



March 19, 2020 Message for Study Abroad Students

Dear Students and Families,

Ithaca College staff have been monitoring the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and have recently received notice that the U.S. Department of State has just issued a [Global Level 4 Health Advisory](#). This advisory indicates the following for U.S. citizens who are abroad:

In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who live in the United States should arrange for immediate return to the United States, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period. (03/19/20)

We now strongly urge all students who have not yet departed their study abroad countries to seriously consider, with the guidance of your families, an immediate return home to the United States or to the country in which your permanent home is located.

Here is the full text of the March 19, 2020 Advisory:

*Global Health Advisory
LEVEL 4 - Do Not Travel*

The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19. In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who live in the United States should arrange for immediate return to the United States, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period. U.S. citizens who live abroad should avoid all international travel. Many countries are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and implementing travel restrictions and mandatory quarantines, closing borders, and prohibiting non-citizens from entry with little advance notice. Airlines have cancelled many international flights and several cruise operators have suspended operations or cancelled trips. If you choose to travel internationally, your travel plans may be severely disrupted, and you may be forced to remain outside of the United States for an indefinite timeframe.

On March 14, the Department of State authorized the departure of U.S. personnel and family members from any diplomatic or consular post in the world who have determined they are at higher risk of a poor outcome if exposed to COVID-19 or who have requested departure based on a commensurate justification. These departures may limit the ability of U.S. Embassies and consulates to provide services to U.S. citizens.

For the latest information regarding COVID-19, please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\)](#) website.

You are encouraged to visit travel.state.gov to view individual Travel Advisories for the most urgent threats to safety and security. Please also visit the website of the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate to see information on entry restrictions, foreign quarantine policies, and urgent health information provided by local governments.

Travelers are urged to enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. The Department uses these Alerts to convey information about terrorist threats, security incidents, planned demonstrations, natural disasters, etc. In an emergency, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate or call the following numbers: 1(888) 407-4747 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) or 1 (202) 501-4444 from other countries or jurisdictions.

If you decide to travel abroad or are already outside the United States:

- Consider returning to your country of residence immediately using whatever commercial means are available.
- Have a travel plan that does not rely on the U.S. Government for assistance.
- Review and follow the [CDC's guidelines for the prevention of coronavirus](#).
- Check with your airline, cruise lines, or travel operators regarding any updated information about your travel plans and/or restrictions.
- Visit travel.state.gov to view individual Travel Advisories for the most urgent threats to safety and security.
- Visit our Embassy webpages on COVID-19 for information on conditions in each country or jurisdiction.
- Visit the [Department of Homeland Security's](#) website on the latest travel restrictions to the United States
- Visit [Keeping workplaces, homes, schools, or commercial establishments safe](#).

If you are a U.S. citizen, we are recommending that you return to the United States as soon as possible if a commercial departure option is available to you. **If you are an international student**, please plan to return to your home country as soon as possible, and reach out to Diana Dimitrova (ddimitrova@ithaca.edu) at Ithaca College for additional guidance. Here are recommendations for rebooking a flight:

- Take action as soon as possible - airlines and travel agents are experiencing a high volume of calls. You may need to wait on hold for an hour or more to speak with an agent. When possible, try to make changes online to expedite the process.
- Before purchasing a new, one-way flight back to the U.S., ask the airline from which you originally purchased your round-trip ticket if you can change the return date; in most cases this is possible. Sometimes there is a fee associated, but you should ask your airline if they are offering an updated flight change policy - many airlines are waiving extra fees and charges for flight changes due to the Coronavirus.
- Make changes directly on your airline website, or call them directly, rather than changing your flight on a third-party website such as Expedia.

If you need assistance booking air travel back to the United States, you may contact Manzoor Saiyed at Frosch Student Travel (Manzoor.saiyed@frosch.com) for assistance in finding a flight. Please note that you will need to provide a credit or debit card to Frosch Student Travel for any flights booked, but you may find that working with a travel agent will be helpful in finding options for air travel home. If you contact him:

- Identify yourself as an Ithaca College study abroad student;
- Provide your date of birth;
- Let him know where you are, and what the closest airport is to you;

- Let him know to which airport you need to return; and
- Let him know your soonest possible date for departure from your study abroad country.

Please work with your study abroad programs to let them know of your plans to return and to complete your coursework remotely. At this time, our primary concern is for your safety and your ability to return home. Therefore, please take action **now** to book travel back to the US or to your permanent home, let us know the date on which you will depart and where you will travel to in the US, and **travel safely home**. Once you are there, reach out to us and we will work with you on resolving any remaining uncertainties about finishing out your semester remotely.

For any questions or concerns, we are ready to support and assist. You may reach us at studyabroad@ithaca.edu, or +1 (607) 274-3306 (leave a message and we will return your call as quickly as possible). If you have an emergency situation, please call the Ithaca College Office of Public Safety at +1 (607) 274-3333.

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