

A World Awaits You

A Journal on People with Disabilities Traveling with a Purpose



Students with Disabilities Studying Abroad



National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange

The Advice is Simple

Take the Chance and Do It

Have you heard of Generation Study Abroad? If you are studying at a U.S. college or university—it's about you! Each year more U.S. college students with and without disabilities are studying abroad. Are you keeping pace? If not, what's stopping you?

Maybe you should consider the opportunity to explore new places and cultures, and make new friendships. Or, maybe you could take the time to seek out the study abroad or faculty advisors on your campus to figure out how to fit it into your studies. You may also be surprised how many places you can travel to without foreign language skills.

If figuring out what program to go on is the main reason you haven't yet left the confines of your campus, we've got you covered. The infographic on choosing your own adventure abroad can guide you through the different options and decisions to "Get Your Planning Started."

Do you think you can't afford it? Where there's a will, there's a way. And we're not talking about inheritances (though that would make it easier). Most colleges and universities allow you to use your financial aid towards study abroad as long as you are earning credit.

Read on and you'll see how these study abroad alumni used vocational rehabilitation funds, scholarships, personal savings, and family support. Choosing a less expensive country to study abroad in and fundraising helps too. Also explore some of the study abroad scholarships listed in this publication.

Study abroad makes you more marketable to employers and graduate schools, and you usually can get credit while being abroad. Not to mention how you grow personally: gaining confidence and independence. Okay, we know what you—or those around you—might be thinking. What about accessibility barriers abroad? That's where our National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange comes in.

Why would you use our information services and online resources? Many students with disabilities, or their parents and study abroad and disability advisors, contact us along the way: to get connected to a peer with a disability who had been abroad; to get leads on arranging sign language interpreters; to learn about strategies for dealing with inaccessible non-Western toilets. And more!

Our National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange shows you what's possible, coaches you on your rights and responsibilities, and gives you solutions for aspects you might not have known were different overseas. Best of all, it's free thanks to sponsorship Mobility International USA receives from the U.S. Department of State.

Still not convinced going abroad is right for you? Read on in this issue of the *A World Awaits You (AWAY)* and you will see that many of the fears or concerns that you, or others close to you, may have, disappear once you are abroad. People are friendly and helpful, you are more adaptable than you think, and the cultural differences end up being great learning experiences.

Take the chance, and claim your place among Generation Study Abroad—you won't regret it.

Our goal is to empower people with disabilities to take advantage of the same international exchange opportunities as everyone else, navigating any access barriers along the way. For two decades, our free services and resources have been made possible by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, a project sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and administered by Mobility International USA.



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INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

ALAHNA KEIL

FROM

USA

TO

ASIA

DURATION

3 WEEKS



0123456789



Group Dynamics and Access in Asia

When Alahna Keil, who has cerebral palsy, enrolled in Luther College in Iowa, located an hour away from her home in Wisconsin, the idea of studying abroad seemed far from her mind. She was apprehensive about the possibility of study abroad both for academic and physical reasons.

Then something changed. She learned of 3-week programs for the January term break. The length seemed manageable, the four academic credits useful, and the faculty supportive – it ended up being a perfect opportunity. By her sophomore year, Alahna was on her way to China, Hong Kong, and Japan.

“One of my main concerns going abroad was whether or not I would need a personal assistant. I’m pretty independent and I didn’t want my mom traveling with us. My college is pretty great in providing equal opportunities for everyone and accommodating in areas that I need.”

Since Alahna would be bringing her wheelchair, she and the study abroad staff scouted out another potential student that could assist her as needed when abroad. The student was very willing to assist Alahna, and they ended up becoming not only roommates but friends. Other students in the group, who she didn’t know previously, also jumped in to assist when needed.

Accessing public transportation and Buddhist temples were a little difficult. While some had ramps, most had one or more stairs up. She would either walk up with the support of a hand to hold on to, or stronger students would lift her up in her 18 pound wheelchair.

“I taught them the safest, easiest, and most comfortable way for me to be lifted. It all went smoothly. It took time to find how we best operate as a group, but by the end of the trip we had it down pretty well.”

Once inside the public bus, the security of her wheelchair made it easier to stay balanced in a crowded space. Inside temple entrances, she found it was flat and well maintained. While Alahna preferred to push her own wheelchair, at times she accepted assistance because of the group’s pace or uneven gravel road, and even snow in Kyoto, Japan.

In the monastic life there is no indoor heat and Alahna felt the effects of cold on her muscles, so she used a lot of layers and heat packs that she planned for in advance. The group also spent time meditating on the floor but Alahna opted for a chair the professor arranged for her.

“As it turns out, there really wasn’t anything I felt I couldn’t participate in because of my physical challenges, so I was really pleased about that.”

Participating in everything meant being included in a visit to a mountain monastery in northeastern China. Because its many stairs can be a challenge for anyone, she was pleasantly surprised to find a palanquin, or a sedan chair, service available. She transferred on to this seat supported by poles that two men – one in front and the other behind – carry up the mountain. This earned her the nickname “Princess Alahna,” which she says was a good joke since she finds it the exact opposite of her personality.

These alternative ways of accomplishing a goal is what Alahna always has to think about. But, by traveling in a group, she found the professor and other students also gained a new level of awareness and perspective on how to include everyone.

“In my attitude I’m pretty flexible and can make things work that people think I can’t. I had a lot of support from my disability services, the professor, and the director of global learning at Luther to help prepare in this trip, and it made it a smooth and enjoyable experience.”





INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

STEPHANIE

FROM

USA

TO

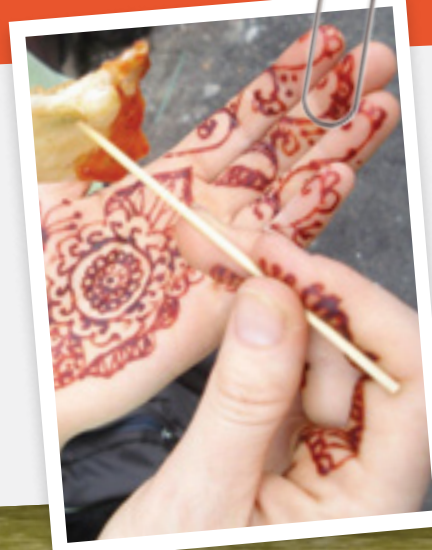
MALAYSIA

DURATION

1 MONTH



0123456789



Making the Most of First Experiences Abroad

The humid heat in Malaysia, lack of air conditioning, and cold showers made adjusting to the first four days of her study abroad program difficult for Stephanie, a student from University of South Florida. She also had to get used to wearing long skirts and pants in the heat, as is customary for women in this predominantly Muslim country.

“I have depression paired with anxiety and once I got there, it spiked. I don’t know what it was. Leaving a lot of the luxury that you take for granted played a part. It was like the realization that you are definitely not home.”

Then by the fifth day, it all changed. The experiences she had been exposed to in Malaysia began to make the journey worth it, despite some discomforts. She had put in place different strategies to make adjusting to living abroad easier: journaling her feelings, maintaining her medication, and finding a way to connect by Internet back home.

“I didn’t fully know in my head if others were also experiencing this, but when I told them that I found a way to get Internet access, everyone jumped on it. Everyone wanted to communicate with their families, and I was like ‘Okay, cool I’m not the only one here missing my family.’”

She also reached out to her roommate, who agreed to encourage her to join in when others were going out, since Stephanie’s psychologist and therapist back home had advised her not to isolate herself.

“The culture was a stressor but once I got used to it, I always enjoyed going out. It was just pushing myself to go was the hardest part.”

Stephanie was traveling with about twenty other students to two cities in Malaysia, Penang and Sawaok, for a one-month special education and global health course. Her undergraduate research mentor led the program and encouraged her to use the mentorship program’s study abroad scholarships towards her participation.

“What really interested me is when we went to special education classrooms and saw how they were run and the programs for adults with disabilities. We did a lot of extracurricular activities too.”

She ended up enjoying learning about the culture, not just the etiquette of pointing with one’s thumb instead of forefinger, but also the four-hour canoe ride to stay in a long house and learn traditional dances from the indigenous people.

I had a lot of firsts—it was my first time going abroad, it was my first time going hiking, it was my first time having new foods. I really wanted to get the most out of the experience and it was definitely worth it.



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

ALEXANDRA FUTTY

FROM

USA

TO

TRINIDAD

DURATION

ACADEMIC YEAR



0123456789



Explore the World Around You

Alexandra Futti has always been determined to not lead a “small life.” As a senior in high school she raised \$10,000 and convinced her parents and Catholic school to allow her take a half year to go on a cultural exchange to India.

“I grew up in a small town in Ohio that was very homogenous, very working class, very white, very Christian. And my whole life I have straddled the place between the sighted and non-sighted. I always felt this strong sensation that there was a larger world than what I experienced.”

Alexandra’s explorations continued as a senior in college when she went to Trinidad for two months to do independent research for her undergraduate thesis. After graduation, she spent a year in Trinidad on a Fulbright Student scholarship, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. As a result, she has now defined her career path.

My gears shifted significantly during my Fulbright program. I had to go far away to realize what I wanted to do at home.

By the time she participated in the Fulbright program, Alexandra’s vision had decreased more and she needed additional disability-related accommodations. The Massachusetts Agency for the Blind provided Alexandra with assistance to purchase the technology she needed for her research. This included a scanner to convert print to electronic text and a braille

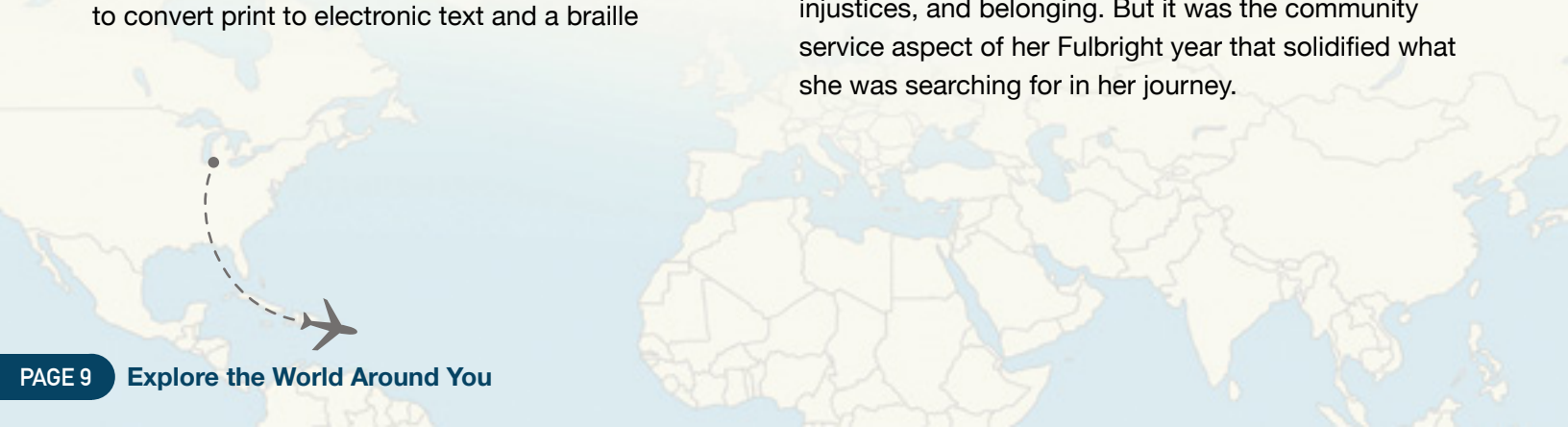
refreshable display to connect with her computer and smartphone to convert text from the screen into braille on the display.

Before arriving, she also reached out to blind associations in Trinidad to arrange orientation and mobility lessons to learn how to navigate the campus. Most mornings Alexandra would walk down her street with her cane to catch a route taxi downtown. From there, she got a bus or maxi taxi at the main bus terminal up to the university and then walked to her classes.

She admits it can be difficult to get around in communities abroad, especially as a woman or where American tourists and those with disabilities are not commonly seen. In Trinidad she dealt with difficult comments directed to her on the street by taking cues from Trinidadian women who joke and call back to help break the tension. Alexandra also found it helpful to make friends with the locals for getting around and going places together.

“Days where I didn’t have classes, I often went around Port of Spain and sat at a roti shop to eat and talk to people. I trusted most people are good and made smart decisions; I was not afraid to go out and talk with people very different from myself, and that is how I learned things.”

Alexandra’s research focused on Caribbean and post-colonial literature, being pulled to it for reasons she was trying to articulate in her own life experience and growing disability identity – feelings of separations, injustices, and belonging. But it was the community service aspect of her Fulbright year that solidified what she was searching for in her journey.





She began volunteering at the country's school for blind children, teaching braille and showing the students that they could aspire to doing more than staying at home as adults. She ended up loving every moment. The cultural interactions she had each day with the children challenged her to explain what the sun is when the heat never ceased, or why her hair felt as it did to the Afro-Caribbean children.

"These were concepts that if you had sight are inherent, but for these kids are not as obvious – so I got to explore and talk with these kids about so many interesting topics."

Since the special education training in Trinidad doesn't include a focus on teaching blind children, Alexandra found it "heart-wrenching" that despite the teachers' good intentions, they didn't have the information to give to the students what was needed.

She ultimately decided to apply to graduate school at Northern Illinois University to become a teacher of blind and low vision students, and hopes to do international advocacy work in the future.

I started thinking: 'Teaching is something I could do every day and I'd be happy doing it.' I started really understanding myself as a person with a disability and all the pieces of my experience came together.





Using Vocational Rehabilitation for a Personal Assistant Abroad

What if your major is International Studies or your degree requires you to take classes overseas? How can you study abroad during your college experience, and pay for your personal assistant while traveling?

These questions were always lingering in the background waiting to be answered for Xuan Troung, a student at North Carolina State University who has osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as brittle bone disease. To find the answers, she turned to her Vocational Rehabilitation counselor.

“I think my counselor knew that day was coming. She had never sent anyone abroad before, so she had to talk to other people in the state. She was really helpful, timely, and supportive of me going abroad.”

Vocational Rehabilitation paid for Xuan’s tuition, a plane ticket, and an hourly rate for her cousin to serve as her personal assistant for a five-week faculty-led study abroad program to London.

Xuan kept her concern about the “what could go wrong” and “what if” scenarios out of her mind until after she booked the ticket. Then she got busy contacting the airlines for travel arrangements with her power wheelchair, purchasing electrical convertors for recharging her battery, and researching equipment vendors ahead of time in London, even calling them to be sure they would be willing to work with her insurance for repairs if needed.

“I packed light on the mass produced stuff such as clothing, hygiene essentials, etc. You can buy those anywhere. I took everything I could possibly need relating to my condition. For me, I took two chairs — a manual and electric.”

Xuan and Julia Kinser Law, her contact in the Study Abroad Office, used resources and advice from the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, and also connected with the disability office on campus, to put together a plan.

Xuan is her own best advocate and resource. We wanted to make sure that we covered all bases, doing everything that we could to ensure a great learning experience for all program participants, including Xuan. Our Disability Services Office was immensely helpful and encouraging.

Xuan's personal assistant came along on field trips and to some lectures, but it was the day to day support that made a difference. Xuan learned the hard way that not all of the Tube (train) stations are wheelchair friendly. Also, most of the buses have ramps that board from the back. However, she needed to pay at the front of the bus and had to rely on a companion to swipe her card.

"The buttons to signal the driver to put the ramp down failed me on more than one occasion. There were a lot of things that were out of my control. I had to rely on my personal assistant, my classmates, and even random strangers. Everyone put out a helping hand without question. Even if it meant carrying me up three flights of stairs, they did it with a smile. It helped me to value myself again; I am still in awe of their kindness."

Xuan's career goal is to help improve the rights of disabled people in Southeast Asia. By going to London, she was able to see how disability inclusion policies are implemented, how the city was designed, and the overall model of another developed country.

"Career wise, it might have been a better choice to go to South Korea or Japan, but with the program options, and for the sanity of my parents, London was a safe start."



Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities

It is important to know your rights, your responsibilities, and what is guiding the current practices of study abroad programs.

Good Reasons for Providing Accommodations

It reflects a commitment to inclusion and an institution's international mission.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 operate as a floor, not a ceiling, for programs in making decisions.

Many colleges and universities do provide accommodations for students on study abroad simply because they think it is the right thing to do.



Look at the Entire Program to Gauge Accessibility

While you must receive meaningful access to essential aspects of the program, this doesn't mean every single aspect will be accessible.

What is reasonable in the United States may look different abroad, and requires diligence by you and the program staff in exploring the options on a case by case basis.

The amount of control over the program makes a difference in what the staff, and you, can expect.

Be Clear and Realistic about What Programs Can Deliver

Conversations about potential barriers are not meant to discourage you. Realistic expectations make for less frustration and better planning for inaccessible encounters.

It is also not meant to scare you – programs have an obligation to prevent harm from coming to you, but you need to understand no program can ensure safety.

It's always a risk and adventure, and with that comes the opportunity to learn and grow, and the dignity in moving forward in what you set out to do.

Source: National Association of College and University Attorneys, NACUA Notes April 26, 2012, Vol. 10, No. 7

Teamwork Makes the World Go Round

It's time to think about how you and the program staff can become allies and work together.

On Working with Hosts

“We need to realize that thinking outside the box is a requirement. When working with students with disabilities, we need to understand the actual needs of the students rather than assuming what their needs are. For example, when I have heard overseas universities say that we can't have a student with a mobility disability or one that is hard of hearing, we respond, 'Well, we actually managed to do it in China, so I'm pretty sure we can find a way to do it in Italy.' It is an opportunity to educate the host university on how the American system works and a chance to let them understand that we can't be barring students who otherwise show they are good fits for the program. We will hear back from some: 'We understand there will be other students coming in with similar needs, so what can we learn from this?'”



KAT DAVIS
West Campus Relations Manager
CET Academic Programs

On Disclosure

“The amount of lead time students give us and how much they disclose make a difference in how successful they are. We usually have no problems accommodating students who are open with us and tell us early on in the process. The crisis stories come from the students whom we didn't know about until they were on-site or about to go abroad, and then we don't have any time to make accommodations. Or we've purchased all the excursions already and none are accessible. We all want these students to succeed on the program, and that's why we are asking them for this information.”

On Lack of Access Abroad

Home institutions, providers and host institutions all share the desire to accommodate and support students and their goals for the experience abroad. That said, in reality there are sometimes aspects of programs abroad that are not modifiable, such as local regulations in regard to preserving the facade of historic buildings. What we work to do is identify more accessible locations or housing options, as well as provide additional financial or logistical on-site support. We pay careful consideration to how we inform students of the realities on-site, so that we can manage expectations, which is a primary concern for all students to ensure the most positive experience abroad. The earlier we can inform students about conditions the better. Our overall goal is to advise students on a one-on-one basis, rather than providing broad recommendations.



CHRISTIE JOHNSON
Senior Director, University Relations
Academic Programs International

On Planning Ahead

We ask our on-site resident directors on a regular basis to complete a comprehensive accessibility questionnaire about the housing, city, host institution, cultural perspectives, and more—anything that might affect the student's on-site experience. Surveys are updated periodically (and as we add new programs) to ensure that the information we have is accurate. We are committed to gathering and maintaining accessibility information to make our programs as accessible as possible to as many students as possible. When assessing new programs and evaluating existing programs, accessibility is always a factor: we ask how accessible a particular site might be, and we seek to identify what we can do to accommodate students (within the confines of what we can actually change and affect). When hosting students with disabilities, we have adjusted our on-site handbook to reflect only recommended facilities that are accessible to all students within the group, so students with disabilities are included in activities outside the scope of the program itinerary.



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE



NAME

TORY SAMPSON



FROM

USA



TO

ISRAEL



DURATION

7 MONTHS



0123456789



Travel Your Heart Out

In one of the remaining Arabic fishing villages on the coast of Israel, Jisr Az'Zarqa, Tory Sampson and her best friend found themselves in a rundown, corrugated steel restaurant. It had “the most amazing” fish dishes. Afterwards, they wandered into a shisha (hookah) bar, and ended up watching a soccer game between Barcelona and Real Madrid with the locals.

For Tory, who was studying abroad in Israel for seven months, this day offered up a surreal moment still vivid in her mind. Yet, it is just one of many memories in Israel and beyond.

“My family always traveled when I was growing up, and then my brother got a trip to Turkey for his high school graduation gift, and I got to tag along. That was the turning point for my love of traveling.”

Tory's brother later studied abroad in China for a year and strongly encouraged her to study abroad too. With her archaeology major through Boston University, she knew she wanted to study in the Middle East even though the choice of countries in that region were few. The University of Haifa in Israel became her choice, partly so she could continue to take Arabic language courses and do an internship at its sign language research lab.

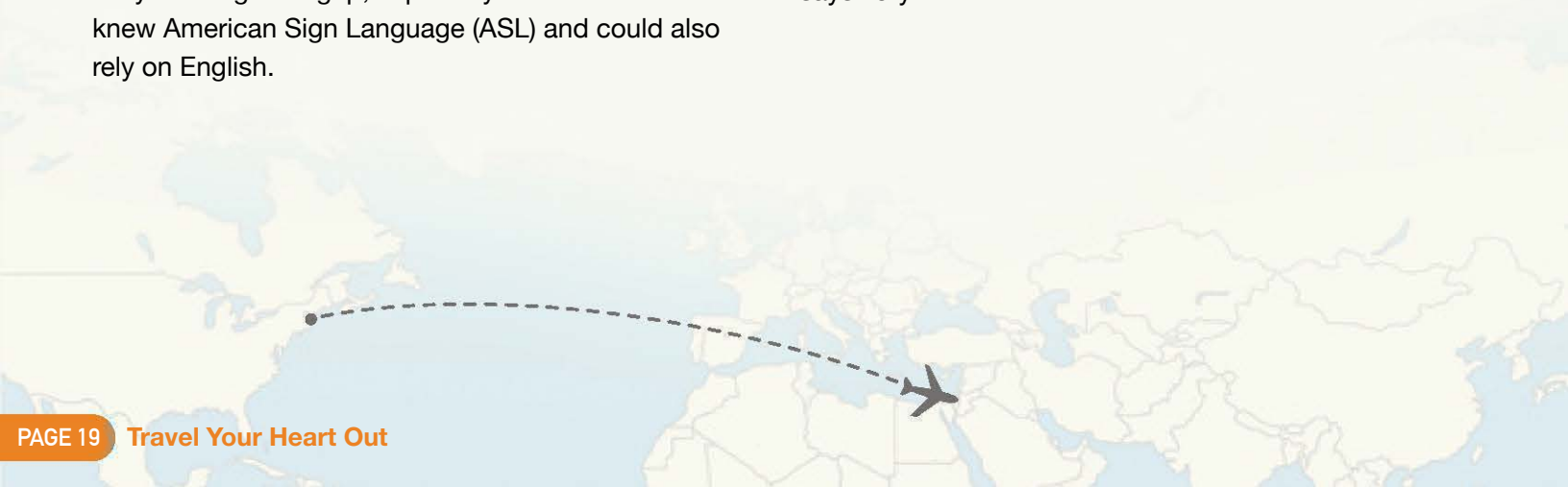
Tory, who is Deaf, found she could use her Arabic extensively in Israel (and on trips to Jordan and Egypt) and also begin to learn some Israeli Sign Language. Communication with the Deaf community was fairly easy to bridge the gap, especially since some locals knew American Sign Language (ASL) and could also rely on English.

“I didn't look for the Deaf community as soon as I got to the country, and I definitely regret it. I had only two months of hanging out with them, and I absolutely loved every minute of it.”

In the classroom, she had an ASL interpreter who resided in Israel that teamed up with a second interpreter in the United States who woke early to connect through video relay interpreting (VRI). This isn't easy to arrange but between Boston University's interpreting coordinator and the University of Haifa's study abroad office, it worked out well. Having the local interpreter helped when the VRI encountered slow or frozen connections, and when the program involved field trips.

“Boston University made sure that I had full access to everything. The local faculty also understood the interpreting situation, and made sure the interpreter was in the loop at all times. I was really impressed as I was expecting them to be a bit lax about it, but they were on top of it.”

The local Deaf students weren't as fortunate, as Tory learned. They told her they only receive 40 hours of interpreting services for a year – that includes education beyond high school, doctor's appointments, judicial issues, etc. A friend had to stop her undergraduate degree when she could no longer pay for interpreters on her own. While students at Israel's Deaf schools know Israeli Sign Language, the emphasis is on learning how to speak and lipread, and many have cochlear implants, says Tory.





I know now that I want to live abroad for a while; maybe teaching at a Deaf school, since I met so many Deaf people there who were frustrated with their educational opportunities.

Since the Deaf community is small, Tory also hung out with other university students, both Israeli and American, at the moadon (a common room for all of the university), at the gym or sports fields, at the beach, and on weekend trips to other cities in Israel.

“I was assertive in making friends. I used my phone extensively to communicate with people who didn’t know sign language, until I taught some people enough sign language to communicate effectively. It’s not good to be cooped up in your room waiting for the semester to end.”

In the final six weeks of the program, Tory got to participate in an archeology dig with other students. All these interactions didn’t just create memories, but other changes in Tory as well. “I am now more adventurous, confident, mischievous, and less judgmental. And way more tan and blonde too!”





INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

ESHA MEHTA

FROM

USA

TO

INDIA

DURATION

SUMMER



0123456789



Cane Travel and Hindi Lessons

Most mornings of her Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program in India, Esha Mehta would wake early and catch a rickshaw with her roommate to her Hindi classes. The morning she remembers most, however, happened at sunrise while on an excursion to Pushkar in Rajasthan, India.

Mehta, who is blind and an avid hiker, joined others from the American group to hike to an old temple. Dressed in traditional Indian clothes, Esha trusted her feet, as she usually does, to guide her along the rocky way and up many stairs.

“When we got to the top, it was really beautiful. My friend Nicole was tracing my hand along the horizon as the sun was rising and telling me what it looked like. Then I asked everyone to stop talking and to experience nature with their eyes closed, just listening to the birds and other sounds.”

For Esha this type of interpersonal exchange creates an opportunity to educate and learn; something that occurred frequently on her U.S. Department of State-sponsored CLS program.

The CLS program staff, after Esha’s disclosure of her disability and explanation of what type of accommodations she needs, learned how to make arrangements for her to participate fully in the program. Through connections in India with a blind retired professor and a school for blind students, the CLS staff had course materials converted and embossed in Hindi braille, offered an extra class in Hindi braille, and found a local cell phone with accessible features.

Before going to India, Esha took two years of Hindi courses at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and relied on her JAWS screen reader to access materials, though it had a few bugs when used for Hindi.

It was her Hindi professor at home who encouraged Esha to apply for the CLS program because the immersion experience would boost her language skills.

At first in India, I was really afraid to say anything because I didn’t want to be grammatically incorrect. As the program went along I got over that wall and realized that the point of learning a language was to communicate with people that speak that language. And if you can get your point across, you are doing the job of language.

Esha found her language skills useful when her host mother or people on the street would question, “What are you doing? Do you know where you are going?” if she happened to be traveling without her roommate or others in the group. It was a lot of educating on her part, “Yes, I know where I’m going; I’m confident to travel.”

Her cane travel skills did need a few adjustments in the new environment with obstacles everyone experienced, like chaotic traffic patterns that seemed unyielding and dogs, goats, pigs, squirrels, and other animals randomly crossing her path.



BADRINATH-460 K.M.

MUSSOORIE- 164 K.M.

DEHRADOON-140 K.M.

RISHIKESH - 126 K.M.

HARIDWAR- 100 K.M.

ROORKEE

DELHI - 100 K.M.

HOSPITAL - 1 K.M.

Esha's use of her cane to travel had the most impact on the children and young adults at the school for the blind where she volunteered teaching English, cane travel, technology training, independent living skills, and a little braille too. They had never been given a cane, she noticed. Instead they would wind their way around the school yard linking arms in a train of people, and rarely did they ever venture farther from the boarding school into town.

I got wonderful feedback from the students since it was the first time they had ever had the opportunity to travel independently. Having a cane in your hand is such an amazing force to getting independence versus having to rely on others to get you places.

While Esha has extended family in India, her main reason for learning Hindi is to fulfill her goal to return there and work on either the lack of psychological support for people in India, since that is her major, or opening a training center for blind children and adults to teach them new skills.

“The idea of empowering someone with a disability is a new concept in India. While there are disability organizations in India that support blindness skills, the resources financially and the stigma with it makes it harder for anyone with a disability to get services.”

Esha hopes to see this change through what defined her exchange experience – the chance to learn and educate. And now, she has more confidence in her language skills to engage and contribute in this way.





INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

TYLER CLARK

FROM

USA

TO

SPAIN

DURATION

SEMESTER



0123456789



Translating the Culture and Language of Spain

Tyler Clark's interest peaked when he visited Valparaíso University in Indiana for the first time, and the campus tour guide mentioned the university's study abroad programs. "Would I be able to study abroad?" he asked the study abroad office that day to which the reply came, "Well, when would you like to?"

A year after enrolling in Valparaíso, Tyler, who has cerebral palsy, changed his major to Spanish in hopes of becoming an international interpreter. Studying abroad would let him know whether or not he enjoyed living abroad and also if he could improve his language skills.

"Will all my scholarships transfer?" Tyler asked at that point, since he has the Lilly Endowment scholarship that covers tuition to an Indiana college. He also applied and received the Benjamin A. Gilman international scholarship for study abroad from the U.S. Department of State, geared toward undergraduates with Pell grants and from diverse backgrounds.

"If you want to go abroad," the study abroad advisor confirmed, "all of your scholarships will pretty much cover everything." The choice was made.

In the spring semester of his junior year, Tyler lived with a host family and attended the Centro de Español como Lengua Extranjera (Center of Spanish as a Foreign Language) in Zaragoza, Spain. He was the only male, only one of two Americans, and the only student with a disability, in the class of nine. The other students were from Ghana and China and classes were held every day from 9 am to 1:30 pm.

"It was a little overwhelming for me at first, because all the other students had known each other from a previous course, so I was the odd one out."

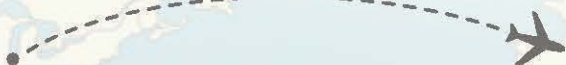
He also experienced homesickness, and getting on social media with people back home didn't make it any better. Then, his host family introduced him to a couple of their friends and they took excursions – a castle, a movie, his host mother's home village. Tyler also learned the Spaniards are very friendly and accommodating, and that if they are trying to help, he recognized "it's something they do for anyone else."

He also started hanging out with the other students in a cooking class, in cafés after class, and then in exploring other cities in Spain. And, he volunteered twice a week with a local student for a Spanish-English conversation exchange.

"Verb tenses were complicated at first, but going to Spain and hearing my professor and my host family use them in every day speech, I learned when to use them."

Although Tyler uses arm crutches and leg braces when he goes longer distances or across uneven surfaces, he adjusted easily to his 30-minute walk to class every day as it was similar to what he did to get to work at home. Only one time he didn't realize it had rained the previous night; his crutch slipped on the wet sidewalk, cutting his lip as he fell into the street.

"These two Spaniards saw me fall and immediately ran up to me and helped me up, then one rushed to their car and got a band aid for me. They said 'Do you want a ride anywhere?'"





He had let his host family know in advance that he had cerebral palsy, and may need some assistance occasionally. His host mother cooked all his meals, did all his laundry, and even cleaned his room a few times.

Tyler would feel bad about not doing chores, and ask “Do I need to do anything for you in return?” His host mother would reply, “No I’m just treating you like I would my own son.” Yet, there were other times when she would try to help and he would say, “No it’s okay, I can do that, no problem.”

On a Valencia trip, his determination showed when climbing a tower with over 250 stone spiral stairs in a narrow passage. He admits he had to cling to the wall if someone needed to pass, but stayed the course and made it to the top. He also traveled some on his own, through a tour from London to France, Switzerland, and back to Spain. Tyler’s host family was worried: “Are you sure you want to travel alone?” He wasn’t sure, but he did it, and fully enjoyed it too.

His Spanish skills, as Tyler had hoped, improved too. His Spanish advisor from Valparaíso noted the change at the end of the semester and told Tyler, “You speak so fluidly now. You were nervous back in January and we had to force you to talk. Now you use all these expressions and I understand you perfectly.”

Tyler is still on his career path to become an interpreter; he may look back one day and point to study abroad as the pivotal moment that solidified it all.



Read about Tyler’s experience in his blog

gilmanprogram.wordpress.com/category/tyler-in-spain



Fact: In the 2013-14 academic year, 146 Gilman Scholarship recipients identified as having a disability and traveled to many diverse locations!



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

JAKE ROBINSON

FROM

USA

TO

GHANA

DURATION

15 WEEKS



0123456789



Why Wouldn't You Go Abroad?

After a five hour ride in a clunky van over dirt roads, Jake Robinson and his fellow study abroad students arrived in the remote, densely forested interior of Ghana to visit a medical clinic.

After lunch, the local host led the group along a dirt path – at first surrounded by children excited by Jake's red wheelchair, then past a goat in someone's living room, and deeper into the jungle for a good distance. Just when Jake was thinking they must be getting close, he learned his adventure was not soon to end.

To understand where he was headed, one must start nine months earlier. For Jake, like other American students with mobility disabilities, the default message he had received during college was: "Go to class, pass your courses, get your degree, and then move on. It's easier to just not study abroad."

But Jake is different. He is not the kind of person to follow the standard path – he is adventurous and, as an undergraduate, he wanted to go places.

In his junior year, a friend told Jake about the Semester at Sea program's website page encouraging students with disabilities to participate. "I really think that as much as you like to travel, you should look into this," he told Jake over lunch.

After initial hesitation, Jake's curiosity lingered on, so he went to the Semester at Sea website, gave them a call, and put in an application.

"I'm one of those students who procrastinates and doesn't do anything on time, so thankfully Semester at Sea was wonderful at contacting me on a regular basis—What do you need? What can we do for you? How can we help you prepare? They were really receptive."

He also appreciated how the program staff checked in to ask "What are you concerned about?" and offered to connect him with past students with disabilities who had traveled the world.

Before Jake knew it, he was on a flight from the University of California at San Diego to Nova Scotia, Canada, to board the Semester at Sea ship. Over the next 107 days, the vessel would circumnavigate the Atlantic Ocean, traveling to 4 continents, 16 ports, and 14 countries. Jake had packed his flexibility to figure out whatever came his way.

After initial stops in Europe, the ship docked in Accra, Ghana, and everyone scrambled off to do different excursions. This led Jake deep into the jungle along that dirt path that didn't seem to end. His local host turned to him and pointed to his wheelchair, "From here, I don't think you're going to be able to use that. We are going to have to carry you."

Jake found himself draped on someone's back, while another picked up his wheelchair, and they began hiking along a wet, rocky path down into a green canyon. He found himself getting nervous, but just kept going, even





when he realized halfway down, “We’re going to have to get back up this!” After an hour, he started feeling angry, “What are you trying to prove? We shouldn’t do this!” but the local host reassured him, “This is worth it. Trust me.”

The trek and trepidation finally ended after two hours. Jake took one look at an “absolutely remote, gorgeous waterfall” and was overcome with emotion. “I had so many of these kinds of experiences with Semester at Sea that I just jumped into – scared, no doubt – but I got to places where I was astounded.”

I could easily just have gone the route of thinking that I don’t want these people to have to carry me, I don’t want to have to get my chair dirty, or I don’t want to take a chance of something bad happening, but it’s a real world experience that is priceless. It’s so incredibly important to go abroad.

Students with disabilities should have the same global experiences that every other student has access to, and Jake believes, “Administrators need to reinforce this or it is never going to change.” His home institution is doing just that; it’s the simple things, such as a study abroad poster in the disability office, which set the expectation, “Why wouldn’t you go abroad?”

The road less traveled may become more well-worn in the future, but the experiences will still continue to astound those who journey along it.



10 Scholarships to Fund Your Travels Abroad

Be an ambassador for peace, master a foreign language, give back through service... and do it all in another country! These ten scholarship opportunities can help make it happen. Although each one has its own eligibility requirements, all of them are open to U.S. citizens with disabilities.

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program

	Open to undergraduates	
	Universal	Can be applied towards most study abroad programs
	Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State	
	Award/benefits	Up to \$5,000 (\$8,000 for those studying a Critical Need Language)
	Critical Info	Must be Pell Grant Recipients
	Minimum time required abroad	2 weeks for community college students, 4 weeks otherwise

It's all about diversity by awarding scholarships to students who have been traditionally underrepresented in study abroad – students with high financial need and who represent various underserved audiences, including people with disabilities – the Gilman Program is diversifying the kinds of students who study and intern abroad.

Christianson Grant



Critical Information

Open to applicants ages 18-28



Award/benefits

\$2,500-10,000



Minimum time required abroad

6 months

If you're not currently in school, you can still travel without going the traditional study abroad route. For those who want to work or volunteer overseas, the Christianson Grant has you covered! Programs may not be part of a degree requirement or for class credit.

Critical Language Scholarship Program



Open to U.S. undergraduates



Open to U.S. graduates



Sponsored by the U.S.
Department of State



Award/benefits

Program costs are fully covered



Minimum time required abroad

Summer, eight to ten weeks

The Critical Language Scholarship Program offers fully-funded language instruction and cultural enrichment experiences overseas for 13 languages in countries where the languages are widely spoken. Think Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Russian and a number of other languages. New to critical languages? Not to worry. Several languages are offered at all levels, including those for beginners.

David L. Boren Awards

Boren Scholarship

	Open to U.S. undergraduates	
	Universal	Can be applied to most study abroad programs
	Award/benefits	\$8,000-20,000
	Minimum time required abroad	One semester, preference for a full year (8 weeks for students in select fields)
	Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense	

Boren Fellowship

	Open to U.S. graduates	
	Universal	Can be applied towards most study abroad programs
	Award/benefits	Up to \$30,000
	Minimum time required abroad	12 weeks, preference for 6 months or more
	Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense	

Boren scholarships and fellowships offer ample financial support for adventurous types seeking less-traditional destinations abroad. Because recipients commit to a year of working in the federal government, they are also a great way to get your foot in the door for a career in the federal sector.

DiversityAbroad.com Blogging Scholarship



Open to U.S. undergraduates



Award/benefits

\$500



Critical Information

Must be accepted to an overseas program and offered through a DiversityAbroad.com Partner Organization

Share your knack for story-telling by blogging your overseas adventures! Diversity Abroad strongly encourages students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, first-generation students, and ethnically and racially diverse students to apply.

Foundation for Global Scholars



Open to U.S. undergraduates



Open to U.S. graduates



Universal

Can be applied towards most study abroad programs



Award/benefits

\$2,000



Minimum time required abroad

4 weeks

Foundation for Global Scholars awards several study abroad scholarships three times annually and designates over half of its scholarship funding to students who are underrepresented in study abroad. It's that simple!

Fulbright U.S. Student Program



Open to U.S. graduating college seniors



Open to U.S. graduates



Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State



Award/benefits

Round-trip transportation to the host country, funding to cover room and board, health benefits



Minimum time required abroad

Varies, generally one academic year

Chase your passions on the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, whether they involve international graduate study, advanced research, or English teaching assistantships worldwide. With approximately 1,900 grants awarded annually and 140 countries to choose from, it is the largest U.S. exchange program around – and one of the most prestigious.

Fund for Education Abroad



Open to U.S. undergraduates



Universal

Can be applied towards most study abroad programs



Award/benefits

Up to \$10,000



Minimum time required abroad

4 weeks

The Fund for Education Abroad scholarships have very few requirements, so why not apply? In addition to awarding general scholarships up to \$10,000 towards four or more weeks abroad, FEA also offers dedicated scholarships for students who identify as LGBTQI or who live in certain regions of the United States.

Rotary Peace Fellowship



Open to graduates



Award/benefits

Program costs are fully covered (tuition and fees, room and board, round-trip transportation, and all internship and field-study expenses)



Minimum time
required abroad

15-24 months

Give peace—and study abroad—a chance! Each year, Rotary International selects up to 100 individuals from around the world to receive fully-funded master's degrees at select institutions in Australia, England, Japan, or Sweden. Fellows earn their degrees in peace studies, conflict resolution, or related fields.

Watson Fellowship



Open to recent graduates

Apply in your senior year of college



Critical information

Must attend and be nominated by one of 40 partner colleges



Minimum time
required abroad

1 year abroad



Award/benefits

\$30,000

The Watson Fellowship challenges students to engage in their deepest interests on a world scale. To do this, Watson Fellowships provide grants for one year of independent study in one or several countries outside the United States just after graduation. All majors and fields of inquiry are eligible.

Where Else to Look for Funding



The study abroad office at your school. It's a no-brainer! Or faculty who lead overseas programs in your academic department.



Third-party providers like AIFS Study Abroad, CEA Study Abroad, CIEE Study Abroad, IES Abroad, SIT Study Abroad, and others sometimes offer fee waivers or reductions on their overseas programs for qualifying students. Find them at StudyAbroad.com and GoAbroad.com online databases.



Many scholarships fund study abroad in specific destinations, such as those through the US-Japan Bridging Foundation, German Academic Exchange Service, and others.



Almost any kind of scholarship can be a study abroad scholarship! Do you already receive scholarships and funding through your school, the government, foundations, or private organizations? Check with the sponsor to find out whether and how that money can be used for study abroad.



Did you know: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Social Security funds (SSI and SSDI), and the GI Bill (for military veterans) can sometimes be applied towards study abroad expenses or disability-related expenses while abroad?

Get Your Planning Started

Choose Your Own Adventure Abroad

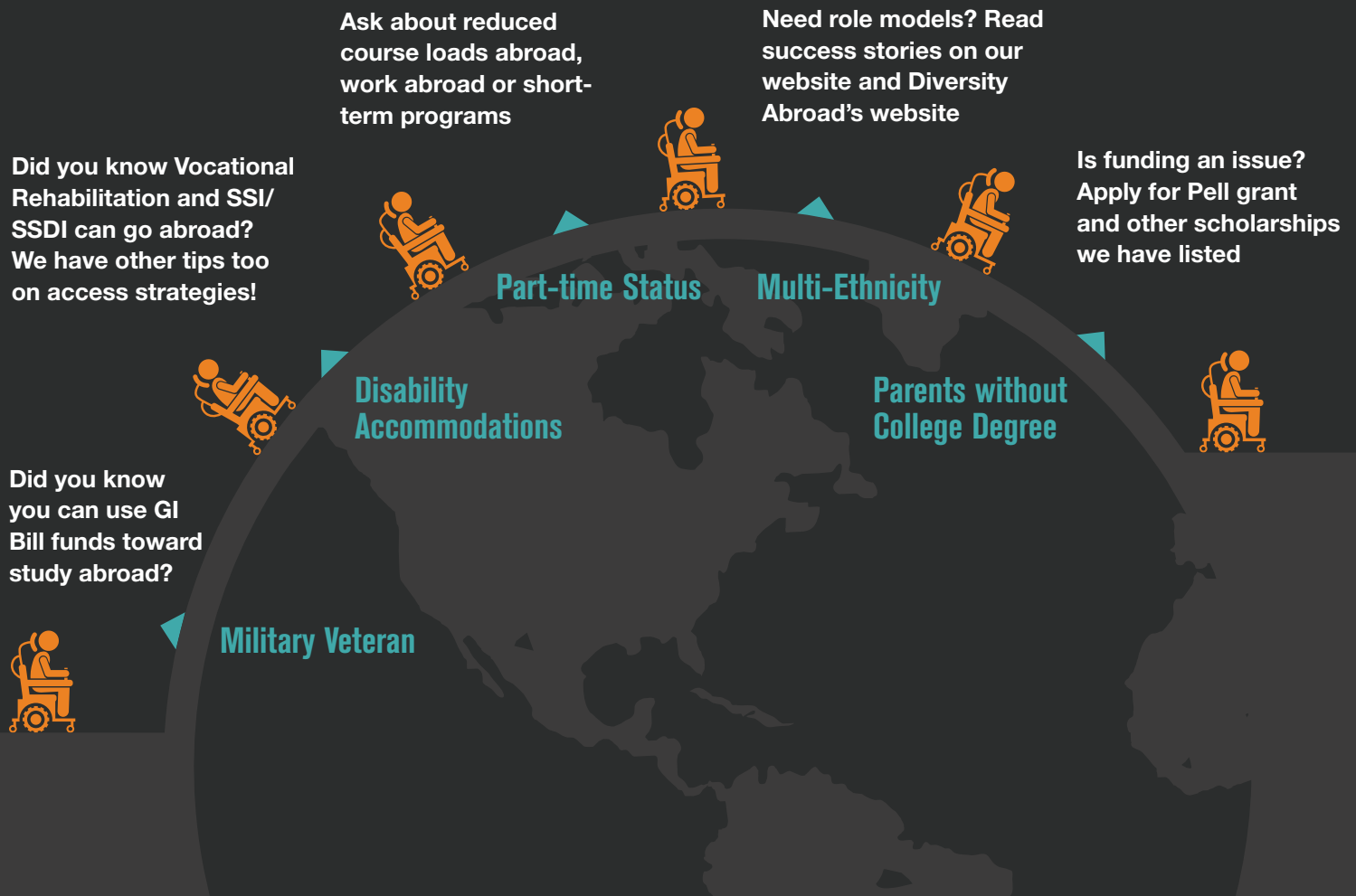
People with disabilities live and travel everywhere these days. By planning creatively, collaborating with others, and being flexible, there's no need to limit yourself to places that are more like home. Your decision may be less about the country where you go, and more about the type or length of program that works for you.



Students with Mobility Disabilities Get Moving!

More than anyone else, American college students with mobility disabilities are reaching their senior year having NOT studied abroad. Check out these existing opportunities you may not know about.

Demographic Hurdles & Resource Solutions



What will clear away perceived obstacles to study abroad?
Share your ideas on social media using hashtags:

#ChangeExchange or **#GenerationStudyAbroad**

Source: The National Survey on Student Engagement 2014. All study abroad demographic data is taken from senior college student responses.

Big “Whoops!” Moments Abroad

#1

My power wheelchair

**DIDN'T
CHARGE**



#2

**THESE
MEDICATIONS
Are Unavailable
OVERSEAS**



#3

Our health insurance

**DOESN'T
COVER ME
ABROAD**



**HOW TO
PREPARE
TO AVOID THESE
MISHAPS?**

Learn more from
other travelers
and our tipsheets at
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You Asked, We Answered!

Our one-on-one information and referral services is free! See who has come to us for advice, and contact us at clearinghouse@miusa.org.





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