Journaling

Why Journal?

There are many reasons to journal while you are abroad. Some include:

- Having an outlet to express your frustrations, excitement, confusion and other emotions.
- Creating a resource for processing all of the information, you have gathered to learn from. There are so many new experiences, stimuli and emotions that occur while studying abroad, this can be a great way to process all of it.
- Having a record of your experiences to reflect on years after your trip.
- It will be a great resource when you begin interviewing for jobs and are asked to give concrete examples of overcoming obstacles, handling stressful situations, displaying flexibility, and communicating with others, for example.

You may want to consider beginning your journal before you leave so that you can reflect on your development throughout the entire process.

Be Creative!

Journaling does not have to be the “traditional” way of writing in a journal in that you write a narrative of what occurred each day. You can get creative by using a number of different formats. You could do a “scrapbooking” approach where you bring a large journal or scrapbook with you so you can attach ticket stubs, programs, menus, or other memorabilia and write your reactions about each one. This will be a great way to preserve mementos and incorporate your memories and feelings with them.

Consider doing a “photo journal” or “photo blog.” Since it is so easy to upload digital photos to different sources you can write about how you were feeling when you took the picture, what was occurring during the time the picture was taken, or how the subject matter is different from your culture. If you update this regularly it will be a great way to remember details of the pictures you took as well as exercising your reflection skills.

Some prompts to get you started:

- Describe a trip you take every day – to school, for instance, and include details like what you see, hear, smell and start to look for patterns on your daily trip.
- Explain what occurred when you first experienced culture shock and how you reacted. How do you feel about this situation now? Do you interpret it differently now?
- If you were contacted by another SDSU student who is thinking of studying abroad at your university what advice would you give him/her?
- Divide the journal into heads like Destinations, Accommodations, Restaurants, etc. and write what you have experienced.
- Write an in depth entry on an individual you have met.
What are your opinions about your host culture stereotypes? How do you understand culture differently because of your own experiences?

What is a Blog?

Blog¹ – A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links.

A blog is often a mixture of what is happening in a person's life and what is happening on the Web, a kind of hybrid diary/guide site, although there are as many unique types of blogs as there are people.

Blogs are alternatively called web logs or weblogs. However, "blog" seems less likely to cause confusion, as "web log" can also mean a server's log files.

Some blog sites that can help you set up your own blog:

- www.blogger.com
  Choose your blog name, connect it to your gmail account (if you have one) so that you can write your thoughts, post pictures, connect with others, and receive feedback and interact with those that read your blog while you're away.

- www.Blogabroad.com
  Follow students on their study abroad journeys as they blog about different subjects like packing, pre-departure preparation, meeting new people, dealing with locals, safety, thinking about home, and much more. You have the opportunity to interact with the bloggers during their journey and comment or ask questions regarding their experiences.

- www.Cafeabroad.com
  Network, city guide, and magazine for students studying abroad.

- www.blogs.glimpse.org/
  A great resource that connects you to others abroad as well as searching for bloggers by country, subject matter like festivals & rituals, food, culture shock, and race and identity. You can create your own blog, connect and subscribe to others blogs and also access newsletters and books about study abroad experiences.

A Great Resource for Understanding Culture:

- www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/

¹ Courtesy of MarketingTerms.com