

# The Unforeseen Risks and Rewards of Student Travel

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO PROTECT YOUR  
STAFF AND STUDENTS IN TODAY'S TRAVEL WORLD



GLOBAL **+** *rescue*

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**What do you do when you're on an overseas trip with 15 prep school students and one starts showing symptoms of COVID-19?**

**Or you're studying abroad in Chile and a series of demonstrations and riots break out, complete with soldiers firing tear gas at demonstrators?**

**Or your child, a high school student staying with a host family in Southern China, suddenly vomits blood?**



**The rewards of student travel are plentiful:** students expand their world view, improve their multi-lingual skills, experience another culture firsthand and gain independence.

But, as with any travel, there are always unforeseen risks. Is the student aware of the medical resources available in their destination? Can your institution pivot quickly to bring students home in an emergency? Is student housing set up for a possible quarantine?

# Study Abroad, Then and Now

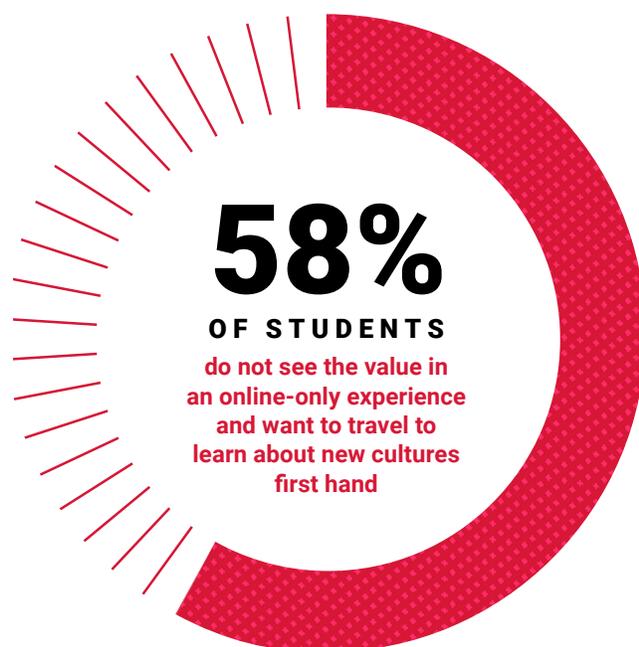
**Three in five students who plan to attend university overseas say coronavirus will not have an impact on their study abroad goals.**

At any point in time, there are approximately 5 million students studying abroad (a quarter million are U.S. students). The field was ready for rapid growth — experts estimated 8 million students would be studying abroad by 2025.

No one was ready for a COVID-19 pandemic, which forced prep schools, high schools, colleges and study abroad organizations to return all students to their home country in spring 2020.

Will coronavirus — and its variants — put a damper on study abroad programs in and 2022? According to a recent survey by Cialfo, an education technology company, three in five students who plan to attend university overseas say coronavirus will not have an impact on their study abroad goals.

With the increasing rate of vaccination, fewer quarantine restrictions and more border openings, coronavirus may not be a barrier to studying abroad. In fact, the main purpose of study abroad — learning and exploring new cultures first hand — drives the demand for educational programs with actual travel. Students want an in-person experience; more than half (58%) do not see the value in an online-only experience.

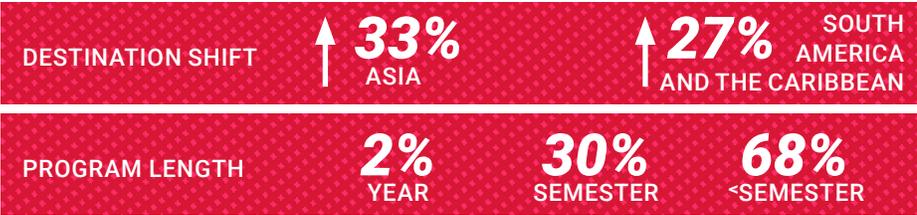


# Pivoting in the New World

**Study abroad programs will adapt and adjust to what students want — and what international policies and public health requirements permit at each destination.**

Some organizations created domestic programs for students to study the world around them. Others offered hybrid options combining online instruction with an in-country experience. Many others switched from semesters (15 weeks) to shorter four-, six- and eight week travel programs. According to Conde Nast Traveler, study abroad programs were already moving in this direction before the pandemic: only 2% of students spend a year abroad, 30% take an entire semester and the remainder (68%) opt for shorter programs.

**STUDY ABROAD TRAVEL TRENDS AMONG AMERICAN STUDENT**



Study locations may change as well. According to NAFSA, a nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange, the majority of U.S. study abroad takes place in Europe with 40% of students studying in just five countries: the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and Germany. Not surprising, considering there is less of a language barrier, the health care infrastructure is similar or familiar, and it is relatively easy to get home in an emergency.

Moving forward, Europe may not be the number one study abroad choice. The growth rate of American students studying in Asia has increased by 33%, while the number of

students studying in South America and the Caribbean has increased by 27% over the last decade. For these new, off-the-beaten-track study abroad locations, staff and students are going to need travel protection services, such as 24/7 medical advisory access and field rescue from the point of injury or illness.

Coronavirus barriers also dictate study abroad locations. The U.K. has countries listed as red, amber or green for coronavirus with corresponding travel rules. The Australian government says international borders will remain closed to foreign students until mid-2022.

# Managing Travel Risk

**Is your program prepared with a risk management strategy that includes medical and security evacuation? Do you have a plan for areas with the possibility of natural disasters and civil unrest? Has your organization fully researched the health and safety resources where students will be living and learning? Does your institution have contingency plans in place for students in destinations with limited healthcare infrastructure that may not be capable of handling serious injuries or illnesses, including pandemics?**

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## Real Life Example: Evacuation in Egypt

**“Given the global footprint that we have, we can’t do what we do without Global Rescue,” said Jeff Cason about the story of Global Rescue evacuating 24 Middlebury students during the 2011 crisis in Egypt.**



Mitigating those risks falls to an organization’s leadership, chief security officer and study abroad program directors, who are accountable for the development and oversight of policies, programs and logistics that protect traveling students, faculty and staff. If you send someone somewhere and they get sick or have an adverse event, it is the law that an organization provides a reasonable level of support for the student, faculty member, or staffer.

According to Jeffrey Ment, managing partner of The Ment Law Group, P.C., in Hartford,

Connecticut, “duty of care generally requires every employer provide employment that is safe for the employees, supplying and using safeguards and devices and doing every reasonable thing necessary to protect the life, health and safety of their employees.”

This holds true for corporations, sellers of travel and educational institutions. Ment notes “when the traveler is a minor or a student, there may be a special duty of care, which some courts might require to be of the highest level.”

Take, for example, Cara Munn, a student who contracted encephalitis from a tick bite while on a school-sponsored trip to China. After four years of discovery, two settlement conferences, a dispositive motion hearing and numerous pre-trial motions, a federal court awarded Munn \$41.5 million. In *Cara Munn, et al., v. the Hotchkiss School* (2014 U.S. District Lexis 76594), the jury found the school breached its duty of care.

The duty of care standard the court applied required the school to exercise care over students similar to what a parent of ordinary prudence would exercise under comparable circumstances. Additionally, the court determined the school did not fulfill its duty of care by failing to have a comprehensive risk management plan, a protocol to assess and communicate the risks associated with the trip, and an operational crisis response plan.



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# Making Student Travel Safer

**Let's look at an example from one of our clients, a Massachusetts-based custom educational travel company.**



The company designs unique open enrollment excursions and global experiences for independent schools with students age 14 to 18. Before the pandemic, the company operated international programs in 29 countries, providing life-changing travel experiences to more than 10,000 students.



During an early 2020 overseas trip to the eastern cape of Africa with 15 prep school students, one student started showing symptoms of COVID-19. A seasoned staff member contacted Global Rescue with an in-app message. The Global Rescue medical operations team followed up to obtain additional information including: the student's travel itinerary (including layovers), symptoms and medical care to date.

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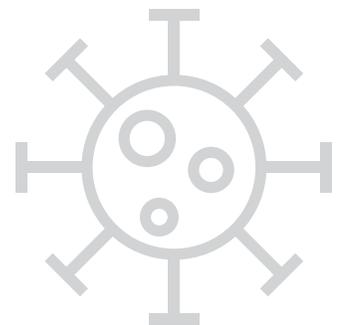
It was determined a hospital visit was in order. Global Rescue located two private hospitals in the area, both with an available pediatrician. One hospital was five minutes from the hotel and the student was brought to the emergency department for evaluation. Based on symptoms and history of travel, the emergency department physician recommended COVID-19 testing.

Now came the difficult part: the wait. While the blood test results were sent to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in Johannesburg, the student and a staff member remained at the hospital for monitoring. The rest of the travel group isolated in the hotel for 60 hours.

“It is huge for staff to have the security of medical advisory services from Global Rescue,” said the EVP of Education. “Our staff does have medical training, but a second opinion — calling and getting advice and a reality check of the situation — is more than just peace of mind. We’re doing what we need to be doing for our duty of care.”

Fortunately, the student tested negative. A positive test would have changed the entire study abroad experience: everyone on the trip would have needed testing, the quarantine period might have been longer, and travel restrictions may have changed during quarantine, making it difficult to impossible to return home. But, as a Global Rescue client, this educational travel company had a back-up plan for any scenario that might have played out.

**Does yours?**



# Creating a Duty of Care Policy

If you haven't done so recently, it's time to evaluate and update your duty of care policy. Make sure it includes these seven elements.



- 1 Employees responsible for fulfilling the organization's duty of care
- 2 An assessment of the organization's travel risk profile, perhaps by program or by destination
- 3 A risk management plan
- 4 **A crisis response plan →**
- 5 An education or training program for staff members, including a clear communication plan with students
- 6 A method, perhaps technology, to track and assess incidents
- 7 A post-travel feedback mechanism to help refine risk management and crisis response plans

Your organization may not have the in-house expertise to set up a travel risk management program. Global Rescue's medical and security travel experts can help your organization at many different levels, such as evaluating a current risk management program or creating a new one for today's travel world.

"It is important an organization's leadership learn the travel laws, regulations, standards and prevailing practices that are relevant to the organization, type of traveler, activities and destinations," Ment said. "Doing so can insulate the organization from multi-million-dollar judgments and significant harm to the organization's reputation and brand."

Global Rescue's travel risk, crisis management and response services empower organizations to confidently give students the experience of a lifetime, knowing every detail has been carefully examined and every precaution taken.

**Contact us to learn more about our study abroad solutions. →**

# Real Life Examples



# On the Ground in Chile

[READ THE FULL RESCUE](#)



Students from Tulane University and Middlebury College were studying in Chile when protests and demonstrations broke out in 2019.

“A student reported seeing protesters getting tear gassed, but we weren’t certain of the severity or scale of the event,” said Alessandra Capossela, assistant director for International Programs at Middlebury College.

Global Rescue specialists knew the situation was fluid, but they needed to assess the levels and patterns for potential escalation. The operations team made the decision to travel to Santiago for ground truth.

“What you get from the State Department is a very general assessment for the entire country. But to have Global Rescue go down there and give you the specifics of the roads, the city and the towns and to say we know where everyone

is and if we have to get them out we know exactly where to go and what to do – well, it was amazing. If we didn’t have that then we might have jumped the gun,” said Carlos Velez, dean of International Programs at Middlebury.

Because the on-the-ground intelligence painted a clearer, local picture for school officials to judge, no evacuations were necessary.

“

**It was reassuring to know we had this resource in Global Rescue,**

– Liz Ross, associate dean of International Programs

# Illness in India

[READ THE FULL RESCUE](#)



Elijah English was studying Indian law in Northern India when she became ill with severe gastrointestinal issues. To make matters worse, she had a flight the next day to continue her studies in Nepal.

Her mother told her to call Global Rescue immediately. The medical team advised her not to fly and hold tight while they located the nearest hospital.

“Global Rescue put me at ease when I was so ill and not in a positive frame of mind to function,” she said.

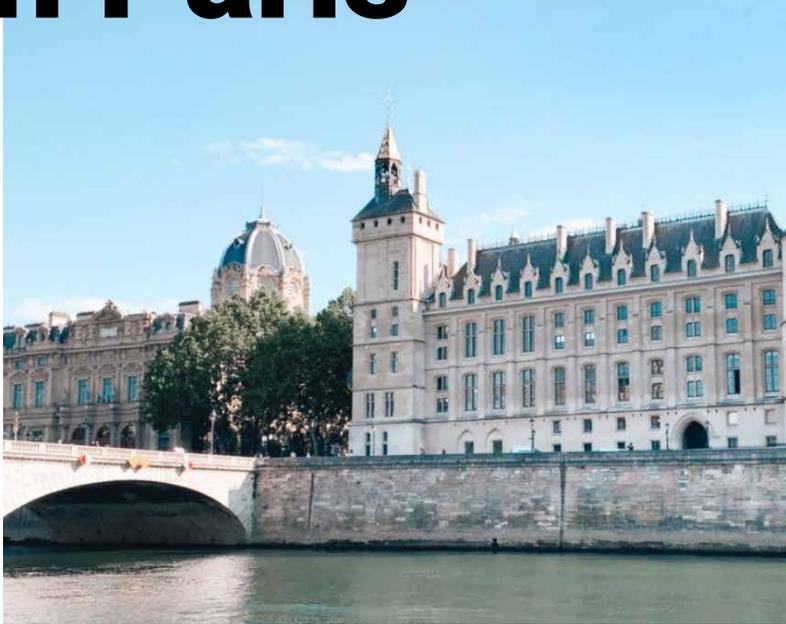
English was admitted to the hospital and Global Rescue consistently checked on her well-being.

“Global Rescue was extremely thorough in ensuring I had the correct prescriptions, being scrupulous and providing advice from medical experts,” English said. “When you are ill and alone in a foreign country, finding yourself in need of medical care can be a daunting and stressful experience. Global Rescue alleviated all of my worries, and provided the best possible support that one could ever ask for.”

**“ Global Rescue alleviated all of my worries, and provided the best possible support that one could ever ask for. – Elijah English**

# Stolen Passport in Paris

[READ THE  
FULL RESCUE](#)



Losing your passport in a foreign country can be a bureaucratic ordeal. During a pandemic, the complications magnify. When a U.S. graduate student studying in France lost her passport to a purse snatcher, she didn't know what to do.

Meredith Richardson contacted the director of the study abroad program who unhesitatingly told Richardson to call Global Rescue immediately. She did and was quickly surprised.

"Normally, when you need help with something there's 24-hour delay. Global Rescue responded to me within about 30 seconds," she said.

Global Rescue services include streamlining the process to replace a lost or stolen passport or visa, even during a pandemic.

"The process to get an appointment for

passport replacement could take weeks. The Global Rescue team handled it completely, got it hammered out within a couple of hours, and got me into the embassy for an urgent passport replacement appointment," she said. "I didn't have to do a single thing, except pull my documentation together."

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– Meredith Richardson

# About Global Rescue

Global Rescue was founded in 2004 to help make travel safer. We provide travelers a better way to get help when they experience a medical or security emergency. Global Rescue employs more than 250 personnel spread across five operations centers in five countries and provides the only vertically integrated duty of care and travel risk management solution to organizations of all sizes, including governments.

Our track record includes more than 20,000 operations worldwide saving lives and protecting our members. These include evacuations during some of the world's most challenging crises, including the 2020 pandemic, Hezbollah's war with Israel, the Arab Spring, the earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal and hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

Our mission is to continue to provide our clients with the world's leading medical, security, evacuation, travel risk and crisis management services.



**THE NEW  
YORK TIMES**

***“Global Rescue plucks people from precarious situations worldwide.”***

**NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC**

***“They’re a well-tested provider of medical services and evacuation.”***

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

***“Members who call in are connected immediately with critical-care paramedics or nurses.”***

**GLOBAL**  *rescue*

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