

Orientation manual

Maastricht University, University College (UCM)

2023-2024



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Students must be aware that not all circumstances are predictable and that study abroad participants must take self-responsibility very seriously. The University, its agents, and employees cannot be held responsible for the actions of the host institution or of the student.

A WORD ABOUT UR'S APPROACH TO STUDY ABROAD

UR follows a philosophy of study abroad that demands a lot of our participants and also provides deep benefits. Our model requires students to be highly organized and responsible; high standards are *always* part of a UR education.

Our programs last for a semester or year, allowing you time to experience more aspects of your host country and its region than if you were going abroad for a shorter term. Another benefit of UR's way of doing study abroad is that our exchanges enhance the internationalization of our campus by bringing international students here.

We send most of our students on exchanges or other direct-enrollment opportunities, which provide the experience of learning and living in the way that the people of your host country do. By taking classes meant for local students, arranging your housing the same way as local students, and interacting directly with the governmental and university administration of your host country, you are gaining *much* greater insight on the workings of the world than if you were taking part in a more American-directed program abroad.

In summary, you need to be fully engaged in the study abroad process to be successful and to avoid problems. That means reading your UR email regularly, reading all of the orientation materials that you receive, attending all of the orientation meetings that are arranged for you, and meeting all deadlines.

ABOUT YOUR PARENTS

Please share all of the orientation materials that you receive with your parents. Also let them know that our office has made a page just for them, which will answer many of their questions about the study abroad process and our policies.

<https://international.richmond.edu/study-abroad/parents/index.html>

For more detail, they can read the Study Abroad Handbook, meant for all students going abroad on semester or yearlong programs.

<https://international.richmond.edu/study-abroad/policies/handbook.html>

You should not rely on your parents to arrange any part of your study abroad experience. Our office will answer basic questions from them about our policies but will not tell them how to apply for your housing, apply for your visa, etc.

Remember that study abroad can be an enormous growth experience; if you are accustomed to your parents being heavily involved in arranging things for you, now is a time to develop greater self-reliance.

ABUSE OF STUDY ABROAD

It occasionally happens that students embark on study abroad as a vacation. International Education (IE) discovers this when our colleagues abroad report that students are missing orientation sessions, classes, assignments, exams, etc., or when we receive transcripts with unusually poor or missing grades.

IE will not tolerate the abuse of study abroad because:

- admission is competitive, and if we grant a student a place in one of our programs and the student then wastes his or her semester abroad, he or she is depriving a classmate of the chance to have a rewarding and potentially life-changing experience;
- study abroad is meant to be part of one's academic pursuits, not a vacation from them;
- abuse of study abroad demeans the work of IE and other offices at UR and at our partner institutions abroad.

Students who are found to have abused the opportunity to study abroad will face consequences (which can include suspension) from Richmond College or Westhampton College.

Students who abuse study abroad may also be required to repay financial aid they receive from the University. Students who receive a tuition waiver may be required to pay back tuition (over \$31,000 per semester as of the time of this writing) for a semester wasted abroad.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Website: www.ucm.nl

Emergencies: 112 (all emergency services)

U.S. Embassy in The Hague

Lange Voorhout 102
2514 EJ The Hague
Phone +31 70 310-2209; Fax: +31 70 361-4688

U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam

Museumplein 19
1071 DJ Amsterdam
Phone: 020-575 5309; Fax: 020-575 5310

PROGRAM DATES

The authoritative source for the dates of your program is the acceptance letter you receive from your host institution abroad and/or the website of your host institution's international office. UR lists our best understanding of these dates under "Dates and Costs" on the page for your program on the study abroad website, <https://studyabroad.richmond.edu/>.

Be sure that you are looking at the page for the right program in Maastricht – there are three of them.

The exact date by which your program ends, and by which you can plan to leave your program site, depends on your exam schedule. You will not know this until you have arrived on-site and finalized your schedule of classes for the semester. You must not plan to leave your program site until after you have finished your last exam. If you leave your program site without taking exams required for your classes, you will not earn any credit for those classes.

COSTS

Every U.S. university that sends students on study abroad has different policies about what students pay, and how they pay it.

Tuition: UR students going abroad continue to pay their regular UR tuition rate to UR, whatever that is (some pay full tuition, some pay none, and most pay something in between.) You do *not* pay tuition or other academic fees to your host institution abroad. If you get billed for tuition by your host institution, tell your study abroad advisor.

Room & board: UR students going abroad pay room & board to whoever provides this at your study abroad site. You do *not* pay room & board fees to UR.

Other costs to expect:

- Telephone connection and utility bills (costs vary widely between programs)
- Books and other school supplies (costs vary widely between programs)
- Local transportation (costs vary widely between programs)
- Medical expenses not covered by insurance
- Printing (not provided free at most universities abroad)

Personal travel

Expenses for personal travel and entertainment are not included in the cost estimates on our website. *Be aware that this is the single greatest discretionary expense for students on study abroad.* You should make deliberate decisions about where and how you will travel in your free time. Many students succumb to peer pressure and make a lot of short, impromptu, and superficial trips while on study abroad. ("Come on, you *have* to hit Prague with us this weekend!") People often come home saying they have been to 10 new countries, but have not

really learned anything about any of them, and have incurred thousands of dollars in debt. IE suggests that you take just a couple of well thought out, longer trips during your semester abroad...you will learn more and spend less.

A tip on hotels/hostels

When you are planning trips, you can make it easier to find your hotel or hostel if you book one near a large, well-known landmark. Imagine that you arrive late at night in a city you have never seen before and are walking from the train station to your hotel. You don't really know where you are going, don't speak much of the local language, have trouble reading the street signs, etc. But if you are staying near the famous cathedral (or market, city square, etc.), then you can ask any bus driver or passerby how to get to that landmark, and that will get you to the neighborhood of your hotel.

FINANCIAL AID

If you are receiving federal, state, or University aid to study at UR, this will continue when you study abroad.

If you receive financial aid, you should speak with someone in the in the Financial Aid Office early in the semester before you go abroad about what you need to know. You may want ask in particular about how your aid package will compare to the room and board costs for your program.

Aid is disbursed on a different timetable when you go abroad; awards are generally not made until 10 days before the first day of classes at the host institution. Thus, you may have to pay a housing deposit – or even your entire housing bill – before you have access to your financial aid.

Housing deposits & pre-payments

If you must send a housing deposit abroad or pre-pay your rent for the semester, and will not have the money when you need it, but will be getting financial aid, UR's Office of Financial Aid can help.

They can write a "Fund Certification" letter saying how much aid money will be disbursed to you, and on what date. If you are working with the housing office of a university overseas, this letter will sometimes be enough to hold your place in campus housing.

If you think you could be in this situation, ask the Office of Financial Aid for this kind of letter ASAP. Don't put this off; if they get all the requests at the last minute, they will not be able to provide anyone's letter quickly.

SUBSIDIES FROM IE

The OIE provides the following to facilitate your experience:

- Travel allowance – an automatic credit of \$1,000 USD on your student account meant to pay for part of your plane ticket
- Students with need-based financial aid who have a self-help requirement (e.g., loan, work/study) will receive an additional \$500 grant
- Provide travel and health insurance to students studying abroad (applicable everywhere except in the United States).

Please read the extensive information on our web site (<https://international.richmond.edu/study-abroad/programs/semester/process/budget.html>) about these benefits.

NOTE: *Travel allowances, health insurance premiums, and other any other payments above tuition costs paid by Richmond on behalf of its semester and year abroad students are available only to Richmond degree-seeking students accepted to participate in UR-affiliated abroad programs.*

About costs in Europe

Prices are numerically about the same as they are in the United States...but coffee at €3 adds up a lot faster than coffee at \$3. Some tips:

- Be sure to ask former participants how much they spent on room & board, going out, textbooks, and traveling. Some or all of these things may be substantially more or less expensive at our partner universities than they are at UR.
- If you have not previously applied for Financial Aid, consider doing so to help pay for your semester abroad.
- Start saving money *now*.
- When you arrive, take advantage of the orientations and “buddy” programs to meet local students. Local people will have valuable tips on ways to save money.

HOUSING AND MEALS IN EUROPE

Differences in housing

Remember that, from a North American perspective, students do not pay very much to attend university in Europe and thus their expectations are very different from yours regarding how student-friendly, modern, convenient, clean, and well-maintained their campuses should be. This applies to academic buildings, exercise facilities, food service, and student residences.

Suite-style residences

Many (but not all) student residences in Europe are suite-style. A typical suite consists of several bedrooms (often singles) arranged around a shared kitchen and sometimes a shared living room. In many residences (but not all), there is a tiny, private bathroom in one corner of each bedroom.

Meals

Most universities in Europe do not have large, central cafeterias like those found on U.S. campuses. Your dining options:

High to medium cost: You can eat at the cafeterias, restaurants, cafés, and coffee shops scattered around the campus.

Medium cost: You can cook breakfast & dinner for yourself in the shared kitchen in your student housing and have lunch at one of the on-campus restaurants, cafés, or coffee shops.

Lowest cost: Cook all your meals for yourself and bring your lunch with you to campus. Depending on your class schedule and the location of your housing, you may even be able to go back to your student residence & prepare lunch there, then return to classes.

More and more supermarkets in Europe allow you to order groceries on line and have them delivered to you.

Utilities

Depending on the type of housing you choose, you may need to pay your own electricity, water, sewer, garbage, tv cable, internet access, phone, etc. At UR, the cost of most of these things is folded into your housing charges, but this is usually not the case anywhere except in university housing or in some apartments. For example, in the Guesthouse (Maastricht housing), utilities are included, but if you will live anywhere else you may need to budget for this expense.

In case you have not had responsibility for paying such things in the past: (a) Be very careful about choosing the person in your apartment or suite who is going to be in charge of this – utility companies usually allow only one person to be named the financially responsible party (b) Be sure to pay these bills on time or you risk legal troubles, immigration problems, and making a bad name for UR abroad (c) If it turns out that someone other than you is the “financially responsible” party, be considerate about paying your share and doing it when the “financially responsible” party needs to have the money.

Laundry

Former participants remark that laundry (like everything else in Europe) is expensive. Laundry is free in the Guesthouse but you should include this expense when planning your budget if you will live anywhere else.

Former participants report that they did not always dry their clothes completely in dryers as these are expensive to use. They use them to get their clothes partially dry and then put them up in their rooms to finish drying. This takes time and means you can't wear something the same day you wash it, but it does save money. It's also better for the environment. You will probably find that Europeans are more environmentally conscious on average than Americans.

Previous participants also remark that the hardest things to dry are cotton sweatshirts or sweatpants, heavy cotton comforters, and jeans, so consider not taking those things with you. Fleece is just as warm and dries much more easily, for example.

HOUSING & MEALS AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE MAASTRICHT

The Guesthouse – your default housing option

UR students at Maastricht will generally live in the Guesthouse. You apply for this through Maastricht Housing and the procedure is explained in great detail on the application.

The Guesthouse provides several locations for foreign students, but most exchange students will stay in its main buildings located at Brouwersweg 100 (P building and C building are most common, or sometimes M building). The main difference between them is that C building has communal kitchens and bathrooms with single rooms while P building has communal bathrooms but private kitchens for each room and each room is a double. The C and P buildings can house a maximum of about 650 students. The M Building (which has both singles and doubles) is a special location because the rooms are located in a separate wing of a former hospital. Past participants have also lived in the “Heilige Geest” location of the Guesthouse (type A) and thought that it was also good.

The Guesthouse will provide you with bed linens and the rooms in P building have essential utensils and some pots and pans in the kitchenette. The Guesthouse has 24/7 security guards and most locations are only a short walk from grocery stores, etc. Maastricht academic buildings are easily reached by bus or bicycle or even on foot from all the Guesthouse locations.

Placement in a particular building/location cannot be guaranteed, since reservations are treated on a **first-come-first-served basis**. Please make sure you reserve a room as soon as possible.

Paying your rent

You will have to transfer the monthly rent fee to the bank account of the UM Guesthouse *before the first day of each month*. You can do so by paying via credit card (no extra fee), in cash, or by opening a Dutch bank account (more information on opening a Dutch bank account at a later stage) and having the bank transfer the money automatically. Please note that you will have to pay a deposit of approximately \$500 at the time of reserving your room; please check the site of the Guesthouse for exact fees.

If you want to transfer the monthly rent via your own bank abroad, you need to provide your bank with the necessary wire transfer details for the Guesthouse, including their bank name, address, IBAN and Swift code, and account number.

Please note that any costs involved in the transfer of money from a foreign account to the Guesthouse are your own responsibility; make sure that the net rent is transferred to the Guesthouse!

For more information about the Guesthouse, see their website:

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/um-guesthouse>

Please read and understand the following tips for a happy housing experience abroad.

- ☐ Locate the nearest fire escape route and know the phone numbers of emergency services in case they are needed. It is a good idea to take a battery-operated smoke detector with you abroad since many buildings are older and may not have smoke detectors or sprinkler systems in place.
- ☐ Be aware of the heating situation provided by your host institution and host residence. For locations where carbon monoxide-producing appliances may be present - i.e., any appliance that burns fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal – be sure to ask for detailed information on usage of these appliances in order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. For further information, please visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/coftsht.html>.
- ☐ Treat your roommates with respect. Ask about the house rules and general living habits (i.e., what are the rules and cost on using the telephone, TV, laundry, hot water, electricity, noise, having friends over, cleaning, etc.)
- ☐ Most housing will not be furnished similar to what you are used to in the U.S. Spaces are generally smaller and bathrooms are often shared. Heating may be used sparingly and you may be expected to wear several sweaters rather than turn up the heat.
- ☐ Bring your own towel or buy one when you arrive. Often you will be provided with bed linens, but if not plan to buy these abroad since these are often bulky to pack in your luggage.
- ☐ Use hot water, electricity, and the telephone conservatively. In many countries, one pays by the minute for phone calls and it is very expensive.
- ☐ Try to adapt to the local food and times when people eat, which may be very different from what you are accustomed to in the U.S.
- ☐ Let your apartment mates know where you are going and when you expect to be home so they can reach you in case of emergency. Do not make a lot of noise when returning home late at night. In many countries it is rude to be overly intoxicated, so learn (or ask about) the cultural norms in regards to alcohol and respect these norms.

Food

Normally students cook their own meals in the Guesthouse kitchens. There are also many cafeterias with student-friendly prices. More information will be given out at UCM orientation. You can read about some local restaurants in the UCM Student Handbook. The Handbook is aimed at degree-seeking UCM students but provides useful information that you may find handy. The Handbook for the next academic year will be updated and posted in June.

IMMIGRATION

To read about your options, please see the separate document called “Immigration Instructions - Netherlands” on the ‘Housing & Visa Info’ tab of the UCM brochure page on Gateway Abroad.

ARRIVAL

Your host institution will be in touch with you in the months prior to the beginning of your semester abroad and will explain how you should get to campus from the airport, how to access your housing, and what to expect during the welcome and orientation period.

Which airport?

The closest major airports to Maastricht are Amsterdam (Schiphol) and Brussels (Zaventem), although Maastricht does have its own, smaller airport (Maastricht Aachen Airport). Unless you choose to fly directly to Maastricht, students should take a train from the airport to the city of Maastricht. The European train system is extensive and easy to use. For a list of train schedules, see <http://www.ns.nl/en>. The airports of both Amsterdam and Brussels have train stations.

From Zaventem (Brussels airport) to Maastricht

For more information taking the train from the Amsterdam or Brussels airports to Maastricht, see [this website](#) and look under “Arriving in Maastricht.” Trains from Zaventem (airport stop) to Brussels Noord Station run every 10 to 15 minutes and take about 15 minutes to arrive. At Brussels Nord Station, you need change trains. Check the boards (or ask the ticket vendor) for which track goes from Brussels Noord Station to Maastricht. You can usually get a direct train from Brussels Noord Station to Maastricht and not have to change trains again.

From Schiphol (Amsterdam airport) to Maastricht

It will take 2.5 - 3 hours on the train from Schiphol (Amsterdam airport) to Maastricht Centraal. Direct trains (no changing) are sometimes available. Otherwise, you will have to change at either Amsterdam Centraal or at Utrecht Centraal. **Tip:** Sit in the front half of the train – in many situations, the back half of the train does not continue all the way to Maastricht! See <https://9292.nl/en> for information about public transit options from the airport.

A very clear travel planner in English is available on internet via: <http://www.ns.nl/en>. The price for a one-way, second-class ticket is about €29.50 (for a first-class ticket you pay more)

UCM Pick Up

Once you arrive in Maastricht, if you signed up for the [Universalis](#) pickup service, a UCM student will pick you up from the train station and take you to the Guesthouse.

Getting to the Guesthouse on your own

If you have not requested the free Universalis pickup service (or if you signed up but missed a connection and are arriving later than intended), you need to go to the Guesthouse on your own.

The easiest way to get there from Maastricht Central Station is to take a taxi; taxis will be found outside the main station hall. The cheapest way is to take a bus: number 1, 2, 5, or 6; after 6 PM or 18.00 hrs take 22, 23, 24, or 25; make sure you get a bus going direction MARKT. Note that the bus will stop running at midnight and it would be too late to check in to housing at that hour so you would need to get a hostel or hotel room for the night.

THE NETHERLANDS

History

Age of exploration. In the 1500s, the Netherlands became an enormously wealthy country through its excellent ship design, advanced navigation technology, and entrepreneurial spirit. Dutch explorers sailed enormous distances to establish colonies and seek business opportunities through the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company. At about the same time that other European powers were exploring and colonizing the world beyond Europe, Dutch explorers and merchants traveled to North America, the Caribbean, South America, West Africa, Southern Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, and all of the coastal regions between Yemen and China. The first Europeans known to have sighted Australia and New Zealand were Dutch ("Zealand" is a Dutch word). South Africa came to have a white population that speaks a derivative of Dutch because of this exploration.

Colonies that were intended to be permanently Dutch were established in Indonesia, on several islands in the Caribbean, in Suriname in South America, and in the mid-Atlantic region of North America. Indonesia gained independence in 1949 and Suriname did the same in 1975. The Caribbean islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten remain integral parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

WWI. The Netherlands declared itself neutral and was able to avoid the destruction suffered by other countries in the region.

WWII. The Netherlands again declared itself neutral but was invaded by Germany anyway. As the Dutch are a Germanic people, the Nazis aspired to incorporate the Netherlands into a "Greater Germany," assuming that they would win the war. The Dutch people suffered horribly during the war, with many civilians killed from shelling and bombing. Many Dutch Jews, communists, socialists, trade union leaders, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, gypsies, dwarves, and other groups persecuted by the Nazis were deported to concentration camps, never to return.

The experience of the Dutch civilian population during the Second World War is an excellent illustration of the ethical dilemmas and shades of grey that characterize life during wartime or during a hostile occupation. As was the case in other German-occupied countries, some people collaborated with the Nazis, some for reasons of ideology, some for reasons of survival. Working-age men were required to travel to Germany and work in German factories, which were regularly bombed by British and American planes. Many Dutch men died in these raids.

There was also an active Dutch resistance to the Nazis. As the Netherlands is a small country without forests, mountains, or other places to hide, it was very difficult to organize resistance activities that would not be found out by the Nazis. Many who resisted were caught and killed. For every successful resistance action, such as an assassination, a train derailment, or the sabotage of a factory producing war material for the Germans, the Nazis carried out horrible reprisals on the civilian population.

Near the end of the war, the Nazis imposed a ban on importing food to the country, and mass starvation resulted in the "Hunger Winter" of 1944/1945. The northern part of the Netherlands was one of the last regions of Europe to be liberated from the Nazis; the people there suffered under them longer than the people of most other German-occupied countries.

Land

The Netherlands has a land area of about 16,000 square miles, or about one-third the size of Virginia. It consists of 12 provinces.

- Drenthe
- Flevoland
- Fryslân
- Gelderland
- Groningen
- Limburg
- North Brabant
- North Holland
- Overijssel
- South Holland
- Utrecht
- Zeeland

"Holland" is just a part of the country, divided into two provinces (North Holland and South Holland), but some people refer to the entire country of The Netherlands by this name. This may be because the three largest Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague) are located in the Holland region.

The Netherlands is a flat country. It is very green. Grey skies and rain occur frequently; it is impossible to imagine drought there. Fertile soil, plentiful, reliable rain and the strong work ethic of the Dutch people have made the Netherlands an astoundingly productive agricultural nation.

In the 1960s, the Belgian singer Jacques Brel wrote a song called "Mijn vlakke land," which means "My flat country." He wrote it about western Belgium, where he was from, and sang it in both French and Dutch, but it describes the Netherlands equally well. It is almost a hymn to that

part of Europe and it remains a very popular song in the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France.

Wanneer de Noordzee koppig breekt aan hoge duinen
 En witte vlokken schuim uiteenslaan op de kruinen
 Wanneer de norske vloed beukt aan het zwart basalt
 En over dijk en duin de grijze nevel valt
 Wanneer bij eb het strand woest is als een woestijn
 En natte westenwinden gieren van venijn
 Dan vecht mijn land, mijn vlakke land
 Wanneer de regen daalt op straten, pleinen, perken
 Op dak en torenspits van hemelhoge kerken
 Die in dit vlakke land de enige bergen zijn
 Wanneer onder de wolken mensen dwergen zijn
 Wanneer de dagen gaan in domme regelmaat
 En bolle oostenwind het land nog vlakker slaat
 Dan wacht mijn land, mijn vlakke land
 Wanneer de lage lucht vlak over 't water scheert
 Wanneer de lage lucht ons nederigheid leert
 Wanneer de lage lucht er grijs als leisteën is
 Wanneer de lage lucht er vaal als keileem is
 Wanneer de noordenwind de vlakke vierendeelt
 Wanneer de noordenwind er onze adem steelt
 Dan kraakt mijn land, mijn vlakke land
 Wanneer de Schelde blinkt in zuidelijke zon
 En elke Vlaamse vrouw flaneert in zon-japon
 Wanneer de eerste spin zijn lentewebben weeft
 Of dampende het veld in juli-zonlicht beeft
 Wanneer de zuidenwind er schatert door het graan
 Wanneer de zuidenwind er jubelt langs de baan
 Dan juicht mijn land, mijn vlakke land

When the North Sea breaks heavily on high dunes
 And white flakes of foam splash like water balloons
 When at the black basalt the surly floods pound
 And over dyke and dune the grey fog is found
 When the beach is desolate as a desert at low tide
 And wet western winds howl with spite
 Then fights my land, my flat land
 When on the streets, squares and flower beds rain lands from the sky
 On roofs and spires of churches so high
 (The only mountains in this flat land)
 When under the heavens people are bland
 When days pass – a dull bore

*And warm easterly winds flatten the land even more
Then waits my land, my flat land
When the heavy sky the waters shave
When the heavy sky teaches us how to behave
When the heavy sky is slate so grey
When the heavy sky is pale as clay
When the northerly wind quarters the heath
When the northerly wind steals what we breathe
Then creaks my land, my flat land
When the Scheldt shines at sundown
And every Flemish dame strolls in sun-gown
When the first spider its spring web weaves
Or in the field in July sunlight trembles and breathes
When the southerly wind through the corn cracks
When the southerly wind rejoices along the tracks
Then rejoices my land, my flat land*

About 15% of the Netherlands' land mass is below sea level. Beginning in the late 1500s, the Dutch began expand their crowded little country by reclaiming acreage from the sea. They built earthen dikes along the coast in areas where the sea was not too deep and then drained the water out of the enclosed areas (called polders) with pumps powered by windmills. Polders require continuous vigilance and maintenance; the fact that they have been used successfully in the Netherlands for 500 years is a comment on Dutch technical skills, diligence, and perhaps stubbornness, too.

People

The population of the Netherlands is about 18 million and the country has one of the highest population densities on the planet. Ethnic Dutch people tend to have light hair, light eyes, and are very tall, and they make up about 80% of the population. But you will of course meet people from many other countries, too. About 6% of the population comes from other EU countries. Indonesians, Surinamese, Turks, and Moroccans each make up about 2% of the populace. The Netherlands is probably the only place in the world, outside of Indonesia, where one can easily find an Indonesian restaurant.

Culture

Attitudes and behaviors

The Dutch have long had a reputation for tolerance. The austere English religious sect that we think of as "the Pilgrims" settled in Amsterdam and Leiden between 1607 and 1620 in order to escape the persecution that they faced from the Church of England, the state religion of their home country. But while they were allowed to practice their religion as they wanted, they found

Dutch culture too permissive for their strict tastes and eventually decided to do like a small number of other groups had done and try to establish themselves in North America.

The Dutch have always taken very practical approaches to issues that make other countries squirm. For example, abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage have been legal there for some time. So-called “soft” drugs are tolerated. People with addiction problems are provided with safe places to inject. Prostitution is legal. But all of these things are still seen as undesirable. The idea is that none of these activities can be stopped, so they should be very strictly regulated to minimize the harm they do to individuals and to society. The Netherlands is very definitely not a “wild” society.

Dutch people have a reputation for being very direct (sometimes blunt), for being very literal, for being punctual, and precise. They have a lot in common with other northern Europeans (Germans and Scandinavians) and have a lot of differences from Latin and southern Europeans (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, & Greeks).

Dutch people put a lot of value on working hard for its own sake. It has been said that some people live to work, and others work to live; the first attitude is the more common one in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands has always had different varieties of Christianity (more Catholic in the south, more Protestant in the North). One of the most strict and uncompromising branches, the Calvinist/Reformed churches, have their roots in the Netherlands. Its message that “everyone has their place” was used by the Afrikaans descendants of the Dutch settlers in South Africa to justify apartheid in the 20th century.

Bicycles. As the Netherlands is very flat, bicycles serve as daily transportation for a very high percentage of the population. As it is a small country, it is feasible to transport your groceries by bike in a specially-designed wagon or to take your kids to school by bike. You can fit as many as three child seats on a bike, if you know how.

Buying a bike will likely be one of the first orders of business when you get to Maastricht.

Don't bring a bike from the U.S. because:

- It costs a lot to ship one on the airlines;
- Bikes frequently get broken or stolen when shipped as baggage;
- You can buy a bike cheaply on-site for about €75 (and should plan to spend at least €50 on a lock), or rent a bike (via Swapfiets or other company) for even less!

Most people will buy used bikes through the Facebook group “Buy / Sell a bike a Maastricht” where you can find plenty of good deals. Bargaining is the norm. The general advice on the street is to buy a cheap bike along with a good lock. Lock your bike no matter where you are – even in the Guesthouse. You will also find it extremely resourceful to learn some basic bike

maintenance like lubricating your chain, repairing flat tires etc. *Do not bring tools with you.* You can borrow them (for free) from the reception at the guesthouse.

Black Pete (“Zwarte Piet”). This character is portrayed as the companion of Saint Nicholas in the folklore of the Low Countries. He appears on December 5, during the annual feast of St. Nicholas, when sweets and presents are distributed to children. He is thought to be a Spanish Moor and is traditionally portrayed by a young man in blackface, colorful Renaissance attire, a curly wig, red lipstick, and earrings. Dutch people are increasingly uncomfortable with this disrespectful caricature.

Wooden shoes. Wooden shoes used to be worn very widely throughout northern Europe, not only in the Netherlands. They were cheap, durable, and offered good protection to the feet of farmers, miners, factory workers, and builders. Advances in the manufacture of other kinds of shoes caused wooden shoes to become rare after the 1940s. Now they are mainly sold as tourist items in the Netherlands but many Dutch people have a pair at home that they would wear around the house or in the garden or garage.

Language. The Dutch language is a Germanic language and thus is related to English, German, and the Scandinavian languages. Compared to many other languages, it is not so difficult for speakers of English to learn. The pronunciation takes time to learn and if you have studied some German, you need to be prepared to “unlearn” some of the pronunciation skills that you have acquired for using that language.

Your Basic Dutch course will allow you to communicate with people not only in the Netherlands, but also in the northern part of Belgium (a trilingual country [Dutch/German/French]), where the language is referred to as Flemish. A form of the language is also spoken in South Africa, where over 400 years, Dutch has evolved into a new, heavily Dutch-based language called Afrikaans; in Suriname, which used to be a Dutch colony; and in the Dutch islands in the Caribbean. It will also give you insight into many place names in the Mid-Atlantic states of the U.S., which were given Dutch names by Dutch explorers and settlers in the 1500s and 1600s.

Because the Dutch have always understood that their small country needs to be connected to the wider world in order to thrive (and thrive it does), the people of the Netherlands have become enthusiastic and skillful speakers of English. But you should still try to use as much Dutch if you can, even if it is just greetings, please, and thank you, as everyone appreciates it when foreigners make such efforts.

Achievements. The Netherlands has distinguished itself in many areas such as exploration, ship building, trade, financial management, agriculture, art, social policies, petroleum extraction, engineering, and art. Probably its greatest achievement is becoming and remaining so prosperous despite being so small, having so few natural resources, and having a substantial part of its land area under constant threat from the sea.

Today

Government. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy, consisting of four countries: The Netherlands, plus Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten in the Caribbean. In principle, all four countries are autonomous, equal partners in the Kingdom, each with its own parliament, but in practice the three Caribbean Dutch countries are dependent on the Netherlands for matters like foreign policy and defense. The Kingdom also includes three "special municipalities" - Bonaire, Saba, and Sint Eustatius - also in the Caribbean.

Economy. The Netherlands' greatest natural resource is the drive and resourcefulness of its people, who, in their very small country, have enjoyed for several hundred years a very strong and diversified economy based on trade with other countries. Their shipping heritage is still seen today in the Dutch ownership of worldwide shipping companies and the fact that Rotterdam is the largest port in Europe (6th largest in the world).

Current issues. Some of the current issues and preoccupations of Dutch society are the desire to keep the Netherlands "Dutch" despite increasing immigration; uncertainty about how to respond to the Middle Eastern refugee/migrant crisis; and the uncertainty presented by the war in Ukraine, climate change, etc.

Currency

The Netherlands is a member of the European Union, and like most other members (not all), it has adopted the Euro (€) as its national currency.

Credit cards may be more difficult to use in smaller stores in the Netherlands as they are in the U.S., or even in some other European countries. You may need to be prepared to pay in cash if you encounter a vender or store that will not accept credit cards.

YOUR HOST CITY – MAASTRICHT

The city of Maastricht is situated between Belgium and Germany in the southernmost region of the Netherlands. The German town of Aachen is only a half-hour's drive away, as is Liège in Belgium. Lining Maastricht's cobblestone streets are historic buildings (many with 18th century facades), churches, small shops, and lively marketplaces. Centuries-old fortification walls still partially surround the town. In 1991, the city attracted international attention as the host of the European Summit, which adopted the Treaty of Maastricht, forming the European Union. Maastricht has been described as a quiet and charming university town.

YOUR HOST INSTITUTION – UNIVERSITY COLLEGE MAASTRICHT

Founded in 1976, Maastricht University is the youngest university in the Netherlands. Its rapidly expanding student body currently numbers about 16,000. Noted for its highly ranked academic programs, Maastricht University is known as an educational innovator with a strong international commitment.

University College Maastricht is an honors college that is part of the Faculty of Humanities & Sciences, which is one of the seven faculties that comprise Maastricht University. UR also has partnerships with two of Maastricht University's other faculties: The Faculty of Economics & Business Administration (SBE) and the Faculty of Law.

Students who have chosen to go abroad should expect and anticipate all aspects of their lives to be different than they are at UR. This includes academics, housing, rules, regulations, social norms, language, and more. Students should look forward to these experiences and handle them with good humor once abroad. After all, one of the reasons you chose to go abroad was to experience something different.

On the whole, you will be expected to take care of things more independently than you are at Richmond. For example, during the first week after arrival, there will be a number of bureaucratic tasks that need to be accomplished. The staff at your host institution will explain these to you and let you know where you need to go, but they will not describe every detail or go with you.

Rather than becoming frustrated with this new way of doing things, students should consider it a cultural experience that will help them gain a wider perspective on how educational institutions function around the world, and take it as an opportunity to grow.

There may be references during orientation, or in messages from your host institution, that mention "Erasmus" and "Erasmus students." Erasmus refers to the European Union's network of educational exchange – so technically UR and other American students are not Erasmus students. However, in practice, all international students are frequently referred to as Erasmus. You should feel free to get involved with Erasmus organizations and ask to be included in the Erasmus mailing list if one is maintained.

UCM is located at the "Zwingelput," which is in the historical center of the city of Maastricht. The Zwingelput has been completely renovated to serve as a UCM building. The building comprises a small courtyard and is located adjacent to the park. This is the perfect place to loiter away some free time in between classes and assignments. Students with laptops can connect to the internet both in the building as well as in the garden using a wireless connection. The building is conveniently located near the University library, several restaurants and lunchrooms, and a five-minute walk leads you to the Vrijthof square, which is the historical and geographical center of the city.

Library

UR students may use the UM library and the Maastricht public library. For more details about the UM library, go to <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um/service-centres/university-library/about-library>.

You will find in-depth information about the collection of books, articles, magazines, etc., as well as information on copying and printing in the library, and much more.

Sports

Most students will want to keep up with exercising while at Maastricht, and the UM Sports Bureau organizes various activities in the field of physical training and sports. Activities include lessons and training courses, competitive and recreational sports, championship tournaments, and various other sports events with the other universities.

See <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um/other-offices/um-sports> for details.

ACADEMICS – GENERAL

Course approval process

Visit <https://registrar.richmond.edu/registration/programs/studyabroad/index.html> for full detail and forms.

Course approval database

There is a database of approved courses available via the link above. Be sure to read the information at the top before searching for courses.

When is the course approval form due?

There is no deadline; you should submit the form to the UR Registrar's Office as soon as you have a finalized schedule of classes at your overseas host institution. You may not need to complete a course approval form if all the courses you plan to take are listed in the course approval database.

Students going on *some* programs will have a firm class schedule months in advance of departure and so should work with their professors to complete the forms in the semester before going abroad.

Other students will not have a firm schedule until arriving at their program site because they need to take a language placement test before choosing classes, or because their host institution requires in-person registration or does not finalize its course schedule until shortly before their semester begins. In this case: (a) while abroad, correspond with your professors about the classes you are taking (b) save the correspondence, especially the professors' decisions about the UR equivalencies of your overseas courses, and (c) either from abroad or upon your return to UR, have your professors fill in the course approval form with the decision(s) that they gave you by email (the form can be completely electronically from abroad or in hard-copy in Richmond).

If part of your overseas class schedule is finalized in the semester before going abroad, you can do the course approval process for those classes, and then do the process for the remaining classes while abroad and upon returning to UR, as described above.

Do not register for a minimal course load

Do not register for a bare minimum course load. Doing so will leave you in a bad position if you later need to drop a class. Being registered for less than a full-time course load puts you in violation of the conditions of your student visa (meaning you could be fined or deported), and could make you ineligible for financial aid (meaning that if you had received aid for the semester, you could be required to pay it back). Also, if you register for the minimum course load and then get a grade lower than C in one of your classes, you will earn less than a full semester's worth of credits for that semester, delaying your progress toward graduation.

Exams can't be moved

When you accept your study abroad program's offer of admission, you are making a commitment to study there for the entire term, including the whole exam period. Do not expect to be able to arrange to take an exam at a different time or place, which some of your peers who are full-time students at Maastricht may be doing.

What appears on your UR transcript

Grades earned abroad are not calculated into the University of Richmond GPA; however, you must take your courses for a grade, not pass-fail, and you must earn the equivalent of a "C" or better in order to receive transfer credit at Richmond.

Maintain your high standards

Though your study abroad grades will not appear on your UR transcript, you should plan to work hard and get good grades while abroad for several reasons. One is that if you ever apply to graduate school, medical school, law school, etc., the institutions to which you apply can require you to submit transcripts from all of the places at which you have taken classes, including any at which you studied abroad. The same is true of potential employers. Another reason to work hard is that you will not get any transfer credit for classes in which you get grades lower than the equivalent of a C; if you do not earn a full semester's worth of transfer credit, you may fall behind in your progress toward graduation. And a third reason to work hard is that if you do not, you will tarnish the reputation of UR and of the people of your home country.

Course load and credits

You must be enrolled in what is considered a full-time academic load in (a) the system of your overseas host university and (b) the Richmond system.

ACADEMICS – SPECIFIC TO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE MAASTRICHT

Please go to <https://studyabroad.richmond.edu/> and look at the page for this program/institution to see information such as:

- Minimum full-time course load
- Typical course load
- Maximum course load
- Link to online course catalog or list of classes available

- How many UR units you will earn for each class
- Explanation of course numbering system
- Grading scale used and equivalent grades in UR's system

It is important to realize that the UC Maastricht program is quite academically demanding. To make good grades, you need to attend class, participate very actively in class, and spend a considerable amount of time preparing for each session. This is not a good program for students who want to do extensive traveling.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Maastricht University has a unique academic style. It's called the Problem Based Learning (PBL) system. In the words of Maastricht:

University of Maastricht is directed at preparing students for professional careers in an academic and a practical sense. From the beginning in 1976 the university has adopted a new educational system which is usually referred to as 'Problem-Based Learning (PBL).' The PBL-method aims to overcome the various drawbacks of traditional instruction methods, where students have a passive role during lectures, subject matters in the curriculum might be irrelevant, disciplines are not integrated, students are not prepared for continuing their own education after graduation, and most importantly, graduates are not trained to apply what they have learned in practice. Recognition of these weaknesses in traditional education have led to the suggestion that situations taken from professional practice should play a role in the curriculum. The PBL-approach is characterized by:

- *The study programme, which is based upon a sequence of problems, both practical and theoretical. Practical problems are frequently taken from real life and revised as necessary to keep the curricula up-to-date.*
- *Training in professional skills.*
- *Assessment of the student's overall progress instead of examinations in particular disciplines.*

The most important advantages of Problem-Based Learning have been described as follows: the student acquires knowledge which can be remembered and is directly useable and applicable, the student learns to learn, and to analyze and solve problems. The method gives students a great deal of responsibility for structuring their own studies, thus requiring a considerable degree of independence on their part.

Student-centered

Students attend one 2.5-hour lecture and 2 tutorial group meetings twice a week, per course. The tutorial meetings are the core activity of the study programme and are the driving force for learning. Within these tutorial groups, problems are presented as cases and are studied in modules or 'blocks' of 6 to 8 weeks. A tutorial group consists of 10 to 15 students with a 'tutor,' a staff member who guides the group process but who does not give answers to the problems automatically. The initiative lies with the student: the learning method is explicitly

‘student-centered’ rather than ‘teacher-centered.’ In this way, students easily discover those areas in which their knowledge falls short. Students are required to participate – to present material frequently and come to class prepared for vigorous discussion. Libraries and various other learning resources that have been especially developed for this method, are available for the subsequent individual learning activities.

Interdisciplinary

In working with this system, students experience the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge for solving problems. They learn the relationship between information derived from different disciplines and how to integrate this information efficiently in order to acquire new knowledge and to solve the problems. The student’s knowledge develops cumulatively throughout the study programme by the progressive acquisition of new information.

Self-study and discipline

The exchange of ideas and knowledge within the tutorial group provides a basis for learning how to analyze problems. Students learn to formulate and discuss their thoughts and to co-operate with each other. Furthermore, experience in the group encourages individual study and effective planning of the available study time. Lecturers do not determine in detail what the students have to do; they rarely give lectures or write syllabi, nor do they provide answers to the problems. The students organize the learning process by themselves. They must be able to determine the way in which they want to solve their practical problems on their own.

The PBL-approach demands a great sense of responsibility and discipline from the individual student. However, at the same time, working in small groups is stimulating and rewarding for all participants. Furthermore, the small group setting invites informal contacts and prevents social isolation of students. However, students with a foreign educational background should be aware that large differences might exist between their pre-university education and the PBL-training method at University of Maastricht.

Course selection

For courses available, please see this site: <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/file/ucm-course-catalogue-2023-2024pdf>

Students selected their courses on the UCM application forms. These are the classes that students will be registered for unless the student is contacted by a UCM staff member stating that the student is not eligible for a class due to lack of prerequisites or another reason. **There is no drop-add period at UCM** because of the structure of the semester and therefore **students generally cannot make changes to their schedule upon arrival to Maastricht**. Therefore, students should think very carefully about the courses they chose on their UCM application.

Students studying in Maastricht in the fall semester will generally take two courses and one skills training (or Dutch) in Block 1 and two courses and one skills training in Block 2. Students studying in Maastricht in the spring semester will generally take two courses and one skills training (or Dutch) in Block 4 and two courses and skills training in Block 5. Be sure when you are searching for courses that you are choosing the appropriate Block numbers for the semester you will be

abroad. Each full course is worth 5 ECTS credits and each skills training is worth 2.5 ECTS. Basic Dutch is 1 ECTS. Therefore, UR students studying at UCM in the fall semester can expect to earn 23.5 ECTS for the semester. Students studying at UCM in the spring semester could potentially earn more if they choose to stay for Block 6 – see details below. Spring students who only stay for Blocks 4 and 5 will typically earn 23.5 ECTS.

For students abroad in the spring semester: You are required to participate in Block 4 and Block 5. There is an optional Block 6 that follows Block 5. In Block 6, you can choose a project to work on, worth 5 ECTS, over 4 weeks. Each student may choose for him/herself if s/he wishes to participate in Block 6 or not. Participation will depend on when you wish to return to the U.S. for the summer, and how long you want your study abroad experience to be.

Dutch courses

In addition to the 4 courses and skills training taken per semester, students are required to take a Dutch language course. The information for registering for a Dutch language class will be sent to you by Maastricht. Any additional tuition/course fees associated with a Dutch language course are paid/reimbursed by UR.

Credit

Maastricht uses the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). A full semester load at Maastricht is as follows: four courses and one-two skills trainings (to include a Dutch language course) per semester. The minimum load required by UR is the equivalent of 3.5 UR units and the maximum is equivalent to 5.5 UR units/semester. Conversion information is available on the UR brochure page for Maastricht.

Registration

After completing the application for University College, you will be contacted by a UCM staff member with further information and instructions on registration and other practical matters. You should assume that you will get into the courses you listed on your UCM application unless you are contacted by a UCM staff member with alternate information.

Academic transcripts

Your host university's international office will send one official transcript for each student directly to the University of Richmond. If you want more than one official transcript, you will need to apply (and pay) for this before returning home.

If you are studying in Maastricht for the fall, your transcript will be sent out approximately in March the following year.

If you are studying in Maastricht for the spring or the full year, then the transcript will be sent around the end of August.

HELP PEOPLE TO HELP YOU IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

U.S. citizens

When you go abroad, it is wise to register your whereabouts with the U.S. Dept of State. This makes your presence known to the representatives of the U.S. government in the country or countries where you are, and makes it easier for them to find you and help you in case of an emergency. We suggest that you register your participation in study abroad but also the trips you take on weekends, at breaks, or after your program ends. You can do this at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

Citizens of other countries

Check with the consular authorities of your home country to see if they offer similar services to those described above, and if so, please take advantage of them.

All study abroad participants:

- ***Complete the “Contact Information Abroad” questionnaire that is part of your UR online application to study abroad.***
- Leave a copy of your passport with your family so that they can help you replace it in case it is lost.
- Leave a detailed itinerary & cell phone number with your program leader, friends, and family any time you take a trip away from your program site.

Passport for a family member

IE recommends that at least one of your close family members have a valid passport when you study abroad. This has been *much* appreciated by the (thankfully small number of) study abroad participants from years past who fell ill or were injured while abroad and who wanted a family member to join them while they were recovering, or who needed their help in returning home.

Credit cards & ATM cards – enlist the help of your family

Before going abroad, make photocopies of your credit cards and ATM cards (front *and* back) and leave these copies with a trusted family member. That way, if your cards are lost, stolen, or eaten by an ATM, your family can assist you in cancelling them and ordering replacements. It may be easier for them to do this from the U.S. (or your home country, if it is not the U.S.) than it would be for you to do this from abroad, because of time zone differences and the difficulty of dialing 800 numbers from outside North America.

HEALTH INFORMATION

The single most important thing you can do to stay safe and well while on study abroad is to limit your consumption of alcohol.

CDC health information

Please check <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> for updates and specific details and recommendations.

Study abroad insurance

UR's International Education (IE) arranges and pays for study abroad travel, accident & sickness insurance that provides coverage worldwide except in the United States. For details and exclusions of the coverage, go to <https://international.richmond.edu/semester/health-safety/insurance.html>

It is important for you and your family to understand how your health insurance works *before* you need it. Read the policy description closely before you depart. It is difficult to absorb detailed information when you are sick, injured, or upset, and it is easy to make expensive mistakes when you are trying to make important decisions under such circumstances.

Prescriptions

Be aware that each country has different regulations regarding the importation of medications, and what is mundane in the U.S. is sometimes tightly controlled or illegal elsewhere. Check with your doctor to see if any medications you take are available where you are going and what documentation is required to bring them to that country.

Be aware that ADHD medications are prescribed less readily abroad than in the U.S.

SAFETY RESOURCES

Useful advice from the US Dept of State

- Traveler's Checklist – <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/checklist.html>
- Students Abroad – <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>
- Alerts and Warnings – <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html>
- Emergencies Abroad – <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies.html>

Phoning the Department of State

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. or Canada (from elsewhere, call 1-202-501-4444; not a free call). These numbers are in service from 8 AM to 8 PM, Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

SAFETY IN EUROPE

Pub life

Being in bars raises safety issues. If you must drink, do so in moderation. Avoid traveling home alone if you have been drinking, because you could become an easy target for thieves and you may become disoriented on the public transport systems. Please be aware that beer in other countries may have a much higher alcohol content than in the United States.

Travelers should take care not to leave drinks unattended in bars and nightclubs. There have been some instances of drinks being spiked with illegal substances, leading to incidents of robbery and rape.

Trouble with cars

Traffic and road conditions abroad, as well as rules about driving and penalties for accidents, are quite different from those in the United States. Road accidents are a major cause of injury and other trouble to students on study abroad. Do NOT drive while on study abroad, and do not ride with other study abroad students who are driving. Do NOT rent or buy a car while on study abroad.

Students are advised to exercise caution when crossing streets, as some streets may be poorly lit and can be narrow. Always look carefully when crossing the street and use sidewalks whenever possible. Also, be aware of oncoming bicycle traffic, as bicycles are a common form of transportation in the Netherlands.

Trouble with bikes

Dutch people take their bike laws very seriously. You need to have lights on your bike, must ride only with traffic, obey all traffic signals, and stay in the bike lane, or you'll have a collision with someone who *is* following the rules, and you will get a ticket.

Demonstrations & protests

Demonstrations (political and civil) are fairly common in the Netherlands. Students should avoid political and civil demonstrations of all kinds (as they can suddenly turn violent) and should be aware of their surroundings at all times.

Safety in your residence

Students need to be aware of safety in their residence. As one would do in the U.S., be sure to locate the nearest fire escape route and know the phone numbers of emergency services in case they are needed. It is a good idea to take a battery-operated smoke detector with you abroad since many buildings are old and may not have smoke detectors or sprinkler systems in place.

TERRORISM

The March 2016 attacks in Brussels show that terrorism is an ongoing concern in Europe, and will be for the foreseeable future.

It is generally thought that there is a moderate-to-high possibility, at any given time, that there will be a terrorist attack somewhere in western Europe. There are many reasons for this, including European governments' involvement in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, and the complex racial/ethnic/religious make-up of the European population. The chances of violence are somewhat elevated in London, Paris, Berlin, etc., because of the symbolic value that terrorists would see in attacking the world's largest, most famous, and most prosperous cities.

Likely targets include financial districts, political districts, shopping centers, and other busy public places; the embassies of Israel and NATO member-states, especially that of the United States. Also, the transportation system – the subway, busses, trains, and airplanes, as well as subway stations, bus stops, train stations, and airports – are potential targets.

Europe got used to terrorism long before the U.S. did. If you are not familiar with such things, you should read about the history of the IRA (Northern Ireland/England), the Red Army Faction (Germany), Black September (Germany), the Red Brigades (Italy), the GIA (France), and ETA (Spain/France). These countries also had their contentious debates about due process, surveillance, and the ethics of fighting unethical opponents in the 1960s and 1970s, thirty to forty years before the U.S. confronted the same issues. One legacy of this familiarity with terrorism is the extremely pervasive system of CCTV (closed circuit television) surveillance found in many European cities. Most public areas of most cities can be observed. Whereas Americans might feel threatened by this, many Europeans feel that it increases public safety.

In response to the many threats it faces, western Europe has developed some of the world's very best intelligence apparatuses. They are working continually to prevent attacks and, in most cases, they are successful.

To protect yourself from the threat of terrorism while in Europe, we suggest the following:

- Keep up with local news
- Keep up with international news; events in one country can sometimes have ripple effects far away
- Do not advertise your nationality as an American (if you are one) any more than you can help it (don't be too loud, don't wear UR or greek-letter clothing)
- Watch out for – and report – suspicious packages or people, especially in transportation settings
- Follow the advice of the government of your home country (U.S. Dept. of State, if you are American) *and* the advice of your host country government regarding safety. If either government issues any warnings or advisories, take them seriously. The same applies with warnings or advisories issued by local law enforcement agencies.

There has been some concern about Islamic extremist activity in the Netherlands, along with the rest of Europe, particularly beginning in 2004 with the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic extremist in Amsterdam. Since this time, the Dutch government has been on heightened alert for terrorist activity. These efforts are being renewed in the wake of the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris. UR's International Education will send out any travel warnings issued by the U.S. Department of State as relevant.

CRIME IN THE NETHERLANDS

Crime rate

Western Europe benefits from generally low crime rates; however, crime, including violent crime, has increased over the last few years, especially in large cities. Incidents include pick pocketing, mugging, "snatch and grab" theft of mobile phones, watches, and jewelry, as well as theft of unattended bags (especially at airports). Since the mid-2000s, there has been an increase in the number of muggings involving knives. Avoid walking alone late at night, avoid isolated areas, and avoid intoxication to reduce the chances of becoming a victim.

The Netherlands, more specifically, does not have a particularly high level of violent crime. Most crimes committed against tourists/students is petty theft, bicycle theft, or mugging. More specific information can be found on the U.S. Department of State web site

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/netherlands.html>.

Maastricht is generally considered to be very safe. However, students must always be aware of their surroundings, should not go home with strangers, and should not walk alone at night.

Do not take the "IR" trains, which are the slowest and cheapest, late at night. Spend the extra money to take the Eurostar and faster trains that are more expensive. If you have the 'green' card for student discounts, the train will cost 15% less.

Pick pocketing

Pickpockets target tourists, especially at historic sites, restaurants, on buses, trains, and the subway. Thieves often target unattended cars parked at tourist sites and roadside restaurants, looking for laptop computers and hand-held electronic equipment. Walking in isolated areas, including public parks, especially after dark, should also be avoided, as these provide advantageous venues for muggers and thieves.

Unfortunately, students sometimes return from trips having had their passports, credit cards, money, camera, and other valuables lost or stolen. Tourists on trains, buses, and most public areas are prime targets for pickpockets. These thieves are experts at their "jobs," which means that you'll not even notice the crime occurring. To avoid this happening to you:

- Stay in a group – both while traveling and at your destination. Women should not travel alone at night.

- Always stay alert to your surroundings and avoid crowded buses, trains, and metros/subways. Assume that anyone could be a pickpocket – appearances can be deceiving!
- Keep all valuables hidden in your clothes, and divide your cash, carrying it in two very safe places on your person. NEVER leave valuables in hotel rooms and always make use of the hotel safe.
- Carry a copy of your passport, travelers' check numbers and expiration dates, your credit card/s, telephone numbers, and emergency contact numbers. Always keep the credit card/s and check numbers separate from the originals.
- When traveling on trains (day and/or night), remember to lock your door if you are in a couchette, and sleep with your valuables under your clothes/on your person. Do not open your door at night for anyone.

ATM fraud

ATM fraud is becoming more sophisticated, incorporating technologies to surreptitiously record customer ATM card and PIN information. Travelers should avoid using ATMs located in isolated areas. In addition, do not use the ATM if there is anything stuck to the machine or if it looks unusual in any way. If the machine does not return the card, it should be reported to the issuing bank immediately.

MISCELLANEOUS

Banking

Some students on study abroad desire to open local bank accounts. In Europe, certain businesses accept payment only through direct debit from a local bank account, typically for services that require payment every month (gym memberships, internet service, etc.). If you find that you want or need to open a local bank account, see the international office staff at your host institution for the best advice.

If your banking needs are limited to withdrawing cash in the local currency, you don't need to open an account at a Dutch bank. You can use your ATM card from your American bank to withdraw euros (€) from Dutch ATMs but please note that there are fees for doing so; be conscious of how often you make withdrawals and be sure to understand the fee amount.

The fees for using ATMs at "foreign" banks that are affiliated with your "home" bank are usually reduced or waived. You should ask your bank if they are affiliated with banks in other countries. If they are not, you may want to open an account with a large U.S. bank that has links to banks abroad so that your ATM transactions don't cost so much. Former participants report that having accounts with Bank of America, Wells Fargo, or Charles Schwab have been useful in this way.

Former participants in programs in the Netherlands have reported that having an account with ING bank worked well for them.

Tip from a former UR student in Maastricht: *“[TravelEx](#) has a debit/ATM card that you can get and parents can load the card with money from the U.S. It's really handy, you can use it for an ATM and debit card because it's a Pin & Chip Card. The withdrawal fees are way lower than if you use an ATM card from the States and it's really handy!”*

Telephones

Most students going to Europe either purchase a mobile phone there or bring an unlocked cell phone and insert a new SIM card purchased in the Netherlands. This is usually cheaper than an international plan for a U.S. phone, for example. Ask the advice of former participants, as the best option seems to change over time.

Be aware that theft of mobile phones is a very common occurrence in Europe, so be careful with yours.

Telephone numbers given on emergency cards are usually provided in the format used by one particular country; it is not possible to provide all of the possible telephone number formats on one card. For example, you usually cannot make an 800 call from a country other than the U.S. or Canada. When you get your health insurance card, you should check to see if/how you need to modify the phone numbers provided on it so you can reach the insurance company from the country where you will study. The same applies with phone numbers for cancelling credit cards & ATM cards.

Also, be aware that many countries do not have just one emergency phone number, like 911, that can be used in any emergency. Many countries have separate phone numbers for calling the police, ambulance, & fire services.

Be aware that in some countries, the emergency service numbers are different if you are dialing from a landline or a cell phone.

Computers

Most students going to Europe take laptops with them and report few if any problems with doing so. Be aware that computers (and other electronics) tend to be more expensive in Europe than in the U.S., so they are more often stolen there than in the U.S. – be careful.

As for shared, publicly accessible computers – you will probably find fewer at your program site, and they will be available for fewer hours per day, compared to UR. There will also be many other students who will be using them, so access will be limited.

Electricity

When traveling with anything that plugs in, you need to think of two factors. One is the plug pattern, and the other is the voltage.

The plug pattern in North America is two flat prongs. In much of Europe it is two round pins. To plug something American into a European wall socket, you will need a plug adapter, which you can buy cheaply at Target, Best Buy, Radio Shack, etc.

The voltage in North America is 110 volts. In Europe it is 220 volts. To plug something American into a European wall socket, *and to not burn it up*, you will need a voltage converter.

Most small electronics such as iPods, laptops, and cameras have voltage converters built in so they can be used internationally with only simple plug adapters, but appliances such as hairdryers or hair straighteners do not, so if you take things like this with you, you will need to use them with voltage converters, which can also be bought at Target, Best Buy, Radio Shack, etc.

Since voltage converters are bulky, heavy, and sometimes as expensive as hairdryers, etc., it is usually best to leave your American hairdryer, etc. home and buy a cheap one in the country where you intend to use it. Just be sure to donate it locally when you leave rather than throwing it away.

USEFUL WEBLINKS

SAFETY & HEALTH

Safety advice from the U.S. Dept of State – <http://travel.state.gov/>

Health advice from the Centers for Disease Control –

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

NEWS

BBC – <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Reuters – <http://www.reuters.com/news/international>

MONEY

Currency converter – <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Currency converter & printable cheat sheets – <http://www.oanda.com/convert/cheatsheet>

TIME ZONES

Make a personal, multiple time zone clock –

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/setpersonal.html>

Have a great adventure!