

# COMING HOME

## RETURNING HOME: Life After Study Abroad

### Preparing to leave

Across the globe, Athena students are in the midst of one of the most difficult phases of any study abroad experience: returning home. You might be asking yourself "Will there be time to return to that great café I always meant to go back to? How will I fit a semester's worth of purchases and memories into two bags?! And how can I be both so excited to see friends & family back home and so upset to be leaving my new friends and life here?" As you rush through the last few weeks of your program and try to cram in as much as possible, Athena encourages you to take a moment to just sit back and relax, to truly take in the wonderful surroundings that have served as your home this semester.

### Returning home

Saying goodbye will not be easy; returning home may be even harder. Whether you realize it at the time or not, you are likely to experience re-entry shock as you re-adjust to the culture of the U.S. and to the college life you left behind. Re-entry is an important part of the study abroad experience and it can be the time when you learn the most from your cross-cultural experience; however, it is often this phase that students are most unprepared for.

### Coping with re-entry

Re-entry can be a time of stress, confusion, and great personal growth. There are many positive ways to cope with re-entry. Perhaps the most vital strategy will be to recognize that what you are going through is normal and extremely common. Expect to encounter a period of some stress and give yourself time to deal with the challenges of re-adapting to life in the U.S. Look positively on your re-entry experience and allow it to help you look at your own culture as if for the first time.

*New Knowledge:* Just as your attitudes have probably changed some this semester, you have also developed new knowledge, skills, and behaviors. It can become frustrating if you feel that these new skills and competencies are of little use once you return home. Seeking out opportunities to share your new knowledge & skills can help ease this frustration.

*Relationships:* Some study abroad returnees say that the most difficult issue to deal with after returning home is relationships with family and friends. Your experience has given you a new global perspective that may be difficult to explain to your friends and family.

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## DON'T FORGET!

### Choose Your Athena Study Abroad S.O.S. Charitable Organization!

#### How does S.O.S. work?

Athena donates a percentage of our proceeds each year to featured charities (which change annually). Athena enables each student to actively participate in the S.O.S. program by allowing the students to decide which global charity they would like to support.

#### Organizations include:

Compassion Without Borders

Damien House

FINCA International

Green America (formerly Co-Op America)

SOME (So Others Might Eat)

Wild Goose Creative

We at Athena understand what it means to give back to the world, and want to place this opportunity in each student's hands. Let's make a difference in the world, one person at a time!

\*\*At the conclusion of your program, you will receive an electronic S.O.S. Charity selection form which includes a brief description of each organization.

\*\* Charity forms are due back to Athena by the following dates:

-Italy programs: June 1, 2009

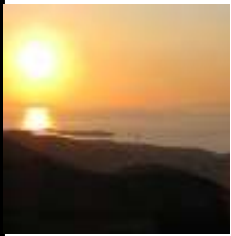
-England programs: June 1, 2009

-Greece programs: June 15, 2009

-Australia programs: July 15, 2009



## ATHENA PHOTO CONTEST 2009



**VOTING  
ENDS  
MAY 21!**



**CAST YOUR VOTE  
FOR THIS YEAR'S  
WINNER AT  
ATHENAABROAD.COM**

## PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

*After you return from overseas, your Athena coordinator will ask you to complete a program evaluation form. This is an opportunity for you to provide Athena with feedback about your overall experience and to make suggestions for further strengthening Athena's services. We truly value your feedback!!*

## 10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE ALIVE

1. **Write** for Athena's Newsletter. We are always looking for student newsletter contributors; if you are interested in writing a short article let us know. We would love to share your words with future Athena participants.

2. **Participate** in Athena's Photo Contest – it's held twice a year so there is plenty of opportunity to submit your entries!

3. **Visit** with your school's study abroad office – the staff members are likely travel lovers too and would be happy to hear your stories & see your photos!

4. **Volunteer** at any events that your school's study abroad office sponsors.

5. **Coordinate** a study abroad photo contest/exhibit for your school. If they already have one, volunteer to be a student judge.

6. **Assist** with your school's new international student orientation.

7. **Join** your school's International Student Association or Study Abroad Returnees Group. If there isn't such a club on your campus, consider starting one!

8. **Enroll** in an internationally-themed class or consider adding an international studies minor.

9. **Participate** in local community events & festivals celebrating cultural diversity. Your campus Multicultural Affairs office might be a good resource for identifying such events.

10. **Study abroad again!**

## AROUND TOWN

Traveling independently after your study abroad program has ended? Be sure to check out some of these popular events!

### SYDNEY

#### Sydney Italian Festival

19 May- 8 June 2009 (various events)

<http://www.sydneyitalianfestival.com.au>

Going on its sixth year, the Sydney Italian Festival highlights the wonders of Italy, showcasing its cultural contributions to the world. Over 200 events are planned over the three week period, specializing in Italy's renowned offerings to the arts, music, cinema, fashion and design. With so many events to choose from, those in attendance are sure to be entertained.

### FLORENCE

#### Florentine Genius

15-25 May 2009

<http://www.geniofiorentino.it/>

The annual Florentine Genius festival is the perfect place to learn more about the Italian culture. The festival is dedicated to significant figures in Italian history including Dante, Leonardo and Boccaccio. The week-long event contains showcases, conventions, concerts and fashion shows, honoring these influential people and many more. Events are scheduled to take place throughout the city.

### ROME

#### Feast of Saint John

23-24 June 2009

[http://www.whatsonwhen.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event\\_id=47550](http://www.whatsonwhen.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event_id=47550)

The Piazza San Giovanni is the venue for the Feast of Saint John, an annual celebration in Rome. The history of the celebration dates back to medieval times, when witches were said to fly overhead, scaring those below and forcing locals and shop owners to close up at night and stay in town. Bonfires, food and lots of drinks are staples in the festival now, including the traditional dish, lumache, also known as snails.

### PAROS ISLAND

#### Athens Festival

1 June 2009- 31 August 2009 (various events)

[http://www.greekfestival.gr/show\\_static?page=about\\_company&lang=en](http://www.greekfestival.gr/show_static?page=about_company&lang=en)

The Athens Festival is an annual event celebrating the culture accomplishments of Greece. Throughout the summer months, cultural events, such as concerts, plays, ballets and much more will take place at various locations around the city. Don't miss out on the great opportunity to learn more about Greece.

Have your own favorite restaurant, site, shop, that you'd like to share with future study abroad participants? **SUBMIT YOUR OWN AROUND TOWN SUGGESTIONS TO [INFO@ATHENAABROAD.COM](mailto:INFO@ATHENAABROAD.COM)**

## RETURNING HOME: Life After Study Abroad

*Relationships Continued:* As you try to reintegrate into campus life, you may experience some feelings of alienation – just as you have formed your own memories this semester, your friends & family back home have also shared experiences without you. The changes you have undergone may affect your family and friends – while these changes are most likely positive, it may take some time for them to accept the “new” you...you may even feel pressured to revert to the person you were before you stepped on the plane this fall. Perhaps the most common, and often most difficult, aspect of this issue is telling others about your overseas experience. Don't be alarmed if your friends and family ask “So, how was it?” but then don't appear to be very interested in hearing all that you have to tell them about your overseas experience – or looking at all of your photos. It is difficult for many friends and family to relate; however, their apparent disinterest should not be taken as a sign that your study abroad experience is insignificant. Don't despair – there will be plenty of people who will love to hear all of your stories & see all of your photos...it just may not be the person you would have expected it to be!

*Portions of this article were adapted from “Coming Home” by Stacey Woody Thebodo, Office of International Programs and Off-Campus Study, Middlebury College.*

## On Your Way Home: Important Airport Information

**The last few days of your study abroad experience can be a little overwhelming. The last thing you probably want to do is pack...but it is an inevitable reality! Be sure to be aware of U.S. Customs regulations and the baggage policies of your airline while you pack.**

### **U.S. Regulations for Purchases Abroad:**

**Those returning to the U.S. after a stint in another country are allowed to bring back duty-free \$400 worth of goods purchased abroad. You must declare all items you purchased and are carrying with you upon your return to the U.S.**

### **Baggage policies:**

**Be sure to check out your airline's baggage policies and weight limits. In most cases, you are only allowed to check two bags in and carry one bag onto the airplane, and that is including your purse. Also be aware of the weight restrictions and the cost associated with them. Depending on how heavy your suitcase is, the cost to check your bag could be extremely expensive. All of this information can be found on your airline's website.**