

Questions about your departure from Fargo?

https://www.ndsu.edu/international/iss/new/next_steps/exchange/departure

NDSU

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND STUDY ABROAD SERVICES

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J-1 STUDENT DEPARTURE GUIDE

QUICK TIPS on REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

Returning to your home country after spending time abroad can be both exciting and frustrating. Here are a few tips to make the transition smooth:

- You might not expect to experience reverse culture shock, but most people experience it to some degree. You might not even realize that you experienced it until after it's over.
- Take your time readjusting. Don't expect to fit back into your routine immediately.
- When starting activities, think briefly about your expectations and how things might have changed. What has changed at home, school, work, or with friends? How have you changed? This may give you insight into frustrations or surprises in what seem like common activities.
- You may have already encountered the well-intentioned but difficult question: "How was your trip?" It's impossible to explain the entirety of your time away in a few sentences. Instead, think about the interests of the person asking and share one memorable event that fits.
- Keep yourself busy! There are people to see, foods to eat, places to go, and things to do. Going forward gives you a chance to appreciate what you have.



LOOKING FORWARD

With the energy and excitement you gained from study abroad, you might be thinking more about your direction in school and your life goals.

- Look at your plans for the future. How has your new perspective changed what you might want to do or where you want to do it?
- ...but don't be hasty. Take a few months to consider your options and to feel settled at home again before you change your major or finalize other significant plans. What seems like a great idea initially might not be your final decision in the long run.
- Think about incremental changes. Is there a way to refocus your current major? Is there a second major that might put things you learned abroad together with what you were already studying? Would a graduate program give you an opportunity to learn more?
- Look outside the classroom. Are there existing student groups or could you start a new one in order to share your new interests? Language or culture groups? Volunteer opportunities?
- Consider the bigger picture. Are there opportunities in the community, nationally, or online to tell your story and pursue your new interests?
- Think long term. What careers seem to fit well with your skills and interests? Internships and volunteering can give valuable insight into what a career would really be like.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Sometimes returning home can be more challenging than expected. You might find things are not as you remember them or that nothing has changed from when you left. It can seem as if your home isn't as exciting as your adventure abroad was. Or, since you have new insight on viewing a culture from outside, you might start to question why and how things are done at home. Here are some ways to work toward integrating the old and the new perspectives:

- Remember that your home culture is an important part of who you are as a person. Just as you probably had frustrations in your host culture in the United States at first, you are going to see things with a different eye now that you have been away from home for a while. Integrating the two pieces of yourself will take time, so be patient with yourself and the process.
- Make a list of things at home that you enjoy and do things you couldn't do while you were away here at NDSU.
- Continue your spirit of adventure at home! Are there interesting places at home that you haven't visited? Activities you haven't tried? Foods you haven't tasted?
- Talk about your experiences...in moderation. Your friends and family will enjoy hearing stories and seeing photos, but they might not have the context to understand the entire experience.
- Keep reminders of your time abroad around. Hang pictures and listen to music from your host country. If someone asks about them, share why these things are important to you.
- Keep in touch with friends and others you met abroad. Technology such as Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, Twitter, and other online resources make it easier than ever to communicate over long distances.
- Channel your nostalgia. When you want to reminisce, use the opportunity to sort your souvenirs and label your pictures. Over time, names and places will start to fade, so guard those memories for the future.
- Consider which elements of the culture where you studied you might want to keep. Are there certain foods you can cook at home, particular holiday traditions you can share with others, or clothing items you like to wear? Over time, you'll be able to find a balance between your home and host cultures. There's no one answer for how best to blend the two. Instead, it's a matter of finding what works best for you.

