

MEANINGFUL TRAVEL TIPS AND TALES

FIRST TIME TRAVELING AS A TEEN



An Initiative to Make Travel More Accessible



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WHY WE CREATED THIS EBOOK FOR FIRST TIME TEEN TRAVELERS

A NOTE FROM GOABROAD



Traveling abroad as a teen for the first can seem overwhelming and no one knows that better than we do. That's why we scoured our expert articles directory to come up with a comprehensive resource of tips for teens traveling abroad for the first time.

Traveling as a teen isn't just about the Instagram likes. You're there to step outside your own back yard and out of your comfort zone. You're also there to learn – about yourself, about your host culture, about your home culture, and more about the world at large. You're going to work hard, play hard, and explore far and wide. It won't be easy, but we think you're up to the task. So, ask yourself:

Are you ready to go abroad? What are your first steps? How do you get your parents on board? How do you make the most of this experience? How important is knowing the language before you get there? Etc.

The list of questions to ask before preparing to go abroad as a teen just gets longer and longer the more you think about it. But, we've already thought about it. In fact, at GoAbroad we've thought about it for 20+ years in the field, and we've learned a thing or two in all that time.

As part of GoAbroad's mission to provide the best and most comprehensive resources for meaningful travelers, our writers share their best tips for first time teen travelers every step of the way— from choosing your program to getting your passport and visa all worked out. They're the experts with real experience and all the best info on how how to get your parents on board, the best possible program options for you, how to fund your time abroad, and anything you might need to know. So, now you can go out into the world and really soak it all in!

Interested in joining this initiative? [Partner with us!](#)

OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Kendall Dick is a travel junkie, sustainability activist, nutrition guru, personal chef, writer, and missionary. She studied nutrition communication at Arizona State University and is currently living in Michigan. Kendall has traveled to Australia, Europe, and Africa.



Mariel Tavakoli is a graduate of the College of William and Mary where she studied public policy and sociology. She fell in love with meaningful travel as a study abroad student in the Czech Republic, where she returned as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant after graduation. Mariel is dedicated to all things international exchange and spends her free time learning languages and always planning her next trip.



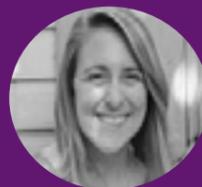
Raquel Thoesen was raised in a multicultural family in the colorful Chicago suburbs, Raquel's greatest joy is gallivanting around the world, and learning about its endless cultures, languages, and foodie treasures. With a degree from Arizona State University in hand, Raquel taught English abroad in Germany through the Fulbright program. Now she's back home in the desert working at a local peanut butter company, picking up eccentric hobbies in her spare time.



Rebecca Murphy's desire to experience the world began as a young child during her first viewing of The Sound of Music. Four languages, 17 countries, and two misadventures to Maria's Meadow later, Rebecca now fills her time writing about and marketing amazing places all over the world. When not talking up meaningful travel, she can be found playing the piccolo, enjoying the great outdoors of her Vermont home, and planning theme parties.



Alisa Tank began traveling overseas at age 16. With every new destination since then, the desire to do something meaningful with her experiences has grown. Alisa has worked for two study abroad organizations, taught English in France, organized public health workshops in Africa and Asia, and currently advises international students in Utah. She holds a master's degree in international public service from DePaul University and enjoys trail running, rock climbing, and camping in the desert.



Danielle DeSimone graduated from the University of Mary Washington with degrees in English, creative writing, and Italian. She lived in southern Italy for five years and has so far traveled to fifteen countries. Danielle is currently the social media manager and assistant editor at the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF), where she gets to combine her loves of writing, Instagram, and pasta.



HOW TO DO HIGH SCHOOL ABROAD IN 8 EASY STEPS

by: Kendall Dick

Your teenage years mark a new era where the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” loses its light-hearted demeanor and starts becoming stressful. This is the perfect time to escape this anxiety-inducing question and decide to do high school abroad! High school programs abroad are daring, exciting, and call for boldness and enthusiasm that will invite you deeper into life. The road most traveled can keep you safe, but can also be detrimental. Don’t stay on the predetermined high school path just because it’s convenient; experience is the best of teachers. Make the decision to travel meaningfully and adventurously and learn how to do high school abroad!

There are a whole slew of study abroad opportunities for high school students available. The best way to get the ball rolling is to narrow down the when and the what.

When is the high school program you are considering?

Before you start your search for study abroad opportunities for high school students, you should know when is best for you to go.

- Summer high school programs abroad are way more beneficial than settling for a burger flippin’ summer job. Plus, going abroad in high school will ensure that you will return to school in the fall with more than just an awesome tan.
- High school foreign exchange programs allow you to leave behind the hallway drama for a semester or two, study high school abroad, grow exponentially as a person, and pave the way for even more studying abroad in college.
- Short-term or two week high school study abroad programs give you the chance to get your feet wet in the whole going abroad experience and make the most of school breaks or holidays. Plus, a study abroad summer high school program or two week study abroad high school program is a great way to break your parents into the idea of perhaps a study abroad high school semester.

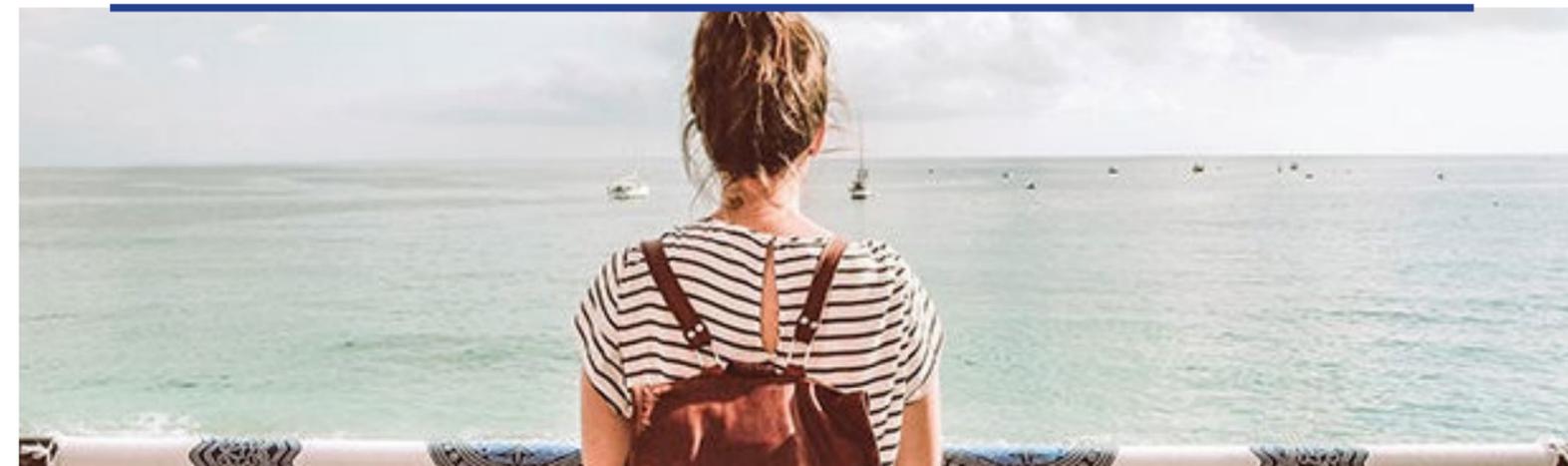
These are just some of the popular ways to study abroad in high school. Have a think and then answer this next question...

What type of high school program do you want to do?

Not all high school travel programs are made equal. Do you want to learn a language, rack up your community service hours, get ahead on some high school or college credits? You’re in luck—you can do all that (and more... just look!):

- Community service high school programs abroad get you out of your bubble and make an incredibly positive impact on your future and in the lives of others.
- Language immersion high school programs abroad are a great way to challenge yourself to see how language lives in its natural habitat—outside the pages of your textbook.
- Adventure travel programs combine physical activity, cultural interaction, and an engagement with nature that will quench your thirst for adventure that makes your heart race and your spirit soar!
- Can’t decide? Want to do them all? DIY your own combo high school study abroad program!

On the bright side, the sky’s the limit when it comes to finding excellent study abroad opportunities for high school students.



8 steps to a badass, beret-wearing-you-abroad

It is going to take some work on your part to make high school abroad a reality, but it can be done. Following these eight steps is a foolproof way to learning how to do high school abroad:

Step 1: Know your goals.

Before you jump into just any high school program abroad, it's important to assess your goals. Why do you want to do high school abroad, anyway? What skills do you hope to acquire? Asking questions about what you hope to gain from your experience will help you start to narrow down your options.

You'll also want to consider logistical questions. How much time do you have? Could you swing a whole year or a couple of weeks? How much money can you budget toward the experience? As you make these calculations, keep in mind all the benefits of doing high school abroad. Many of them, like fluency in a foreign language or falling asleep under the constellations of a different hemisphere, are priceless.

Step 2: Know where you want to go and what you want to do—find programs that match that.

Once you've sussed out your goals, needs, and desires and you're ready to head down the path of going abroad in high school, it's time to find programs that line up with those goals. So get down to business, make a spreadsheet, and be sure to consult GoAbroad's online advisors and be sure to make use of MyGoAbroad to help narrow your search.

Step 3: Compare your programs.

Now that you have a spreadsheet teeming with high school study abroad programs it's time to compare and contrast and really hone in on which program is right for you.

The best way to do this is by reaching out and talking to people. Talk to alumni, read reviews, understand what's included, check dates align with your calendars, try to land some scholarships or high school credits, and all those other tedious tasks that are well worth the extra effort.

Step 4: Start getting your money together.

While any international escapade can easily cost you an arm and a leg (and maybe a non-vital organ), it does not have to be financially impossible. Remember to look at your upcoming high school abroad voyage as an investment in your future and keep in mind that no one can put a dollar amount on this kind of experience!

So, back to how the heck you are going to pay for this. Contrary to popular belief, the options are not as grim as they may seem. Make an informed and well-planned visit to The Bank of Mom and Dad, peruse scholarship options, do a little fundraising, or even get a part-time job, because at the end of the day, saving your money just makes the most cents...

Step 5: Pick your final program and apply, apply, apply!

Once you've narrowed down your options, figured out what you can afford, and decided which high school study abroad programs best fit your goals, it's time to submit your applications! This isn't the time for mistakes, so make sure that you've reviewed all of your application materials for errors.

Don't be discouraged if you don't hear anything back right away, and try to be patient as you wait for your application to be reviewed. Instead of anxiously refreshing your inbox, do a Google image search of the country you've set your sights on and marvel at how magnificent your life will soon be.



Step 6: Now that you got in (because #duh, you're awesome), you have to do your travel planning and logistics.

Don't stride off into the sunset just yet. You still need immunizations, insurance, bank details sorted, spending money, tons of gear, passports, visas, flight tickets, etc. Now that you're nice and overwhelmed, just take a deep breathe, make a checklist, and remind yourself why you want to do high school abroad in the first place (see: step one).

Step 7: Start getting your money together.

If you suffer from packing paralysis, then you probably needed to start packing for your high school abroad program yesterday. To alleviate the effects of packing paralysis, research your destination to make sure you are prepared to dress properly and respectably. Also be sure to get a list of recommended packing items from your program advisor for a little guidance so you can travel light and be the light.

Step 8: Go and have the learning adventure of a lifetime!

You did it! You made it through the daunting application process and got the parental signature! Once you've weighed your options and made a final decision, now the real fun begins. As always, keep in mind your goals and the ways you plan to make your high school abroad experience meaningful and go and have the learning adventure of a lifetime. How do you spell success? T-E-E-N T-R-A-V-E-L!

You've got the inside scoop on how to do high school abroad

High school is a period of concentrated self-development, a time where the realization begins to take place that there is more to life. There is nothing that can put into perspective the challenges and successes of your own high school experience like spending time abroad. Uprooting from familiarity and venturing out to experience life in another culture will prompt revelations about yourself and the world as you know it. What are you waiting for?



HOW TO FIND INCREDIBLE TEEN TRAVEL PROGRAMS

By: Mariel Tavakoli

Are you daydreaming of maps, flight tickets, and selfies at Machu Picchu while your friends are making plans for summer break at the pool, sleep away camp, or sports practice? We get it. Lots of other teens get it too. Find your squad with high school summer travel programs, alternative winter and spring breaks, or even a gap year, that will expand your horizons and provide you with a more thrilling answer to the age-old back-to-school question “How was your break?”

What are teen travel programs?

Consider teen travel program options to bike across national parks, do meaningful community service, master a foreign language, or simply tour some of the world’s most stunning cities.

Whichever type of adventure is calling your name, the most important part is that you’re getting outside of your comfort zone bright and early. Programs often are comprised of small groups of students, two to three counselors, who come together for a fun and life-changing experience

Who is eligible for doing teen travel programs?

Well you, of course. Teen travel programs are an exciting opportunity for anyone who craves an adventure outside the scope of normal high school life. If you feel mature and ready, start your research with finding a program and checking their eligibility requirements.

This might be a specific age or even could be related to your good ol’ GPA. Next, check the price list and determine if a particular program is in your budget. Otherwise, there are plenty of scholarships available to enable you to confidently submit an application to the program of your dreams!

What are Popular Destinations for Teen Travel Programs?

Teen travel programs can take you as far away as around the world or as close as the next state over, but several popular destinations continue to attract students from year to year. For many students embarking on their first travels without family members, the European trio of England, France, and/or Spain might seem like the perfect introduction to a future full of travels. For those with more linguistic goals or who are interested in an immersive challenge, try programs in Costa Rica or China.



How Much do Teen Travel Programs Typically Cost?

Ahh, the question all parents need to know the answer to immediately when you mention that really cool summer program in New Zealand. For most programs, you can expect to be paying somewhere between \$2,500 and \$5,000. It’s no small chunk of change, but the experience itself will be priceless.

While overall program cost will vary between organizations and destinations (Europe will be a little pricier than Central America, for example), most teen travel program fees are inclusive. Meaning your flights, housing, meals, and all those fun excursions and cultural exchanges you’ll be going on, are included in that final price tag. It’s still always a good idea to double check that your program fee is inclusive, and if it isn’t, you’ll want to know what isn’t covered. That way, all you need to worry about once you’re abroad is a little extra spending money for a nice souvenir to thank Mom and Dad, and anyone who helped fund your experience— looking at you Aunt Gail.

How Long Do Teen Travel Programs Usually Last?

The most popular time for teen travel programs are during the classic schools-out summer holiday months of June-August. For a longer program from 3-8 weeks, the summertime is your best bet, if you’re not taking a full gap-year or term. Short-term programs are also offered in the summer or even can be a quick transformative opportunity during the winter holiday or spring break.

What Are The Benefits Of Teen Travel Programs?

Maybe you crave a new perspective, need to beef up your college application, or just need a break from your parents or friends at home. No matter what your motivation, a teen travel program is an amazing gateway to a future life of studying abroad or working abroad. Before embarking on the program application process,

take some time to reflect on what your reasons are for wanting to travel abroad and then make the most of every moment once you hop on that plane!

How to find teen travel programs

Finding the program of your dreams is a one-stop shop when it comes to making the most of GoAbroad (hey, that’s us!). Follow these easy-peesy steps and you’ll be on your way to booking a flight ticket in no time – it’s like we’re doing your homework for you. :-)

- Create a MyGoAbroad account: A MyGoAbroad account makes it easy to browse programs, read reviews, and compare details to make a final choice.
- Visit our directory of too-good-to-be-true teen travel programs.
- Filter based on where you or your child wants to travel. You can also further filter based on what focus you want the program to have (such as community service or language immersion) or how long the program should be (such as a few weeks to a full year).
- Save and bookmark programs to later review from your Dashboard.
- Narrow down your list of dream programs, then compare your favorites side by side to choose the ultimate one for you.
- Sign up, pack your bags, and get your show on the road!





Gap Year Teen Travel Programs

If you're interested in a teen program for the long haul or you've already caught the travel bug from past teen travel programs, consider taking a gap year either during high school or before continuing to university or a job.

Just like more short-term teen travel programs, gap year opportunities are limitless in scope and the variety is expanding as more and more students are opting for these experiences. Join in the trend and take a gap year to put invaluable international experience and skills on your resume in preparation for your next step.

- **Pros:** With a gap year you'll undoubtedly gain a competitive edge when applying for jobs or university study. In addition, you'll start building a network overseas that will enrich your future possibilities.
- **Cons:** Gap year programs can be expensive depending on the type of activity and destination. In addition, make sure you have strong motivation and justification for where you want to go and what you want to do. This will make all the difference during and after your program abroad.

Community Service & Volunteering Teen Travel Programs

Volunteer teen travel programs are both a great way to get service hours for your school or extra-curricular groups, gain a first-hand understanding of global issues, and to connect with local communities.

When volunteering, you'll work side-by-side with community leaders and have the emotional experience of seeing the direct impact of your actions on the lives of others. Some examples of common teen community service programs include constructing homes or community buildings, teaching or tutoring, or working on eco-farms.

- **Pros:** Community service programs are active, so if you've been fidgeting through your classes all year, these programs are for you! Plus, you'll return home with a greater appreciation of cultural differences and a new view of your life at home.
- **Cons:** Get ready to get down and dirty and to roll up your sleeves because volunteer teen travel programs are hard work! From a bigger picture view, be careful when researching these programs to ensure that the company is partnering with local groups, rather than imposing a foreign idea of how to serve the community.

Language Immersion

Teen travel programs that double as language immersion programs for high school students is the perfect occasion to actually learn to speak the language you've been learning (for years) in high school! Look for programs that offer a combination of classroom instruction and a homestay in order to maximize your language immersion. Then get ready to show off your new linguistic skills all day err' day whether at the club or grocery shopping.

- **Pros:** There's nothing like traveling and living with native speakers to learn the local slang and get rid of your textbook twang. Plus, you'll meet plenty of new friends to continue your language practice with Whatsapp chats and Skype sessions when you get home.
- **Cons:** Be prepared for some culture shock when diving into a full foreign language environment. While it may get frustrating to have your tongue-tied, just think of the look on your foreign language teacher and classmates' faces when you show up in September.

Teen Travel Programs are YOURS for the Taking

Get out of the classroom, off the couch, and out into the world! And no— we do not mean going to the mall. We want you to seriously get the heck out there. Haven't had the opportunity to leave your small town? Travel to the far reaches of the Earth and explore every corner of southeast Asia. Mom really breathing down your neck about going outside more? Show her just how far outside you're willing to go and trek the Inca trail.

The opportunities are out there, you just have to be brave enough to get after them, and we know you have what it takes. So only one question remains: what could you possibly be waiting for?

Work Experience

Skip another summer working at the Peach Pit and embark on working high school summer travel programs. If you're ambitious and independent, a high school internship or work experience abroad is a great way to kickstart your resume and evaluate your interests as you get ready to make some pretty big future decisions about a major or permanent job. Look for programs that will customize your work placement based on your experience and interests.

- **Pros:** With a job or internship placement you'll get the real feel for what it's like to live abroad and work in an international environment. This will set you apart when applying for future positions with global companies who seek intercultural competence.
- **Cons:** Programs might be more hands-off after the initial orientation period, so be prepared to take your abroad experience into your own hands. Also, given that your placement is unique, be prepared to constantly explain your experience and what you learned.



DARE TO LIVE

“Traveling tends to magnify all human emotions” - Peter Hoeg

“If we wait until we’re ready, we’ll be waiting for the rest of our lives”
- Lemony Snicket

“Oh the places you’ll go...”
-Dr. Seuss

“To Travel is to Live”
– Hans Christian Andersen

“I am not the same having seen the moon shine on the other side of the world”
-Mary Anne Radmacher



ADDRESSING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDY ABROAD HEALTH & SAFETY CONCERNS

by Raquel Thoessen

If you're a high school student considering study abroad, we all know what you're thinking. The parents will never let this one fly. Letting their kid run off into the big, dangerous world all alone? Keep dreaming, kid.

For parents, sending the high school aged children off to see the world isn't as simple as letting their chicks leave the nest and grow up. Apart from the legal responsibility that parents still hold over their teens, leaving kids under the supervision of others in a dissimilar culture and society is a difficult pill to swallow for any mother or father.

Oftentimes, parents are saying au revoir and sending off the kids to a strange place they themselves have never experienced. The unknown naturally carries many concerns, especially when it involves their pride and joy (that's you).

Whether you're the one freaking out about teen travel safety or your family members have been holding their breaths at the thought, all it takes is a little wisdom and safety know-how to calm the nerves. We're here to tell you that it's all going to be okay. Read on for some comforting information about health and safety while doing high school abroad!

Is high school abroad safe?

The big question. There's really no overarching, general answer for this question, as natural disasters and summer love may be lurking in any corner of the world, parents present or not. However, when it comes to safety as a teen abroad, high school kids and parents can rest assured that high school study abroad programs are designed with safety as the first priority. Students may even have more supervision abroad than back home. With rule books and guidelines strictly in place, a student's continued participation in a program may be on the line if any questionable behavior is found.

Concern has risen over recent terrorist attacks and violent events highlighting news in Europe, however to this day, the homicide rate in the United States remains much higher than in Europe as a whole. So when parents worry most about environmental dangers, a quick look at up-to-date statistics shed light on the current situation in any city.

Rather than a loose trip abroad teeming with temptations and vices (we're looking at you, gelato), high school abroad should instead be viewed as an opportunity to learn responsibility and independence. In addition, there's much to be gained through cultural immersion and international education alone. The fact of the matter is staying safe while doing high school abroad comes down to personal choices, finding the right organization, and education during the pre-departure phase.

As any alumni can attest, you'll be most at risk for overeating delicious foods and catching the contagious travel bug, among other common teen travel dangers.

Popular high school travel destinations that are also some of the world's safest countries

For first-time international travelers or those for whom teen travel safety is a number one priority, consider a country that's both well-visited by peers and ranks highly on the safety meter.

Topping the worldwide list is the tiny, chilly island of Iceland, where yearly tourists far outnumber the country's population. For a decade, Iceland has dominated as the most peaceful nation and continues to become increasingly loved for its otherworldly landscapes and fermented shark meat...*ehem* hot springs, that is. English-speaking countries have always been study abroad favorites and it just so happens that New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland are also safety approved. For lovers of passion, siestas, and Spanish, either Spain or Chile provide a good dose of health and safety while doing high school abroad. Also in the mix are Japan and Germany—longtime sweethearts on lists of safe countries to travel for teenagers.

15 Basic Tips to Keep Teens Safe & Healthy

Sometimes how to travel alone as a teenager isn't all common sense. There are some things you can only pick up through trial and error, and the rest is sage wisdom from the elders.

1. Know your program's rules

Stepping onto foreign soil, where legal ages to engage in certain activities are far lower than back home, will seem like the most emancipating experience of any young teen's life. However, each high school study abroad program will enforce additional rules to ensure that participants stay responsible and safe during their time abroad. Violating the program's contract by drinking alcohol or running around during a curfew, for example, can get you a swift boot back home.

Trust us—your program is on your team. They want you to have the most amazing experience possible while abroad. You might think that some rules are over the top or unfair, but keep in mind that your safety is their top priority. There will be plenty more summers in your life to return to New Zealand for cliff jumping or for riding a motorcycle across Peru (on your own!).

2. Have all local and international emergency numbers on hand

You can never be too prepared for the unpredictable, and amassing phone numbers and contact names can literally be a lifesaver. Teen travel safety doesn't have to be a solo ride, and it's perfectly fine to depend on other for help, whether you get lost, sick, or feel uncomfortable in any situation. Make sure you have all contacts from your on-site program organizers, family members, and local authorities with you on paper at all times.

3. Bring enough medication to last your high school study abroad program

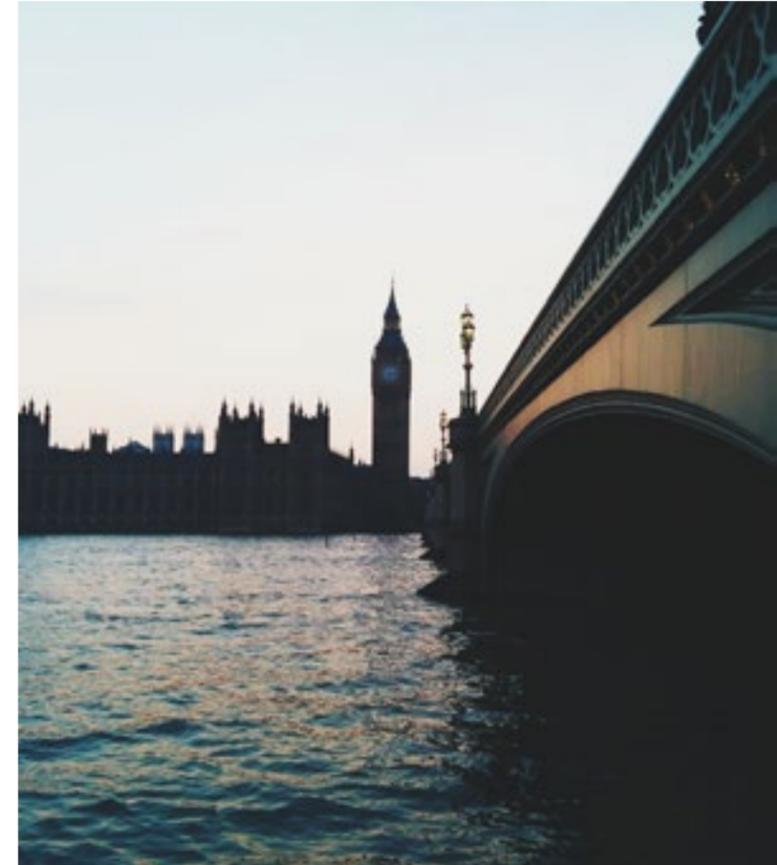
Shipping prescription or even over-the-counter (OTC) medication abroad can get really tricky with differing international customs and drug laws. While you may be used to having some basic medications like ibuprofen readily available at any corner store at home, they may require a doctor's note abroad. Planning for meds won't be a concern for short-term programs, but part of how to travel as a teenager on lengthier trips requires you to do some extra homework and check in with a doctor before departure.

4. Be aware of your destination's laws and legal ages

Assuming any law is a given is a big no-no in the international traveler's handbook. Read up on your host destination's common laws and minimum ages. You probably wouldn't guess that chewing gum is banned in Singapore, or even that eating near important landmarks in Rome will land you a fat fine.

5. When in doubt, don't drink the tap water

Unless you've confirmed an absurd amount of times with human, digital, and print resources that tap water is okay to drink, don't do it. Nasty, untreated water can contain hoards of disease-inducing microorganisms that will bust any high school study abroad program. Even if the sink water is proclaimed safe by local standards, your



body may not have the immunities built up to process it.

6. Notify at least one person of your whereabouts

Making good decisions doesn't make you immune to strange happenings around you. Have at least one person know where you are at all times, even for a night run alone around the block for some snacks. In addition, make sure to keep some sort of ID card on your person at all times, because you neeeever know.

7. Always take a travel buddy

To piggyback off the previous point, a comforting way to go out that beats going solo is taking an accountable buddy along. Apart from having an emotional support system and Instagram photographer there for you, a partner overall increases safety as a teen abroad.

8. Keep in contact with home

Staying in touch with loved ones isn't just for parents' peace of mind. The maintained correspondence can be comforting when feeling homesick or to keep in the know while away. Just imagine the horror to come back to a completely new home, just because you ignored all of mom's Skype calls!

9. Trust your instinct, avoid sketchy areas

Found a shortcut through the city? Unless you know exactly what areas to expect, it's best to stick to what's most familiar, or where you've been. In addition to urban centers, this applies to lonely forests and all the scenes in Disney movies where the witches come out to do magic.

10. Bring a copy of your medical records

Bringing along a few copies of medical records can drastically improve health and safety while doing high school abroad. Due to language barriers and new foods, it's not always possible to know exactly what ingredients go into the exotic foods you try. Having a printed copy with your program or yourself can quickly explain to health professionals what they're dealing with if something does go wrong.

11. Leave valuables at home, your homestay, hotel, or dorm

Unless needed for a particular reason, lifeline documents like passports or backup credit cards are better left behind in a safe place. The only exception is if you feel the safest place is with you! Although flashing expensive bling, glitzy, giant cameras, and fat stacks of bills can be commonplace back home, you may be putting a target on your forehead abroad in other countries that screams "Take me, I'm foreign and rich!"

12. Put that beer bottle down

Despite what you do back home and the drinking age in a travel destination, consuming alcohol in a new environment leads can lead to some unintended decisions. Even if your high school study abroad program doesn't explicitly prohibit this behavior, you best think twice, thrice, or four times before grabbing a glass!

13. Avoid wandering in the dark when not with your program

Hazards only multiply in the darkness. You can trip, run into poles, get lost, or encounter some questionable personalities up to no good. Bringing along a flashlight may help, but a better solution is to avoid venturing out after dark when not chaperoned by program leaders. Traveling in a group of several can draw even more unwanted attention, if you're in a questionable area of town.

14. Don't do weird stuff that you wouldn't do at home

Climbing statues, posing with religious relics, being exceptionally loud in public spaces with your new crew—all behaviors a dignified, responsible young adult would never do at home. Having fun is a vital part of studying abroad, but the world doesn't turn into a playground, ready for all visitors to stroll on through. Cultural norms, religious observances, and even public volume are all little things that any respectful travel (regardless of age) should be aware of.

Foundational knowledge of a host destination is a basic part of how to travel as a teenager! Apart from your program's orientation, you can soak in other cultural tidbits by doing a bit of research on the internet or asking previous participants.

15. Remember: Stranger, Danger!

Remember that movie where two high school friends vacation in Paris, only to be kidnapped by some shady guys and saved by retired CIA agent dad? Spoiler: It's not based on a true story.

The film portrays an incredibly unlikely scenario, but it does teach a good lesson about withholding information from strangers. This tip doesn't just apply to teen travel safety, it's a good practice to keep in mind throughout life wherever you travel. Venturing abroad is an exciting experience that will definitely bring out a new side of yourself, yet becoming overly trusting of unknown people can lead to some unwanted dangers.

Special circumstances/additional safety measures recommended

Teen female travelers. No matter where women go in the world, they always receive more cautious warnings from pretty much everyone alive to be more careful than their male counterparts. Despite all the potential dangers (as we're told), it may come as a surprise that for years, the vast majority of study abroad participants have been women. Maybe it's something to do with the countless reasons why females should study abroad?

Although a lot of advice you hear over and over again may seem like nagging, teen female travelers should be aware of potential risks in other countries. Knowing how to cope with certain unwanted behaviors can also be a game changer. Blatant discrimination, catcalling, or unwarranted touching are unfortunately just some circumstances that females of all ages need to learn to deal with. There are tons of online resources and blogs by pro female travelers that highlight personal experiences and what to expect!

Where is it safe to study abroad openly as a LGBTIQ* high school student? Attitudes, norms, and religious perspectives differ vastly from one side of the world to the other. While it may not be explicitly banned to be LGBTIQ* in certain countries, negative treatment and discrimination may still be widely accepted by the general population, making it uncomfortable or even unsafe to be open about your sexual orientation.



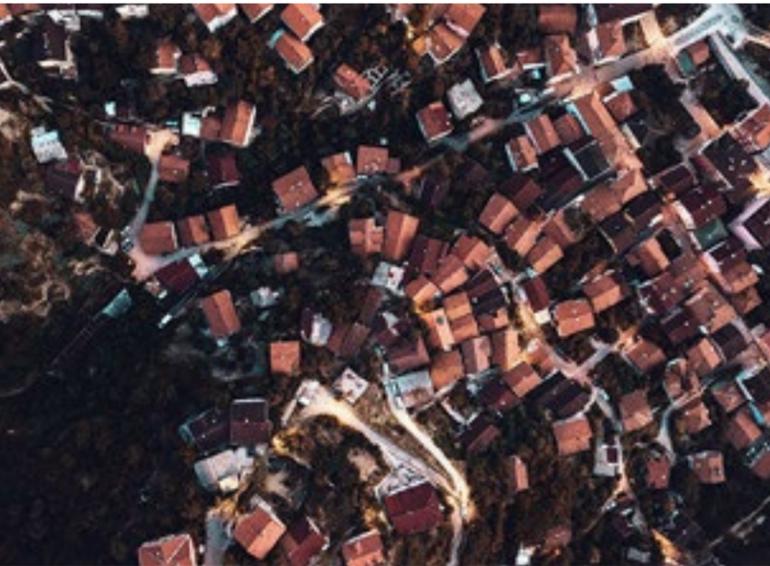
Countries like Canada, Spain, France, Iceland and other Scandinavian countries not only have notably large LGBTIQ* communities, but the more liberal attitudes and laws vastly increases safety as a teen abroad who identifies as LGBTIQ*.

For Asia enthusiasts, China and Japan stand among some great LGBT-neutral locales, where you need not worry about feeling threatened.

First time traveling solo. Boarding a 10-hour flight across oceans and continents for the first time without anyone familiar can be a terrifying idea. However, the magic of high school study abroad programs is that you won't actually need to know how to travel alone as a teenager at all. Program organizers aren't going to airdrop a group of teens alone in new country to fend for themselves. High school study abroad programs structure guidelines and procedures with participants' needs and ages in mind!

How to travel as a teenager safely

If you read through this whole article, congratulations! You've got the groundwork down for staying safe while doing high school abroad. Being young and naive doesn't mean you should have to skip out on the thrilling, life-changing lessons of international travel. Having some vital information and tips to keep in the back of your mind will prepare you (and calm the parents) to take the leap and study abroad.



THE ULTIMATE PROS AND CONS OF A HOMESTAY ABROAD

By: Rebecca Murphy

Staying in a homestay abroad might sound like it encompasses everything you've ever striven for in life: a unique and beautiful home that you don't have to make a mortgage payment on, siblings that adore you and don't pick fights over stupid stuff, and having a pseudo-personal chef at your disposal. Basically you want to live in a Mary Kate and Ashley movie (don't we all...). The good news is that MOST of this is true when it comes to doing a homestay abroad. The bad news is that there's also the possibility of none of this being true. Cue unsettled, foreshadowing background music...

We've all heard the study abroad host family horror stories, and whether it be the house not exactly being your ideal living situation or the family itself not living up to your expectations, there's a lot that you can't control when living with strangers. So, how do you see through the potential for a bad situation and have hope that a homestay will be just as awesome as you want it to be? Just like any mature adult (of which we're not but can pretend), you weigh the good with the bad and make an informed decision! Sounds like a lot of work, but don't worry, team GoAbroad is here to help! Introducing: the ultimate pro/con list of doing a homestay abroad!

Pros of doing a homestay program abroad

To say that we had a hard time narrowing down this list would be an understatement, as there are just SO. MANY. PROS. of doing a homestay abroad, especially a study abroad homestay. Check out our top ones below!

- **You will develop a second family and have lifelong connections (the biggest pro of all!).** How could you not have a lifelong bond with the people who were there for your entire experience abroad? Nobody else but them will truly understand what you experienced.

"You will get to experience celebrations, holidays, and festivals"

- **Your language skills will skyrocket. WE PROMISE.** Living with a local family means you won't have an "English escape" at the end of the day, so your language skills will constantly evolve without you even noticing. Why sit in a boring classroom studying flashcards when you could learn the same vocabulary by binging on Netflix auf Deutsch with your host brother?



- **You will start to like foods that you otherwise wouldn't have tried** if you hadn't lived with locals. We know that haggis might sound gross, but the way your host dad cooks it will forever change your opinion!
- **You'll develop a firmer grasp of the local culture, history, and politics** by having a family to engage with and ask questions. No judgement at home for not knowing something!
- **Homestays are generally cheaper** because they are usually all-inclusive with meals, lodging, laundry, and some type of cleaning service bundled together, you'll most likely save a good deal of money with this route. Particularly homestay study abroad programs will definitely run cheaper!
- **You will get to experience celebrations, holidays, and festivals** with your family and participate in local traditions. Did you even study abroad in a foreign country if you didn't learn how to sing "Happy Birthday" in their language?
- **There will be a "friendly face" waiting for you when you arrive.** Having a dedicated family ready to help you settle in will speed up the assimilation process, and just make you feel more at home overall!
- **You'll make a lot of new friends through your host siblings.** Nothing beats getting an instant friend group with relatively no effort!

Cons of doing a homestay program abroad

Homestay programs don't always turn into host family horror stories, but sometimes they do...

- **You might get a host sibling who starts crushing on you.** Eww.
- **Your host parent(s) might be the worst cooks.** Sorry in advance for all of the burnt pork chops you'll have to pretend to like. We can't all be winners.
- **You might be placed in one of those rare families that views it like a business transaction.** Some families have visitors filter through their homes every semester to make some side money, and don't really view their host students as part of the family but rather as tenants. Make the most of it and enjoy the fact that you won't have host parents breathing down your neck at all times. Can't get grounded if your parents don't care! (Probably someone's famous last words)
- **On the flip side, you could be the first person that the family has hosted,** and they could be just as excited (ie overbearing) as your real parents. Because you're living in someone's home, you have to respect their rules and expectations. It's up to you to decide if you'd rather make your own way while abroad!



- **Your host sister might think the Macarena is the best song and blast it 24/7.** Invest in some ear plugs.
- **You (probably) can't keep alcohol in your room** like you could if you lived in an apartment or dorm. Unless you get one of those cool moms like Regina George's who'd rather you drank in the house.
- **Speaking of booze, you will most likely run into your host parents at some point when you're out at a bar** with your new friends, or when you're coming home from the bar as they're leaving for work. Yes, it will be awkward, but it'll give you something to laugh about when the hangover dies off!
- **You just might not like them.** You can't pick your family, and you (usually) can't pick your host family, either. You're basically in the same situation as getting randomly selected with your freshman year roommate: you close your eyes, hold your nose, and hope for the best.

Skip the study abroad host family horror stories

Ultimately, doing a homestay is the best option for those looking to improve their language skills, become immersed in a new culture, and make lifelong friends and connections. There are very few actual homestay horror stories that meaningful travelers encounter, so there really isn't a reason to be concerned about anything.

Most program providers work very hard to vet their host families and want to offer the best experience possible. So, skip the study abroad host family horror stories, sign up for a homestay program, and see for yourself just how awesome it is!

[CLICK HERE TO KEEP READING!](#)



8 AMAZING TEENAGE VOLUNTEER SUMMER PROGRAMS ABROAD

by Kendall Dick

You're probably here because you are equally dumbfounded and in awe of your teenagers desire to do something productive and beautiful with their life this summer. To help you navigate the how's and what's and why's of shipping your high schooler overseas, we've compiled not only a list of 8 amazing summer volunteer programs for high school students abroad, but also some advice and words of encouragement as you figure out where in the world you can volunteer abroad under 18 and stay safe!

Why your teen should spend their summer giving back

Summer volunteer programs for high school students abroad span the gamut. You can work with large nonprofits, in community development projects lead by small enterprises, on farms, in the water. But why should you let your baby boy or girl run off on teenage volunteer summer programs—especially abroad?

It will spiff up their college apps.

A nice bullet point about teen summer volunteer experiences will surely give admissions officers something to be impressed about (even more so when they took their community service internationally). Their experience might even trigger the start to a captivating essay. Bonus: They may also have picked up a little foreign language to add to their application.

They will grow up.

When you volunteer abroad under 18, high school students are responsible for more than just themselves. This fosters intense tolerance, independence, confidence, self-resilience, and adaptability. Getting them in the door at a summer job or internship instead may seem de rigueur for teens to hold their own in a competitive economy—but what they really need is to hone their soft skills, like how to be caring and compassionate, before moving on to those technical skills. Plus, summer volunteer programs for teens often do a great job of teaching both hard and soft skills, depending on their project.

To disconnect.

Wi-Fi is limited during summer volunteer opportunities for teens, so volunteers can spend their downtime connecting with real human beings and being where they are. The only time they will be spending on their phone will be to call you and let you know that they are more than okay (these are safe volunteer abroad programs, after all!). And what better souvenir can you give your kid than the chance to realize their dependence on their phone is—dare we say—a tad unhealthy?

Is summer volunteering for high school students safe?

It takes some pre-planning, but there are many safe volunteer abroad programs out there. Students under 18 years old can gain immense benefits from the process of managing their health and safety while abroad. Volunteering abroad may even keep high school students much safer than if they were to stay at home partying all summer. If wanting to participate in summer community service programs for high school students is the biggest act of rebellion coming from your teenager—count your lucky stars!

8 Summer Volunteer Programs for High School Students Abroad

1. Global Vision International (GVI)

These summer volunteer programs for high school students abroad tackle critical local and global issues through education and training programs on sustainable development projects around the world. GVI programs even run in partnership with acclaimed international partners like Save The Children, WWF, The Red Cross, and PADI.

2. Broadreach

Responsible, hands-on volunteer abroad experience helps students gain a new perspective on the world and learn more about themselves. These programs also help students earn relevant certifications (scuba, sailing, first aid, etc.) as hard proof (and another impressive line on their resume) of their achievements.

3. Youth For Understanding (YFU)

Full cultural immersion is the best way for high school students to gain skills needed to thrive in an increasingly multicultural, interconnected, and competitive world. These high school summer volunteer programs abroad promote the type of intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and social responsibility necessary for future success.

4. Projects Abroad

High school students can volunteer abroad in incredibly meaningful and worthwhile projects in developing (and safe!) countries with topnotch in-country support from program staff to ensure a safe and fun experience..

5. The Experiment in International Living

These high school summer volunteer abroad programs equip students not only with essential cultural skills, but also with a deeper awareness of and sensitivity to global issues. Students will walk away with invaluable new skills, connections, awareness, and knowledge that help them to thrive in diverse environments.

6. Volunteering Journeys

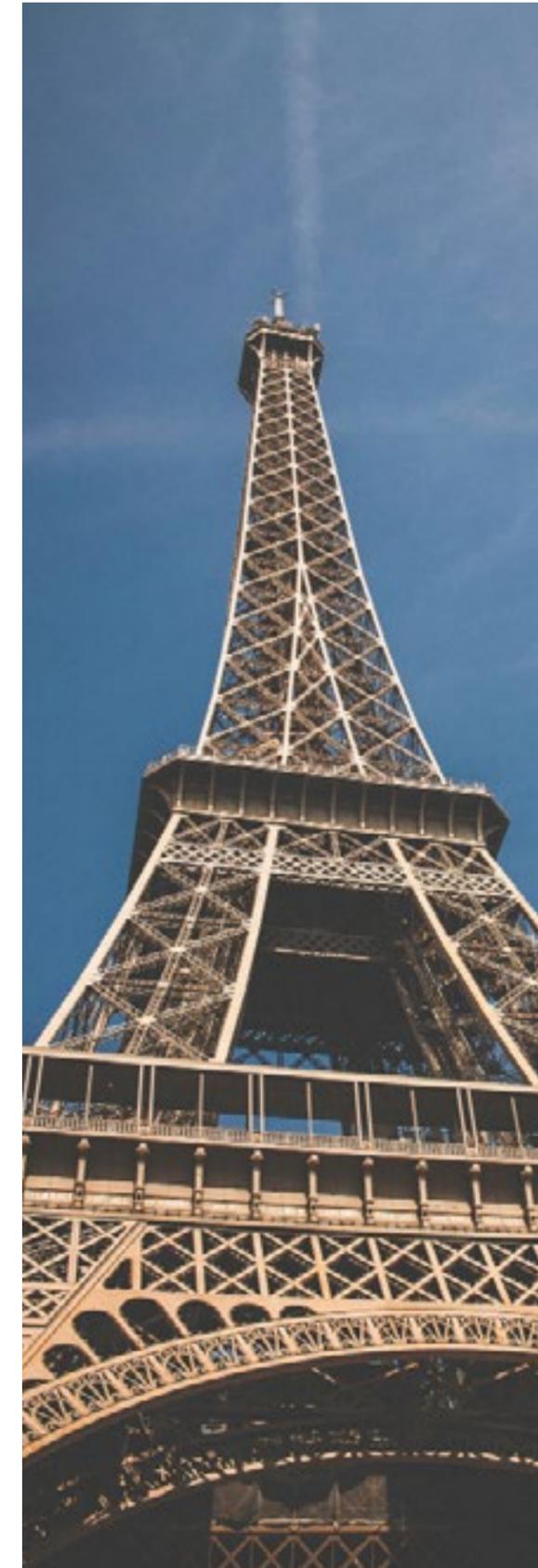
Authentic high school summer volunteer abroad experiences unfold when students are immersed in local living with the communities they are serving. These programs focus on building relationships, showing the value of personal growth, and seeing how strong real life learning comes through volunteering abroad in high school.

7. Academic Programs International

These affordable, high-quality summer volunteer abroad programs for students are designed to offer students meaningful travel opportunities that allow them to transform their lives while transforming the lives of others.

8. Study Programs International (SPI)

High school students can combine an authentic language immersion experience and leadership skills that will set them up for an advantage in college admissions and future job opportunities. These summer volunteer programs abroad focus on developing lifelong skills while gaining global perspectives and learning another language.





12 BEST STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by Alisa Tank

There will come a day when your teenage child approaches you and mentions casually, "I'm thinking of studying abroad." Like clockwork, you'll start to panic and think, "Across the ocean in a foreign land with a bunch of strangers? No way!" It's true, the prospect of sending your bundle of joy overseas is scary, but in reality, traveling abroad can open a young student's heart and mind like no other experience.

Luckily, after that brief moment of uncertainty, you decided to give it some more thought, and after reading about how studying abroad is a life-changing experience for high school students, you've started doing your research. Good job! A big part of making sure your child has a great experience is choosing the right provider. Whether your student wants to spend a summer exploring You can help them learn a few key phrases, have a night of cooking (or, attempting to cook) local cuisine, and take the time to watch a movie or documentary together.



12 safe—and fun—study abroad programs for highschool students in 12 great places

1. [SPI](#) - Study Spanish in Costa Rica,



This is a great program for novice travelers who've already begun Spanish studies and want to practice their skills in real-life situations. It easily makes our list of best study abroad programs for

high school students. Students spend two weeks to a month living with a host family, attending afternoon language classes, and exploring the rainforest and the Pacific coast. After a summer of ziplining adventures, wildlife hikes, and tico cuisine, don't be surprised if you start getting meal requests for gallo pinto after your child returns home!

3. [Spoleto Study Abroad](#) -Study Art in Italy



Student creators of music, film, and the visual and written arts will find paradise in Spoleto, a quiet, historic town in Umbria. They'll spend three weeks

engaged in directed lessons while also participating in excursions to nearby towns, learning about Italian culture, and indulging in local cuisine. The slower pace of life gives students time to focus on their craft, connect with other students, and experience the ultimate joy of gelatos and sunsets.

2. [Rustic Pathways](#) -Volunteer at a Zoo in Australia



Who wouldn't want to care for a baby wombat or take a cheetah for a walk? Aspiring veterinarians and animal lovers alike

might need to be dragged home after this adventure in Australia. Students will spend two weeks alternating between caretaking tasks at the Australia Zoo and learning about all sorts of animals in the wild, from feeding dolphins to spotting koalas. If that's not enough fun already, excursions to Surfer's Paradise and Brisbane will ensure adventure.

4. [AFS](#) - Study French in France



There's no better way to learn a new language and culture than by truly immersing yourself in it 24/7. AFS participants spend 11 months living with a host family, attending school with their French counterparts, and learning about la

vie française by experiencing it firsthand—all of this is what makes it one of the best study abroad programs for high school students.

5. West Coast Connection - Travel across South Africa



Westcoast Connection travel abroad programs for high school students seamlessly weave together adventure travel with a chance to serve local communities, providing students with a well-rounded understanding of this complicated country. Students travel overland from Johannesburg to Cape Town, visiting nature parks and contributing to environmental and youth service projects along the way. While the program is only two to four weeks long, students are sure to return home with a changed outlook on their place in the world.

7. Travel for Teens - Wander Eastern Europe



Some students may want to head off the beaten path to a less touristy destination, which is right where Eastern Europe, and travel abroad programs for high school students with Travel for Teens come

in. While everyone else has their eyes on Paris and London, why not spend a summer exploring the fascinating histories of Budapest, Krakow, and Prague? Students will not only participate in cultural activities like pierogi making and thermal bath soaking, they'll also learn about history's dark side during visits to Auschwitz in Poland and the House of Terror in Budapest.

6. Broadreach- Explore underwater in the Caribbean



A leader in underwater adventures for students, Broadreach ensures that students from beginner to expert learn the necessary skills to enjoy diving and sailing. Participants live aboard a catamaran as they travel from one island

to the next, practicing water skills and learning about leadership, Caribbean cultures, and each other. There's a strong possibility your child will return home with 12 new lifelong friends and a fierce determination to major in marine biology!

8. Where there be Dragons - Spend a Gap semester in Senegal



Older students will have the chance to experience a life very different from their own when they embark on a three-month journey to Western Africa. Spending time with several host families around the country, they'll learn about the impact of

development on urban and rural environments as well as engage in an independent study project of their choosing. This will allow them to think critically about their own experiences as they observe the world around them, from the mighty baobab tree to the gentle call to prayer to a heaping plate of yassa. Life after a semester in Senegal will never truly be the same.

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DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT: TRAVEL PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS



"My time spent in Peru, through the Maximo Nivel program, was an experience that I will never forget. I was able to fully immerse myself in the Peruvian culture through the itinerary they created for us, and was able to strengthen my Spanish speaking inside and outside of the Maximo classroom. The volunteer work we were able to do was the most life changing opportunity that I was lucky enough to have the chance to experience. I would highly recommend this program to any high schooler who wants to partake in a service trip, work on their Spanish skills, or just simply wants to experience another culture. Maximo Nivel is an amazing company that has changed my life for the better in so many ways."

- Jenna, Peru, 2015 Maximo Nivel

"Going on an intercultural exchange is a once in a lifetime opportunity, so you have to make sure you do it right. YFU is the best option. While I did have many exciting, educational, and emotional experiences abroad, my father had his doubts at first. After conducting thorough research, we concluded that YFU was the safest program around with their intricate layers of support for both the student and natural family. During my exchange, YFU ensured that I was safe, comfortable, and ready to learn. Great experiences can be had anywhere, but safe and educational experiences are YFU's specialty in my opinion. I encourage any parents of prospective students to research YFU's support system."

- Ronak, Japan, 2016 YFU



"There is no experience more transformative and expanding than study-abroad, and SPI seeks to offer the best in this type of experience. They carefully choose study programs at universities which can offer well-trained homestay experiences and excellent language studies. Students are encouraged to learn to live like a "local" and to truly enjoy all parts of living abroad."

-Laura, Sienna, SPI Study Abroad

GET SOME GREEN: 6 HIGH SCHOOL STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS

by Rebecca Murphy

Studying abroad in high school is without doubt one of the coolest things a teenager can do. From taking your studies outside of the classroom (and more importantly, your comfort zone) to physically living in a foreign place where you probably don't speak the local language fluently, participating in this type of adventure speaks wonders about the student, and we all know that the younger you are, the more impressive and meaningful it is.

Your youth is both a major advantage and a major challenge: you are a teenager, and most teenagers make minimum wage or close to it (that 15 cent raise you just got is not as big of a deal as you might think it is, unfortunately). So, how can teenagers afford something like a high school study abroad program when just filling the tank of your beater car is a challenge?

1. Reach Cambridge University Scholarship

Designed for current high school students between the ages of 14 and 18, Reach Cambridge offers scholarships to any of its two to three week summer programs in historic Cambridge, England. It might sound too good to be true, but all you have to do to win this (virtually) free three weeks in jolly old England is write a killer essay. Seriously, that's it. When someone wants to throw money at you for doing literally the same thing you already have to do for school, trust us, you do it.

2. Andeo International Homestays

The Andeo Summer Abroad Scholarship is open to all students applying for one of Andeo's individual homestay programs, and ranges from \$100-\$1000. All you have to do is ask your language teacher to nominate you, and then fill out a short application. Pretty easy, so there's no excuse not to try. Locations include Germany, Japan, or Mexico!

3. Two Worlds Youth Travel Programs

If you are determined to study abroad in high school, but don't have specific parameters or are a bit more open about your high school study abroad program options, one of the Two Worlds United Scholarships is probably right up your alley. With programs in over 32 different countries and lasting from just a summer to an entire year, students really have a lot of options here. Open to all high school students age 15-18, the scholarship awards range from \$250 up to \$1800.

Two Worlds United actually has several high school study abroad scholarships available, so applicants aren't bound by specific criteria. Scholarships are usually awarded based on financial need, academic merit, class rank, and level of courses attempted in high school, but each award is different, so be sure to consult one of their counselors for more specific information.

These scholarships for high school study abroad are just the beginning, so don't be afraid to dig deeper!

4. American Foreign Service Association Scholarship

Potentially one of the most life-changing and overall bada\$\$ high school study abroad scholarships available, the AFSA offers a National High School Essay Contest every year. The winner of the best essay receives not just \$2,500 of straight dolla dolla bills, but also a trip to Washington D.C. to meet the Secretary of State, and a full scholarship for a Semester at Sea excursion. Ay ay, captain!

5. Sons of Norway Scholarship

Have you been looking for an excuse to celebrate your Nordic heritage? Are you excited to finally have a chance to live up to your Viking ancestry? If you or a parent/grandparent are members of the Sons of Norway, you are eligible to receive some serious moolah. Enter: the Helen Tronvold Norwegian Folk High School Scholarship. (Say that five times fast.)

This scholarship (worth \$2,000) can be applied toward the cost of attending any Norwegian Folk High School (check out AFS Intercultural Program!). In case you didn't put two and two together, this means you'll be getting paid to frolic with reindeer and catch the Northern Lights in one of the most beautiful countries when you're not in class...or maybe while you're in class, if you really play your cards right. Nordics, rejoice!



6. Congress-Bundestag Scholarship

Are you sadly not Norwegian, but looking for some type of similar cultural exchange scholarship? Luckily, Germany's got you covered! One of the most prestigious high school study abroad scholarships, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) program is open to any high school student (with or without cultural ties to Deutschland) to study in Germany for 10 months for free. Yes, you heard us right.

In addition to admission and tuition to a top-notch German high school, the scholarship also covers placement with a host family, pre-departure training in the U.S., orientation on site in Germany, language classes upon arrival in your host community, and cultural excursions throughout the year to the German Bundestag and several cities around Germany. Prost!reindeer and catch the Northern Lights in one of the most beautiful countries when you're not in class...or maybe while you're in class, if you really play your cards right. Nordics, rejoice!

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