

## Health Information

**In the Footsteps of Philip, Alexander the Great, St. Paul and Beyond: Three Balkan Countries  
Greece, Bulgaria, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)  
June 11–26, 2010**

This form contains two parts:

- 1) Information from St. Olaf College to you, the traveler.
- 2) Information from you, the traveler, to St. Olaf College.

### **Health Information for the Traveler**

Study Travel is an adventure of the mind, body and spirit. Traveling overseas is an exhilarating experience — it should also be a healthy one.

Many places you travel will cause no special health concerns. Healthcare systems and facilities in many countries are quite similar to those in the United States. In other regions, however, there are differences and specifically recommended health procedures.

This form is meant to be used by participants as a general reference only. It is by no means comprehensive; therefore, travelers should consult with a physician or other resources regarding particular health questions.

### **Participation Requirements**

Greece is not handicapped accessible. Though we will transfer between cities by air-conditioned private motor coach, you should be prepared for lots of walking. Greece is full of tiny streets, mountains, hills and dales — places a bus just can't get to. You should be capable of walking a minimum of one mile at a time over uneven terrain and up to five miles per day, of climbing stairs that may not have handrails, of keeping pace with an active group of travelers on long days of traveling, of dealing with the emotional highs and lows that can occur when experiencing a different culture, and of traveling with a group for several hours each day.

Most days, we will depart the hotel between 8 and 9 a.m.; we will coordinate our departure time in order to maximize our time at that day's sites. We will stop for lunch at some point in the early afternoon (usually between 12 noon and 2 p.m.). Often we will resume our program after lunch, visiting another site or museum. We will try to avoid the hottest part of the day, but sometimes being out in the sun will be inevitable. Some days will have several hours of free time; others will have very little or none at all. We try to return to the hotel in time to relax and freshen up for dinner. Greeks eat dinner much later (particularly in the summer months) than do Americans, and dining for the Greeks is much more than eating; it is time to socialize, to sing, to dance, and generally to experience fellowship with friends. We generally arrange for our evening meals between 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. This can make for long days on certain days.

You should plan on seeing your family physician or a travel doctor at least four to six weeks prior to departure, preferably earlier, to talk about routine vaccinations and an anti-malarial prescription for the visit in Kruger National Park.

### **Upon Registration**

- **Review Your Health Insurance**

Participants are solely responsible for their own insurance coverage while traveling on the St. Olaf Study Travel program. Many medical providers do not cover you outside the United States. Check with your own provider first. If you are not covered, we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance. See the travel insurance information at the end of this document.

- **Identify Your Health Needs**

Inform us of health or other special needs issues when you register. Describe allergies, disabilities, psychological treatments, dietary requirements and medical needs. Resources and services for people with disabilities vary widely

by country and region. If you have a disability or special need, please identify it immediately so that we may research what accommodations, if any, can be made.

- **Check Health Advisories**

Research recommendations for your destination country and check regional health and medical advisories. Check the travel recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and from the World Health Organization at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).

- What immunizations are required or recommended? Obtain this information as early as possible, as some immunization cycles require several weeks.
- What illnesses, if any, are specific or endemic to the region? Are there ways to avoid these illnesses through medication or behavior?
- What is the altitude and average daily temperature?
- What is the water quality?
- What are the laws governing import of medications and medical supplies?
- What treatment is available, especially by an English-speaking physician, in case of illness?

## **Before Departure**

- **Visit Your Health Care Provider**

Visit your doctor or a travel clinic physician to find out whether you need to take any special precautions based on your medical history and destination.

- **Prescriptions**

Update your health records and prescriptions for medications and corrective lenses or equipment. Carry medications in their original containers. Arrange to bring necessary prescription medication with you. If prescriptions will need to be filled overseas, carry written prescriptions using generic names to facilitate refills, and check with your doctor, pharmacist or other resources to ensure that refills will be available. It may also be helpful to have a letter from your physician that describes the health issue, the prescribed dosage and the generic name of the medicine.

- **Anti-Depressant/Anti-Anxiety Medications**

If you take anti-depressant or anti-anxiety medications, physicians often recommend that you stay on them during the program, even if it would otherwise be time for you to taper. Be particularly cautious about dosage changes prior to departure. We encourage you to consult your physician on this matter.

- **Allergies**

If you are allergic to anything, wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace and carry an identification card to inform health care personnel in the event of an accident or injury.

- **First Aid Kit**

You may wish to carry a small first aid kit. The kit could be quite simple or more comprehensive, depending on your destination. It could contain such items as bandages, ace bandages, thermometer, adhesive tape, gauze, sterile cleansers, antibacterial ointment and antiseptic cream. Depending on the region, you might include antihistamines, salt tablets, sunscreen or insect repellent.

- **Over the Counter Medications**

Pack an adequate supply of any over-the-counter medications you take regularly, as well as remedies for motion sickness (if you are prone) and diarrhea. Remember that the food abroad will be different from what you're used to at home.

## **En Route**

To help ameliorate jet lag, follow these tips on the airplane.

- **Drink liquids to avoid dehydration**

Water and fruit juices are best. During flight, alcohol dehydrates you and affects you more quickly and strongly. It can also cause joints to swell and make it harder to adjust to time changes.

- **Move**

Stretch, stand and walk around as much as possible.

- **Sleep**

If possible, sleep during the flight. If you can find an empty row, lift the arm rests and stretch out.

- **Set your watch**

Change your watch to the new time when your flight departs. Attempt to eat meals on destination time.

- **Sleeping on arrival**

If you arrive in the morning, stay awake until a usual bedtime (or at least until 8 or 9 p.m.). If you arrive later in the evening, try to go to sleep early. Try to establish a regular sleeping pattern as soon as possible.

### **During the Program**

Because of cultural and environmental differences, many matters need to be addressed after you arrive.

- **Finding Medical Assistance**

Learn how to find medical assistance, whether routine or emergency, before the need arises. Is there a 911-style emergency number? If so, what services does it access? Who will provide routine medical care and how can you reach that provider? If you need any special resources, find out how to get them. Is there a coordinator on site who can assist you with finding this information?

- **Culture Shock**

Culture shock can be a real health issue. Traveling through time zones and for long periods of time, facing different values and habits can leave travelers impatient, bewildered and depressed. You may find yourself alternately exhilarated and exasperated — thrilled at the experiences the new culture offers and frustrated by the culture's differences from your own.

Ups and downs are natural. If you are angry, impatient, homesick, or depressed during the first few days, remind yourself that these things will pass once you are sleeping and eating normally. If these feelings are prolonged, please seek help.

- **Diet and Routine**

Food in other countries may be quite different from what you are used to at home. It may be healthier in some instances (more vegetables and fruits) or less healthy in others (more fried foods than you usually eat). If you have special dietary restrictions or needs, you should consult with St. Olaf College before departure. Depending on your destination, you may need to drink only bottled water and avoid ice cubes. At any rate, drink plenty of liquids to stay hydrated. If you have special dietary needs, make arrangements in advance.

Despite the change in environment, you can still keep some of your routines from home. Get enough rest, especially the first few days. Be as active as you normally are, but beware of extra activity and strain, as travel itself is taxing.

### **Upon Return**

- **Illness**

If you become ill when you return home, contact your doctor. Sometimes illnesses first appear weeks after initial exposure. Inform medical personnel about the countries you have been in. Many diseases that are indigenous to foreign countries are unfamiliar to doctors trained in the United States.

- **Tuberculosis Testing**

Tuberculosis is on the rise in the United States and many other countries. Because of concern about exposure during airline flights, it is now recommended that you have a tuberculosis test 30 days after your return from travel abroad. Consult with your physician regarding whether you should have a tuberculosis test.

### **Travel Insurance**

Travel insurance is not included in Study Travel fees, but is highly recommended. Benefits typically include:

- Medical protection. Most medical providers do not cover you outside the United States. Check with your own provider first.
- Baggage protection including delay, theft or loss
- Trip cancellation or interruption. Depending on the policy, coverage may include injury, your sickness or death or that of an immediate family member; fire or flood damage to your home; jury duty; and cancellation of public transport due to a strike.
- Emergency evacuation.

A good place to start is with your current insurance providers. Your homeowner's insurance may cover baggage theft, and your medical insurance may cover you for illness overseas. If not, attaching a rider to a current policy may be the least expensive option.

Next, check your credit card's travel benefits. Some credit card companies offer insurance on baggage loss, travel accidents, trip cancellation and medical and/or legal assistance when the travel is purchased with that credit card.

Another option is the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT). IAMAT benefits include access to "competent medical care available to travelers by western-trained doctors who speak English besides their mother tongue." Membership is free, and donations are requested.

Finally, consider purchasing insurance from a travel insurance provider. The following list was compiled from the Internet, suggestions from Study Travel participants and travel magazine listings. It is offered without endorsement by St. Olaf College and St. Olaf College is not responsible for any insurance you purchase through these or other providers.

- Travel Insured International           1-800-243-3174
- Travel Insurance Services           1-800-937-1387
- Travel Guard International           1-800-826-1300

The following websites advertise the ability to compare policies: *insuremytrip.com* or *quotetravelinsurance.com*. Again, these websites are offered for informational purposes only and without endorsement by St. Olaf College. St. Olaf College is not responsible for the accuracy of any of the information on these websites or for any insurance purchased as a result of visiting such websites.

#### Pre-Existing Conditions

If you wish to purchase travel insurance that covers all pre-existing conditions without question, the time required to do so is often within seven to 10 days after making a deposit on the program, depending upon the policy. If this coverage is important to you, please investigate options carefully and make your decision quickly. Most policies cover pre-existing conditions no matter when you take out the insurance, as long as the condition has been under a doctor's care and is a controlled condition.

#### Premium Refunds

Some insurance providers will not refund your premium if St. Olaf College cancels the program, but will apply it to future travel.

We encourage you to question insurance providers on these issues and ask for thorough explanations.



5. I have the following **DIETARY RESTRICTIONS OR REQUESTS** (special dietary requests CANNOT be guaranteed):

6. I understand that my health insurance provider may not cover me outside the United States. I have sufficient health, accident, disability and hospitalization insurance to cover myself during my participation in the program.

Primary health insurance \_\_\_\_\_ Policy number \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary health insurance \_\_\_\_\_ Policy number \_\_\_\_\_

**Acknowledgement**

I have read and understand the health information and program requirements and confirm that I am capable of fulfilling the program requirements and that I will be responsible for my own insurance and my own health and safety. I understand that if St. Olaf College needs further information about my health condition(s) in order to assure that I may safely participate in the Travel Study Program or to fulfill the program requirements, I may be asked to provide a physician's certification.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_