

Navigating Accessibility & Disability Issues Abroad
*A Guide by Student Success Alumni Fellow, Sasha Conley
for The Hampshire College Global Education Office*

Pre-Departure Information to Consider

*Note: Directly asking a program some of these questions prior to your acceptance/admission may indicate to them that you have a disability. Disability disclosure is a personal choice. If you wish to keep your disability status private while abroad/until you are accepted, request that GEO ask these questions for you anonymously or look for country-specific questions online.

[Abroad with Disabilities has a great list of resources available here.](#)

- o What does a typical day look like? How much intensive walking is there?
- o What is the common transportation method while in the program?
- o What is physical and mental healthcare like in that country for a visitor or temporary resident?
- o How accessible are pharmaceuticals?
- o How does that culture view people with disabilities/mental health?
- o How wheelchair-accessible is the location? How common are wheelchair accessible bathrooms? Curb cuts? Squat toilets?

While In-Country

Communication is a key component of self-advocacy that can improve your ability to participate in program activities. Checking in with program staff can be especially beneficial during these times:

- At the beginning of the program
- Right before starting a large project, when you're in the thick of things, and while wrapping it up
- When deadlines/assignments are piling up (whether due to late work, extended deadlines or a rigorous program)
- Before leaving for a new excursion location (on a multi-location program or during a day trip) preferably a few days in advance to allow follow up questions to arise and to mentally prepare.

And on these topics, since acquiring information in advance can help reduce culture shock, anxiety, and help you feel more prepared.

- Walking tours
 - o What is the protocol for if you need to leave? Can the program reimburse you for transportation back to the site if you need to take public transportation while everyone else walks back?
- Housing
 - o How close is your home to the program site/excursions/public transportation?
 - o Are there a lot of stairs in your home or leading up to your apartment?

- What is the neighborhood like? Will you be safe at night? Who can you talk to about processing street harassment?
- Transportation
 - How common are buses, trains/trams, and cabs/ubers?
 - How expensive are they? Are there discount options for buying uses in bulk?
 - Does the program have a transportation stipend?
- Mental Health
 - What are some tools or methods you can use to cope with the emotional stress of an unfamiliar location, new people, and different cultural norms?
- Disclosure
 - How do you want your disability needs communicated to, or kept private from other program participants and permanent and visiting staff?

Feel free to email accessibility@hampshire.edu or work with GEO staff to discuss how to navigate your accessibility needs abroad.