiables

- 1) Follow directions of all adults the first time. This includes (but is not limited to): chaperones, host families, host school teachers, tour guides, airport/hotel personnel, etc.
- 2) All communication should be positive and constructive
- 3) Use the target language at all times, including with each other, except for designated break times.
- 4) Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- 5) Respect self, others, and property
- 6) Stay with your chaperone and group, or with your host, at all times
- 7) Be on time
- 8) Be responsible for your own belongings: phone, luggage, etc.

It is strictly prohibited to:

- 1) Possess, consume, distribute or engage with others who are using alcohol, tobacco or drugs; or purchase or wear any related paraphernalia or other items which promote the use of these.
- 2) Purchase or carry any item that may be considered a weapon, including toys or replicas.
- 3) Post inappropriate pictures of or comments about yourself, other students, or adults at any time.
- 4) Leave your group (or host family) without permission
- 5) Drive any automobile

Note: Any student who acts in a way that is irresponsible, dangerous, or illegal while on a DCI-sponsored trip will be sent home at his/her family's expense.

Specific Expectations

Packing and Property Expectations

- 1) **Ensure you have everything that you need**
Follow the packing guidelines provided to make sure you have all clothing, toiletries and other items you need. If you are missing or in need of something, speak with your chaperone.
- 2) **No illegal or prohibited items allowed**
Ensure you do not possess, purchase or use any item that is illegal, prohibited or inappropriate (see Packing Agreement for full list). Report any inappropriate items, use or behavior to trip chaperones immediately.

3) Be responsible for your belongings

Know where your belongings are at all times, especially valuables (passport, money, etc.). You are responsible for your own belongings, including damage or loss of any items. Report missing, lost or damaged property to your chaperone. Carry essential items in your day pack.

Medication Expectations

1) Identify all prescription and over-the-counter medication on International Trip Packing and Medication Agreement

Any medications brought on the trip must be in properly-marked original containers. You may only have in your possession medications that have been identified on the Packing and Medication Agreement.

2) Take medication only as outlined on Medication Agreement

You are responsible for administering your own medication as outlined by your parents/guardians on the Packing and Medication Agreement. Consult with your chaperone if you have any questions or concerns.

3) Do not share medication with anyone

It is strictly forbidden to share any medications, including over the counter, with anyone, including other students, chaperones and members of your host family.

Train, Bus, Plane, and other Transportation Specific Expectations

1) Stay seated

You need to remain in your seat unless given permission from your chaperone to move. The only exception is to utilize the bathroom.

2) Keep volume low and use appropriate language

Speak in low voices with the people near you and use headphones for music, videos, etc. If there is any chance that another person can hear you, do not curse or use other language that a teacher or parent would not want to hear you use. Try to speak in the target language at all times!

3) Cell phone use dictated by chaperones

Most times while not at home, you will not be allowed to use cell phones for anything but taking photos because you should be paying attention to something else. Assume you may not use your phone unless your chaperone says you can.

4) Sound on your devices should not be coming out of your phone

Please use headphones at all times.

5) Clean up after yourself

Leave a place cleaner than you found it!

6) If you get lost or there is an emergency:

Remain calm, stay with the group when possible, try to contact your chaperone via wifi or phone, ask an employee for help.

Hotel Specific Expectations:

1) Remain calm and keep volume low

Be considerate of your volume including your music, at all times, so you do not disturb others. No running or yelling in the hallways or other areas.

2) Students are responsible for any additional charges to the room

3) Room leader holds the key

Vote on a room leader who will keep your hotel room key. Whenever you leave your room, check to see that the lights are out, the door is locked, and that the room leader has the key. Your chaperone should have your other key.

4) Be neat

Put all trash in the can, dirty towels in the bathtub, keep your things organized, and respect all hotel property. If the room is a mess, housekeeping will not be able to clean the room. All rooms will be checked by an adult before departure. Students and their families are responsible for any damage to hotel rooms or other property.

5) Respect your roommate(s)

Do not touch your roommates' things, eat their snacks, or use electronics in a way that is disrespectful to your roommates.

6) No visitors allowed after lights out

Only those staying in the room or chaperones are allowed in hotel rooms after lights out.

7) Lock the door

If someone knocks on the door, ask who it is before opening it. Do not open the door for anyone except for our chaperones. Call your chaperone if you do not know who is at your door.

8) Follow "lights out" expectations

A time for lights out will be announced when we get to the hotel each night. That also means all electronic devices are turned off.

9) Stay in your room

Unless specifically told by your chaperone, you are to be in your hotel room at all times.

10) If you get lost or there is an emergency:

Remain calm, try to contact your chaperone via wifi or phone, ask a hotel employee for help.

Host School Specific Expectations

1) Check in with DCI chaperones for attendance

Go see your chaperone to check in first thing in the morning and before you go back to your host family in the afternoon.

2) Follow your host sibling to all of their classes

The one exception will be study-hall time for DCI students, during which you are expected to work on your DCI schoolwork.

3) Be a respectful, active student

Follow all host school rules. Participate actively in classes. Use the target language as much as possible. Make sure to ask your host sibling or the host school teachers if you are unsure about a rule or about what's going on in class.

4) Absolutely no cell phone use in class

Our partner schools have very strict rules about student cell phone usage. Do not use your cell phone while in class, or it will be confiscated by a host school teacher and returned to you at the end of the day.

5) If there is an emergency:

Remain calm, try to contact your chaperone via wifi or phone, ask host school teachers for help.

Host Family Specific Expectations

6) Keep volume low and use appropriate language

Speak in the target language at all times! Speak in low voices with the people near you and use headphones for music, videos, etc. If there is any chance that another person can hear you, do not curse or use other language that a teacher or parent would not want to hear.

7) Be neat and be a good guest

Clean up after yourself, keep your things organized, and respect all host family property. Offer to help with dinner, dishes, etc. Pitch in and show your host family you appreciate their efforts for you as a guest. Students and their families are responsible for any damage to property.

8) Follow host family rules and instructions

Follow the curfews, rules, and boundaries that your host families give you, even if you do not understand or agree with the reasoning behind it.

9) Remain with members of your host family at all times

You must always be with at least one member of your host family, except when with the entire group for scheduled activities. You may not gather in DCI-only pairs or groups at times when you should be with your host family.

10) Inform host parents and DCI chaperones when leaving home

If you leave your host family's house, you must be accompanied by a host sibling with a working phone. If you will be gone for less than an hour, you must tell your host parents where you are

going, when you will be back, and who they should call to get in touch with you (host sibling). If you will be gone for more than one hour, you must also tell your chaperone this information.

11) No body modifications while abroad

Even if the legal age to get a piercing would allow you to do so while you are abroad, you are still required to follow US laws and DCI rules. As such, getting piercings, tattoos, haircuts, or other body modifications is not allowed while you travel.

12) Limit time using electronics

Your host families have opened up their homes to you. It is considered rude to spend all of your time at home on the phone, watching Netflix, playing games, etc. You should be social and engage with your host families as much as possible to make the experience worthwhile.

13) Be understanding of cultural differences

Be prepared to try all foods served to you (unless you are allergic to an ingredient or you are given something you should not have, such as alcohol, in which case you should politely and respectfully decline), engage in conversation and participate in social activities.

14) Ask for breaks, sparingly

Living in a foreign language 24/7 can be exhausting. If you feel you need it, you can ask your host family to be excused for up to 1 hour to give your brain a chance to recharge.

15) If you get lost or there is an emergency:

Remain calm, try to contact your chaperone via wifi or phone, ask your host family for help.

Museum, Restaurant, and Tour-Specific Expectations

1) Keep volume low and use appropriate language

Speak in low voices with the people near you and use headphones for music, videos, etc. If there is any chance that another person can hear you, do not curse or use other language that a teacher or parent would not want to hear you use. Try to speak in the target language at all times!

2) Practice active listening while guides or leaders are speaking

Remain silent when guide/leader is speaking and engage as appropriate by asking questions, reflecting, etc.

3) Cell phone use dictated by chaperones

Most times, you will not be allowed to use cell phones for anything but taking photos because you should be paying attention to something else. Assume you may not use your phone unless your chaperone says you can.

4) Stay with your chaperone and group at all times

5) Be aware of your surroundings

While in public, take note of where you are and how many people are around you. We are traveling in large groups and need to make room for others as we travel through streets, museums, etc.

7) If you get lost or there is an emergency:

Remain calm, try to contact your chaperone via wifi or phone, ask an employee or police/security officer for help.

Whereabouts

During the afternoons and evenings, students are encouraged to explore their host community along with their host siblings. In order to do so safely, students must always have a way to communicate with host parents and chaperones while on the go. Additionally, host parents and chaperones must always know the students' general whereabouts.

1) If you will be gone from your host family's house for less than an hour:

Tell a host parent where you are going, and who you are going with (you must be accompanied by a member of your host family with a working phone).

2) If you will be gone for more than an hour:

Both your host family and a DCI chaperone need to know:

- Where you are going
- Who you are going with
- The phone number of the host family member who is accompanying you
- What time you expect to be back

You must text your chaperone once you return to your host family's home.

Consequences

General Steps When Student Not Following Expectations

- 1) Formal warning
- 2) One-on-One Conference/Time with chaperone (away from friends)
- 3) Detention during free/downtime (15-minute increments)
- 4) Dismissal from trip; sent back home at family expense.

Offense	Consequence(s)
Inappropriate phone use	Phone will be confiscated for an appropriate amount of time, up to the entirety of the trip <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Incident: Student must be witnessed powering down cell phone and placing in the book bag. • Second Incident: Phone is confiscated for the day. • Multiple Incidents of inappropriate use: Phone is confiscated for the remainder of the trip. Calls home can be made from chaperone phones.
Separating from group or chaperone without permission/breaking curfew	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Possessing, consuming, distributing or engaging with others who are using alcohol, tobacco or drugs	Dismissal from trip
Entering the sleeping room of others after lights out	Dismissal from trip
Inappropriate use of medication	Communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Possession, purchase or use of any item that may be considered a weapon or any other inappropriate items or materials	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Romantic/sexual involvement with other(s)	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Physical altercations	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip

Stealing or damaging property	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Not following host school's rules	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Bullying	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip
Not communicating whereabouts	Loss of free time and communication home; potential dismissal from trip

Note: Consequences for major discipline issues that may result in a student being sent home will be determined by the trip leaders in consultation with DCI Principals and Leadership. All other consequences will be determined by the chaperones involved.

Participating in Voyager is a Privilege

Being able to participate in these programs is a privilege. Throughout the year, you need to continue to demonstrate that you are deserving of that privilege.

In order to remain eligible for the trip portion of the Voyager Exchange, you must:

- Maintain at least a 3 in all of your classes,
- Achieve at least a 4 in your primary target language class,
- Receive no more than two (2) referrals in DeansList
- Abide by the Voyager Attendance Agreement (see below).

Your teachers and the RJ team will be giving regular updates to the Voyager Team about your grades and behavior.

Cause for concern - grades

If, at the end of any quarter leading up to the trip, a student's final grades do not meet the requirements outlined above, that student will automatically be removed from the program. A removal from a Voyager Program because of insufficient grades may be appealed and reversed through the following steps:

1. For all of the classes in which your grade was insufficient, submit a proposal following [this template](#) to the Voyager Team and the High School Principal. The proposal must be signed by the teacher of the class in question, your parent/guardian, and yourself.
2. After each time interval detailed on the proposal, the Voyager Team will check with your teacher on your progress. Once you have met the benchmarks outlined in the proposal

three (3) times, your removal from the Voyager Program will be reversed, and you will be allowed to travel abroad.

3. If you fail to meet three (3) benchmarks in the time indicated in the proposal, your dismissal from the program will stand and you will not be allowed to travel.

Cause for concern - behavior

If you receive a referral in DeansList at any point during the year before your trip, here are the next steps:

1. Your family will automatically receive an email alerting them about your referral.
2. Depending on the severity of your referral, you may meet with a member of the RJ team, the Voyager Team, and/or your parents/guardians to discuss a plan to get you on track.
3. Upon receiving your third referral, you will be removed from the Voyager program for this year.

Appeals

We understand that there may be extenuating circumstances that lead to any of the outcomes outlined above. In order to appeal a decision that you think was made without regard for any extenuating circumstances, please follow the Appeals Policy below:

Eligibility Waivers

There may be extenuating circumstances in which a waiver may be submitted on a student's behalf for acceptance in the Voyager Program. These can either waive the student's Academic or Behavioral Eligibility in applying for Voyager. Determinations regarding waiver submission are made on a case by case basis by the Principal, Director of Student Support Services AND the Experiential Learning Coordinator. The waiver request should include:

- Transcripts from the school year at the end of which the student applied for Voyager (usually 8th or 9th grade);
- Attendance records for the same school year as above;
- A signed statement/explanation from the Custodial Parent or Legal Guardian as to why the Voyager applicant deserves a waiver of the Voyager Eligibility criteria;
- Medical records (if applicable);
- Legal documentation (if applicable);
- A signed statement/explanation from the student's grade-level counselor (if applicable);
- IEP's (if applicable); and
- Any documentation or evidence to substantiate a hardship or extenuating circumstance exists.

Attendance Agreement

DCI's Voyager Exchange is a multi-month-long program. In preparation for going on the Voyager Trip, accepted Voyager students are expected to attend ALL Voyager activities. Aside from the two weeks of traveling abroad, the primary Voyager activities are the **pre-departure sessions** led by trip chaperones.

- After one (1) unexcused absence from a pre-departure session, students and their families will receive a written warning from the Voyager Team and the students' chaperones. Any subsequent unexcused absence from a pre-departure session will result in that student being removed from the program.
- In order to be granted an excused absence for a pre-departure session, a student must
 - Email their chaperones and the Voyager Team no later than 24 hours before the activity
 - Inquire what kind of make-up work they will be expected to complete
 - Complete that make-up work within the timeframe laid out by the Voyager Team and the chaperones
 - Provide confirmation from a third party of the conflict that will prevent them from attending the session (message from parent, doctor's note, coach's email, etc)
 - In the case of sudden illness or emergency, no advance notice needs to be given. However, a follow up email explaining the illness or injury as well as a doctor's note or message from a parent/guardian will be necessary to receive an excused absence.

The chaperones and the Voyager team understand that emergencies do happen, and will never penalize students for events outside of their control. All we ask is for proactive communication and a demonstration that students are taking this exchange seriously. As such, even if a student has had all their absences excused but has missed a total of three (3) Voyager activities, we will be reaching out to that student and their family to re-assess whether now is the best time to be participating in the program.

Payment Policies

Full Payment Policies are linked [here](#). Below is a summary:

- To secure their student's spot in the program, families must pay a deposit of \$100 if paying full price or \$20 if paying reduced price. Deposits must be paid by the date indicated in the policies linked above.
 - The reduced price is for students who receive Free or Reduced Lunch (FARMS) and Extra Assistance (EA), meaning their families receive either SNAP or TANF. Discounts are applied by DCI staff based on approved FARM and EA

applications. If you are unsure whether you qualify for a FRL or EA discount, please contact the front office at reception@dcinternationalschool.org Please contact reception@dcinternationalschool.org to fill out FARMS forms if you haven't already done so.

- Subsequently, families will make a total of four (4) additional payments. Each payment is due by the first school-day of each of the next four months.
 - We can adjust your payment plan to suit your needs. Please contact the Voyager Team to discuss details.
 - Families may choose to make smaller, more regular payments at any time- the dates are benchmarks
- If a student is removed from an international trip while traveling or abroad due to behavior issues, their family is responsible for travel costs home.
- Any unpaid balance after returning from the trip will be added to the student's record and will eventually need to be paid in order for a student to pick up their high school diploma.

Before You Travel

DCI School Work Expectations

4 weeks before you are scheduled to depart, fill out the form linked [here](#) with all of your teachers and turn it in to your chaperones.

You should complete all major summatives and formatives scheduled during your time abroad before you leave. You will be completely immersed in a new school environment and working extremely hard to integrate and build connections using their target language. As such, you will have no time to work on DCI school work while abroad.

While you should do your utmost to complete major assignments before you depart, you will also have a **2 week grace period** to turn in any outstanding work without penalty starting from the Monday you will be back at school after your trip.

End of Quarter grades

If your trip overlaps with the end of a quarter, you must complete the required school-work **before** you leave for your trip.

10th grade personal projects

Extensions for the 10th grade personal projects **cannot** be granted. If your trip overlaps with a major due date for your personal project, you must submit your work by the due date.

Standardized Testing

All students who miss a STAMP or MAP test date because of a trip **must** sign up for a make-up test when they return to DCI. All students who miss the DCI-administered PSAT or SAT will be able to sign up for a make-up test once they return.

What to pack

Each traveler on the Voyager Exchanges will be allowed one checked bag and one carry on.

Shoes: anticipate walking a lot. Pack the most comfortable shoes possible. Sandals are ok but not recommended. Most host schools require close toed shoes.

Clothing: Pack light! You will be able to do laundry while you are traveling. Have lightweight, comfortable clothing good for walking. Anticipate the following temperature for your travel destination:

	February	March	April
Argentina	low 80s - low 60s	low 80s - low 60s	low 70s - low 50s
France	mid 40s - mid 30s	low 50s - high 30s	high 50s - low 40s
Spain	high 50s - high 30s	low 60s - low 40s	high 60s - high 40s
Taiwan	low 70s - high 50s	high 70s - low 60s	low 80s - high 60s

- 2-3 pants (quick dry are a good option too)
- 2-3 shorts/skirts (only necessary in Taiwan, Argentina, or Spain)
- 5-6 shirts
- Comfortable, closed toed shoes for walking
- 1 sweatshirt or something warm in case it gets cold at night
- 1 rain jacket (essential, we will continue rain or shine)
- 1 regular jacket (see weather above)
- Clothes you can be active in (you never know when you'll want to join a pick-up game of soccer or jump into a PE class)
- socks and underwear
- sleepwear

****Make sure to pack a change of clothes in your carry on! Voyager students have had their luggage delayed before****

Additional Items: Here is a continuation of the list with items beyond essential clothing you should consider

- Bug spray (highly recommended for Taiwan and Argentina)
- Sunscreen
- Bathing suit (especially for Taiwan and Argentina; visits to France and Spain may coincide with swimming units in PE, verify with your host sibling)
- Small first aid kit, especially stocked with pepto bismol, imodium
- Travel toilet paper
- Hand sanitizer
- All necessary toiletries
- Any other medications, over the counter or otherwise that you may need as they may not have exactly what you want once you arrive in-country
- Electronic converter plugs ([Europe](#), [Argentina](#), [Taiwan](#), none needed for Taiwan!)

Dress Code: all of the host schools have stricter dress codes than DCI. Here are the rules you must follow on top of DCI's dress code while you are at the host school:

- Shoulders, midriff, and upper chest must be covered
- Legs covered up to finger tips when arms hang normally
- No pajamas
- No hats
- No open-toed shoes

Outside of host school activities, follow the regular DCI dress code unless told otherwise by your host family or chaperones. If your host school requires its students to wear uniforms, you will not need to wear their uniforms.

A gift for your host family: Bring your host family a small gift to thank them for hosting you. If you need ideas, DC-themed tchotchkes or DCI apparel make for excellent gifts. Check out [Shop Made In DC](#) or the [Smithsonian Gift Shops](#) for inspiration. Depending on the family, American candy or snacks are also received very enthusiastically.

****Some Voyager students in the past have mentioned that it was nice to have a few extra small gifts to give out to people outside of the host family, like friends at the host school.****

Money Abroad

Before Leaving

- Make sure you call your bank to let them know where you will be traveling and for how long.
- You know your spending habits. Reach out to your host family or to DCI students who traveled last year to get a sense of how much the things you would like to buy will cost. Make a budget accordingly. We recommend somewhere between \$50-\$200 for things like souvenirs or snacks.
- Discuss with your family whether to exchange currency at their bank in the US before you travel (this will not be possible for Argentinian Pesos, see below).
- If you are bringing credit/debit cards, check with your bank to see what kinds of foreign transaction fees you might incur if you use your card abroad.

Once You Arrive

- Exchange rates are usually best at branches of your bank abroad.
- You will also be able to exchange currency at money exchange counters or just by withdrawing from ATMs, but you'll be paying more.
- Be aware that different countries or stores may not accept the full range of payment options you are used to in the US (certain credit card companies, mobile apps, Apple Pay, etc). It's always a good idea to have at least a little local cash on hand.

Special note on Argentina

- The official Argentina exchange range is much higher than the de facto “Blue Rate” people use day to day.
- To get the “Blue Rate,” you will need US cash. Bring newer, blue tinted \$100 bills (which is where the name Blue Rate comes from). You can bring smaller bills, but they won’t get you the same exchange rate.
- When you arrive in Argentina, your host family will take you to a local currency exchange to get you the Blue Rate.
- You may be able to use credit cards in Argentina (especially in Buenos Aires), but most credit cards will be charged the official exchange rate in addition to international credit card fees, which means you’ll be paying way more ([although this seems to be changing](#)).

Jet Lag

(Adapted from [Longwood University Study Abroad Handbook](#))

Jet lag refers to the physical and mental effects the body suffers when traveling rapidly across numerous time zones. The condition results from the disruption of the traveler’s normal sleep-wake cycle.

As a result, the traveler may experience indigestion, daytime sleepiness, and headaches, changes in blood pressure, fatigue, and poor concentration. If you are in the air for more than six hours or cross more than three time zones, your body may react unfavorably to the stress, causing symptoms that you will experience upon arrival abroad, often including exhaustion, disorientation, headaches, insomnia, nausea and aching bones and muscles.

There is no single cure for jet lag. What works for one person may not work for another. Following are some tips that may help reduce the effects of jet lag:

- If you can, get up and move around regularly on the flight.
- Eat a meal high in carbohydrates the evening before the flight.
- On the day of the flight, eat lightly.
- Especially avoid coffee, tea, and nonprescription drugs.
- Set your watch for the time at your destination. This will help mentally prepare you for the time change and begin the process of your body’s adaptation to a new sleep cycle.
- Try to relax on the flight. Make yourself comfortable. Wear loose clothing.
- Drink water (not coffee or a soft drink) for each hour spent in the plane.
- If at all possible, get some sleep on the plane.
- Once you arrive: if it is dark, go to bed; if it is light, get out and do something in the sunlight
- During the first few days after you arrive, do your best to stay awake for the full day, even if you wake up and go to bed a little earlier than you would at home. Avoid taking naps in the afternoon.
- Take sleeping aids like melatonin to help your body adjust to the new sleep cycle

Meal Times and Portions

Argentina

(adapted from the [ISEP website](#))

Getting used to Argentinian food and meal times may take some time, depending on your home country. In general, breakfast is very light and usually consists of some type of bread product. Cereal, French bread with jam and *medialunas* (similar to small croissants) are all common breakfast foods. A small cup of instant coffee is also a favorite among Argentines. Lunch is the largest meal of the day and usually takes place between 1:30-3 pm. Many businesses close in observance of the afternoon siesta, so it can be hard to plan on doing your errands after lunch. Dinner is usually eaten no earlier than 9 pm. Argentines tend to follow these standard mealtime practices relatively closely. Restaurants generally don't open before 7:30 or 8 pm. for dinner. Beef, empanadas, Italian food, hamburgers, very sweet desserts and *milanesa* (a breaded and fried type of thin steak) are all common in Argentina.

You will also see people drinking yerba *mate*, a loose tea-like beverage that comes from a specific type of Argentine bush. Drinking *mate* is a very common custom in Argentina and Uruguay. Argentines mostly drink mate at work, during class, at home with friends, while studying, during an afternoon snack and sometimes at a café. When sharing *mate* with a group of people, say "*gracias*" only after you are finished taking all of your desired turns. The actual plant material is referred to as *yerba* or *yerba mate*, and the container from which you drink *yerba* is called a *mate*. The metal 'straw' used with mate is called a *bombilla*. Drinking *mate* is a common reason for a person to stop what they're doing, relax a little and enjoy conversation with friends and co-workers.

France

(adapted from the [ISEP website](#))

Food plays a major role in the country's social life. Meals are ritualized and full of social and cultural meaning. There are also political aspects to the meaning of food. For instance, there has recently been much concern about the quality of "engineered" food and a rejection of foods that have been genetically altered.

The three main meals are *le petit déjeuner* (breakfast), *le déjeuner* (lunch) and *le dîner* (dinner). Although the midday meal had great importance in an agricultural economy and is still the main meal in rural areas, there is a tendency for families to eat the largest meal in the evening. Breakfast is a light meal of bread, cereal, yogurt and coffee or hot chocolate. Lunch and dinner generally involve several courses, at minimum a first course (l'entree) and a main dish (le plat), followed by cheese and/or dessert. In restaurants, it is common to have a price that includes all these courses, with a choice of dishes.

Meals involve a succession of courses eaten one at a time. A typical family meal starts with a soup, followed by vegetables and a meat dish and then a salad, cheese and dessert. Wine is commonly served at meals. Convenience foods are becoming more prevalent, and fast food is a growing trend.

Spain

(adapted from the [ISEP website](#))

The Spanish diet is rich in diversity. Pork products such as *jamon serrano*, *jamon iberico* and many other forms of the meat are very popular. Depending on the region you live in, fresh seafood may be widely available at a very reasonable price. Vegetarians may have a slightly more difficult time finding strictly vegetarian dishes, but it is possible. It is considered inappropriate to bring food, drink or chewing gum into the classroom in Spain.

In Spain, breakfast is very light, normally a coffee or tea with toast or pastries. Around 11am, many people eat a light snack to keep them going until lunch, the main meal of the day.

Lunch is normally eaten around 2 or 3 pm in the afternoon and may consist of multiple *platos*, or courses. The Spanish school day typically goes from 8-3, with a few short breaks between classes. Students eat lunch when school lets out either at home, or at the school cafeteria.

Tapas provide a late afternoon/early evening snack. Many people go for tapas with friends and share a few plates of different appetizers. Dinner is a lighter fare, and is served later, generally around 9 or 10 pm.

Taiwan

(adapted from the [ISEP website](#))

Food is the country's love language. A typical greeting in Taiwanese is *jia ba wei*, meaning "have you eaten?" Sharing meals and communal dining is a very important aspect of Taiwanese culture. When you are a guest, expect your hosts to place food on your plate. Leaving a full plate will be taken to mean you didn't like the food. Leaving a completely empty plate will be interpreted as a sign that you still want more. Always make an effort to accept offered food. If you are full, make sure to leave something on your plate.

Breakfast is typically eaten right after waking up in the morning. Typical foods include congee (稀饭 xīfàn), egg pancakes (蛋饼 dànbing), soy milk (豆浆 dòujiāng), and assorted sweet and savory rolls (面包 miànbāo). Breakfast can also be acquired at nearby convenience stores and street vendors, where you might find breakfast sandwiches (早餐三明治 zǎocān sānmíngzhì) with dried pork or fish (肉松 ròusōng) or fried dough wrapped in flatbread (烧饼油条 shāobing yóutiáo). Coffee may be served in homes but is always available at nearby convenience stores.

You will need to specify exactly what kind of coffee you want, for instance pure black coffee is 美式咖啡 (měishì kāfēi).

Lunch is typically served between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm and dinner around 6-7:30 pm. Restaurants will not serve food outside of those times. Lunch is served at schools in plateware that students bring from home. The most common ingredients in Taiwanese food are pork, seafood, rice, and soy. Most dishes are comprised of these items but will then add unique spices to change the flavor of each dish. Peanuts, sesame oil, mustard greens, chili peppers, and cilantro are all common spices used to enrich Taiwanese dishes. Some variations of Chinese dishes are also common in Taiwan. Taiwan is one of the best places to indulge in great seafood, such as cuttlefish, tuna, squid, etc. Additionally, people in Taiwan will not drink tap water unless it is boiled first.

Cell Service and Internet

Wifi is readily available in all of the places you will be traveling to, but be prepared to not have the same access to Wifi that you are used to in the US. The host school you are visiting may not allow its students to connect to the Wifi. Your host family might have wifi, but not as fast as what you're used to, or else it may only work reliably in certain parts of the house.

DCI does not require students to have working cell phone service while they are abroad. Your chaperones will have working phones while you are abroad, so make sure your host sibling and your host parents have the chaperones' numbers saved. That way, you can contact your chaperones through your host family at any time.

If you would like to make sure your cell phone can connect on the go abroad, talk to your family about upgrading to an international plan with your current provider. You can also check to see if your phone is [e-sim compatible](#), and buy an e-sim from a local cell-service provider to use while you are abroad. Below is a list of the biggest providers by country:

- Argentina: [Claro](#), [Telefónica Movistar](#), [Telecom Personal](#)
- France: [Orange](#), [SFR](#), [Bouygues Telecom](#), [Free](#)
- Spain: [Movistar](#), [Orange](#), [Vodafone](#), [Yoigo](#)
- Taiwan: [Chunghwa Telecom](#), [Taiwan Mobile](#), [FarEasTone](#)

If your phone is unlocked and you can freely change sim cards, you may also consider buying a local sim card after you arrive. It is very easy to find pay-as-you-go or preloaded sim cards in convenience stores that will cost between \$10-\$20 if not less. Ask your host family to help you find a local sim card once you arrive.

While You're Abroad

General Best Practices

- Keep your receipts whenever you buy public transit passes or load value onto a card.

Passport Expectations

Chaperones will be keeping student passports during the entire trip. Chaperones will hand out passports when needed and collect them immediately after. Chaperones will also have print and digital photocopies of all students' passports during the entire trip.

Expectations while with the host family

General Expectations

- Do your best to be an active member of your host family's household during the duration of your stay
- Follow all household rules, including curfews
- Keep your room clean
- Accompany your host sibling to school when they go to school
- You must spend the night at your host family's house, unless you are on an approved overnight trip

Integration Period

For the first four (4) days after your arrival in-country, you are expected to commit to an integration period. During this period, you must prioritize spending time with your host family during non-school hours. You should not initiate plans with DCI peers until the integration period is over.

The purpose of the integration period is to make sure you are honoring the investment of time and resources made by your host family. While they are very excited to host you, hosting someone in their house for that long is a huge commitment. Be mindful of that commitment and honor it by investing the time to build a relationship with your host family. Participating in a Voyager Exchange means you agree to invest time and energy in local relationships.

Leaving your host family's home

- One of your host parents should know where you are at all times
- Any time you leave your host family's home for more than 1 hour
 - you need to be with someone with a working phone (host sibling, host parent, or other student at the partner school)

- Tell a host parent and your chaperones where you are going and when you'll be back

Health and Safety

- Self-administer any medication that you have brought from the US
- Only purchase over the counter medications with your chaperones or your host parents present, so that they can verify you are getting the right medications
- In case of emergencies, call your chaperones as soon as you can
- If you ever feel unsafe or something just feels “off,” call your chaperones immediately

Language Practice

- Speak to your host family in your target language as much as possible.
- Be patient with yourself
- Ask your host family to correct you or to refrain from correcting you, depending on your needs
- Look up words you don't know online or use English to ask how to say something you don't know
- If you need it, ask for a short break to give your mind a chance to rest. Living 24/7 in a target language is exhausting, give yourself the chance to recharge!

Communication and Group Message Expectations

Your chaperones will create a Whatsapp or similar group message with all DCI students and chaperones on it. This group will typically be used for announcements and to check in about your whereabouts.

Please respond promptly to any messages posted by chaperones in this group message. Refrain from any extraneous conversations in this group message to keep important announcements and questions easily accessible. Students are encouraged to form their own group messages for casual conversation.

Emergency Procedures

DCI Voyager Exchange participants will spend most of their time under the supervision of a caretaker (either a host school teacher, a host parent, or a DCI chaperone). Additionally, one DCI chaperone with mastery of the trip's target language and familiarity with the local context will be designated as the “Emergency Chaperone.”

In case of a serious injury, illness, or other emergency

Step 1: Whatever caretaker is present will assure the safety of the DCI students involved in the situation.

Step 2: Caretaker will call emergency services (if needed).

Step 3: Caretaker will contact the Emergency Chaperone, inform them what happened, and where the caretaker and student(s) are.

Step 4: Caretaker must stay with the student(s) until Emergency Chaperone arrives

Step 5: After assessing the situation, the Emergency Chaperone will contact the student's family back in the US and inform them what happened.

Step 6: Emergency Chaperone will contact the DCI leadership member on call back in the US and inform them what happened.

Step 7: Emergency Chaperone will stay with the student for any interactions with local emergency services

Step 8: Emergency Chaperone will continue to stay in touch with local emergency services, DCI leadership, and the student's family and act accordingly to assure the student's health and safety.

If no caretaker is present when an injury or emergency occurs, students should contact Emergency Services and a DCI chaperone IMMEDIATELY.

Student advice

Below is a collection of advice that previous Voyager students put on their feedback forms after they got back from their trips.

Self-care

- Do not be afraid to tell your host family you need a break. They will understand and it'll help so much to just have a breather from everything going on. The chaperones will ALWAYS help you. If you have any issue, big or small, let the chaperones know. They will be there for you asap.
- Get good sleep so you can beat jet lag early.
- Tell your host family when you're hungry/tired. It's better to say something than to suffer in silence, even if you're shy.
- Don't worry about your assignments, really try to disconnect and live in the moment. When you get a little overwhelmed or tired it's also important to be able to create boundaries and safe places.

Challenge yourself

- Keep an open mind! Even if you're tired and your host sibling wants to go do something, force yourself to do it because you'll probably have a blast.
- Have fun interacting with people, including other students at the school and complete strangers. Also, be open to trying new activities, foods, etc. Step out of your comfort zone!
- Be prepared to communicate in your target language almost all the time.
- Spend most of your time with your host family and not so much with your DCI classmates.
- Know the weather and activities that are going to be done so you can pack appropriately. Bring enough money and buy what's only necessary.

- Talk to your host sibling before going to the new country.
- Try to speak the new language exclusively while you're there, at least with the people who live there (they know it might not be very good, that's why you're there!).
- If you feel comfortable, respond to people in the target language even when they start in English.
- Keep in touch w/ your host siblings after the exchange as well.

Packing

- Pack just enough. Leave some space in your suitcase because most likely, you will want to buy clothes or any other form of souvenir.
- Make sure you talk with your fellow Voyager group about what you are all taking, maybe some of you can share things, or maybe make a list of things you'll need for the trip. Don't overthink how much you'll need for the trip, make a list of things you really want to buy and don't just let your emotions buy for you while you're there.
- Be prepared to bring home 2x what you brought.
- Pack one large suitcase and a small one plus a backpack and or duffel bag. You are bringing more than taking to said place plus you want to make sure you have enough space for everything. You can also use air sucker bags to create more space.
- Know the weather and activities that are going to be done so you can pack appropriately. Bring enough money and buy what's only necessary.

Cross-Cultural Learning

- If you can, follow the kids on social media, even if they aren't your buddy or family because you're probably going to be friends with a lot of them. Also try to learn about traditions, the national anthem, pledge of allegiance, and other traditional national things. Also listen to a lot of popular music from that place so when you listen with the kids, you can sing along.

Appendix A: General Resources While Abroad

Identity

- Diversity Abroad's Diversity and Inclusion Guide: <https://www.diversityabroad.com/article/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide>
- IES's Student Diversity and Access Resources: https://www.iesabroad.org/student-diversity-access#paragraph-info_wrapper6061
- CISabroad's Inclusion and Access Abroad: <https://www.cisabroad.com/inclusion-access-abroad/>

Ability

- Mental Health: <https://www.goabroad.com/articles/free-ebook-meaningful-travel-tips-mental-health-self-care>
- Exchangeability: <https://esn.org/exchangeability>
- Emerging Horizons: <http://emerginghorizons.com/>
- Abroad With Disabilities: <http://abroadwithdisabilities.org/>
- Mobility International USA: <http://www.miusa.org/plan/americans-abroad>
<http://www.miusa.org/resources> <http://www.miusa.org/ncde>

LGBTQ

- Department of State LGBTI Travel Information: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/lgbt.html>
- International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA): <https://ilga.org/>
- National Center for Transgender Equality: <http://www.transequality.org/issues/travel>
- OutRight Action International: <https://www.outrightinternational.org/> Click on 'Where We Work' and then the region to see the links to the country-specific pages.
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators Rainbow Special Interest Group (SIG): <http://www.rainbowsig.org/resource-center/study-abroad/>
- Refugee Restrooms (Gender Neutral Restrooms with GPS): <http://www.refugerestrooms.org/>
- Go Abroad.com's LGBT Student Guide: <https://www.goabroad.com/downloads/lgbt-study-abroad-guide.pdf>
- TransRespect Versus Transphobia: <https://transrespect.org/en/> Click 'Explore', then the '+' under the 'Choose a Map' heading to see the drop down categories, then you can select a country to see the selected data for a specific country.

Race and Ethnicity

- All Abroad.us Info to Support Diversity: <http://www.allabroad.us/diversity-resources.php>
- Diversity Abroad Destination Guides: <http://www.diversityabroad.com/destinations>
- Transitions Abroad: Top 10 Reasons for African American Students to go Abroad: <http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/study/articles/studyjul1.shtml>

- IES Abroad Country Specific Resources (17 Countries available):
<https://www.iesabroad.org/study-abroad/student-diversityaccess/resources/country-specific>

Appendix B: DCI Resources for Before Travel

- [Voyager Exchange Dashboard](#) (bookmark this site)
- [Pre-departure Academic Checklist](#)
- [Voyager Academic Makeup template](#)