

STUDENT HANDBOOK

For Students Studying in
San Juan



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Mission Statement

The mission of SSA is to promote an in-depth understanding of Spanish-speaking countries for our students through specifically designed academically rigorous university-level and cultural travel programs. We consider all of our students to be willing to cross cultural boundaries, to live as members of another culture, and to thus learn about others as they learn about themselves.

In accordance with our mission, SSA promotes equal opportunities within our programs and does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. We believe in educating students on cultural tolerance and sensitivity, acceptance of differences, and inclusiveness.

After Acceptance

Getting Ready to Go to San Juan

Before you depart, there are a few things you need to take care of. Please read carefully!

ONLINE ACCOUNT

All students studying with SSA have an online account. To access your account, go to ssabroad.org and click the "Login" link at the top of the page. You will then be prompted to enter your username and password. If you have forgotten your password, you may request a new one on the login page.

LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT EXAM

- Students need to take exams online prior to leaving & once they have arrived in PR.

PREDEPARTURE STEPS

In order to finalize your acceptance in an SSA program, you must submit the following items via your online account as soon as possible. All pre-departure items will be due within 2 weeks of the application deadline.

- Online Language Placement Exam Results
- Course Selection
- Health Statement Form
- Academic Pledge and Program Conditions & Release Statements
- USC Matriculation Form
- USC Residence Application Form
- Program Deposit (due within 10 days of acceptance)
- Arrival Information
- Digital Photo

PASSPORT

For U.S. citizens, travel to Puerto Rico is simple. You do **NOT** need a passport. All you need is a government-issued photo identification. **Please note that although you are not required to bring a passport to Puerto Rico, you should bring one if you intend on traveling to a non-U.S. territory during your stay in San Juan.**

For Canadian citizens, a visa will be required to enter the U.S. territory (Puerto Rico).

VISA

Non-U.S. and non-Canadian citizens studying in the United States or Canada may be required to apply for a visa, even for short term programs in Puerto Rico. Consult the U.S. consulate in your home country about visa requirements well in advance of the program start date.

BUDGETING FOR YOUR TRIP

Below you will find a detailed estimate, which explains how to budget for personal expenses and other costs not covered by your SSA program fees.

	<u>Semester</u>	<u>Short-Term</u> (per term)
Books* and supplies	\$500	\$250
Local transportation	\$300	\$100
Every-day and going out expenses	\$2,100	\$600
Weekend trips (on your own)	\$500	\$250
Flight	\$850	\$850
Miscellaneous	\$600	\$300
Total	\$4,850	\$2,350

*You will not need to purchase books prior to your arrival in Puerto Rico. Your professors will inform you of the materials you will need and where to purchase them on the first day of class.

We figure the average student will spend about \$250 USD per week while in San Juan. Of course, some will spend more and others will spend less. Think about your lifestyle and budget accordingly. A drink and appetizer at a bar or pub costs approximately \$30. You should plan on spending about \$50 per month for ground transportation. If you stay out late at night, you should plan to take a taxi or Uber home. The cost is between \$10 and \$20 per ride, depending on the distance.

In total, we recommend that students budget a minimum of about \$1,500 per month for expenses in San Juan. Although lodging and study tours are included in the program fees, students will also want to have extra spending money for going out with friends, making a special weekend trip on their own, or buying gifts to take back to friends and family at home. These figures are general guidelines and may be different for each person's budget and lifestyle in San Juan.

You will receive a meal stipend from SSA through your PayPal account. You will receive this in a bulk sum on a monthly basis. You can use this meal stipend to purchase food anywhere it is available on and off campus: cafés, cafeterias, local restaurants, grocery stores, etc. You will have access to a full kitchen shared by your floor of the dormitory. There is a 24-hour Supermercado Pueblo (Ciudadela) less than one mile from the USC campus, as well as a Supermax Supermarket and a Walmart, where you can buy groceries and personal items. Additionally, there is a cafeteria on campus open Monday-Saturday and some restaurants that you can walk to.

Please bring physical debit or credit cards. Most stores don't accept Apple Pay nor Google Pay. In addition, Venmo is **not common in Puerto Rico.

POWER OF ATTORNEY

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal document while you are abroad, you should make the necessary arrangements for a "power of attorney" to be held by parents, guardians, or another appropriate person to act on your behalf. This can be done by writing out in detail the specific duties that this person will have, (i.e. signing a check; corresponding with the school or university about financial or academic matters; or obtaining medical records and information, in case of an emergency). This letter should then be notarized so that it is legal and official. Public notaries are available at many banks, post offices, public libraries, and town halls.

ABSENTEE VOTING

If you are a U.S. citizen and will be abroad during an election, you may vote via absentee ballot. **You should apply to do this at least 2 weeks before you leave home.** U.S. citizens can get more information, as well as the forms needed to apply for the absentee ballot, by visiting the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov. Be sure to also call the local city clerk's office of the city where you are registered to vote. Canadian citizens can get more information on voting in an election while outside of Canada in this [link](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't forget to follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)! For all program-related questions for SSA staff, please email info@spanishstudies.org.

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION MEETING

Students accepted into an SSA program will be invited to participate in an online pre-departure orientation meeting before their departure. During this meeting, students will be able to ask SSA staff and the on-site Resident Director specific questions about study abroad in Puerto Rico. Dates and information on how to join the meeting will be sent via email closer to the meeting date.

DEPARTURE NEWSLETTER

SSA students receive a Departure Newsletter by email a few days prior to the program start date. The newsletter contains important travel and arrival information, such as the orientation address, emergency contact information (also included in this handbook), the address for SSA in Puerto Rico, taxi and baggage tips, and contact information for fellow participants.

Billing Details

SSA is affiliated with over 80 colleges and universities. For most affiliated schools, payment is made to SSA directly by the school. However, billing arrangements vary between universities, so we ask that you pay close attention to the information received with your acceptance email and in the View/Pay Bill section of your online account.

PAYMENT OF FEES

The non-refundable deposit is due within 10 days of your acceptance to the program. In cases where the school is sending payment directly to SSA, you should ask your college or university to discuss this with SSA directly.

Note: The due date for the non-refundable deposit may not be deferred.

Payment must be received by SSA no later than the due dates listed in your online account. Any payment submitted after its due date will be subject to late fees. You will not be admitted to SSA housing or classes until all payments have been received. Special arrangements are made only in exceptional cases and may include interest rates and service charges. Your transcript will not be released until all financial obligations you incurred during the school term have been satisfied.

If you anticipate that you will have financial aid to use toward your program payment or would like to set up a monthly payment plan, please contact SSA regarding the necessary paperwork to defer your final program payment due date.

Note: All checks should be made payable to Spanish Studies Abroad.

FINANCIAL AID

You must speak with the financial aid office at your home university regarding your school's policies for the transfer of financial aid for study abroad. If financial aid will transfer, there are some forms that must be completed in order to coordinate the transfer of funds and the deferment of the final

payment due date if aid will be disbursed after that time. The non-refundable deposit due date may not be deferred, even if the amount will be covered by financial aid.

The SSA Financial Aid Deferment Form, included in your online acceptance packet, should be submitted to your home university's financial aid office to be completed and returned to SSA before your program final payment due date. You will also need to make sure that the financial office is able to coordinate with SSA regarding any forms that they need completed by SSA to transfer financial aid, such as a Consortium Agreement.

Scholarships

SSA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The SSA Scholarship Program is open to all students enrolled in all of our programs. We offer \$1,500 scholarships for semester programs, \$500 scholarships for summer programs, and \$500 scholarship for the January Term among all of our locations. Students may apply for only one of the two scholarship options: The SSA Merit-Based Scholarship or the SSA Diversity Scholarship.

Award recipients are chosen based on the submission of one original essay in English. For more information about the scholarship program and to download the application, visit www.spanishstudies.org/scholarships.

While all eligible students are encouraged to apply, the SSA Scholarship Program is very competitive and only a handful of awards are made per term. Students will be notified of scholarship awards before leaving for their programs abroad. The award will be transferred to the student's PayPal account after arrival in Puerto Rico. Scholarship awards cannot be used toward program payments like tuition. Scholarships are meant to offset extra expenses while abroad, such as flights, gifts, entertainment, etc.

SSA GO-AGAIN ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The SSA Go-Again Alumni Scholar Fund was developed in 2004 and designed to benefit returning students wishing to embark on an additional cross-cultural adventure with SSA. SSA now offers all alumni students a stipend to apply towards another SSA experience in Spain, Argentina, Puerto Rico, or Cuba. Please note that all SSA Alumni who choose to attend an additional program with SSA will automatically receive the Go-Again Alumni Scholarship. Alumni who receive a Go-Again Alumni Scholarship are also eligible to apply for the SSA Scholarship Program. Alumni scholarships are as follows:

- Semester: \$500
- Summer Term: \$100
- January Term: \$100

Refunds

If you decide not to attend a SSA program after you have been accepted, please send us a written notification immediately. You can inform us of your decision via email at info@spanishstudies.org.

Withdrawal from the program between the final payment due date and 30 days before the start of the program has a penalty of 25% of the program fee. Withdrawal from the program within 1-29 days before the start of the program has a penalty of 25% of the room and board fee and 100% of the tuition, study tours, orientation, and general education fees. There is no refund for any portion of the program fees on or after the program start date.

Please note that these penalties are in addition to the deposit, which is non-refundable.

There is no withdrawal from room and board arrangements with SSA during the course of a program. SSA will change unsatisfactory lodgings but will not refund any portion of room and board fees after a student's arrival at a home. If students find their housing to be unsatisfactory, they should contact the SSA staff immediately; SSA will determine if a housing change is warranted.

Packing Suggestions

Since Puerto Rico has a Caribbean climate with an average 85% humidity rate, you should dress accordingly. Puerto Rico is a summer season place all year long. During the last few years, in the summer it can reach 100°F, so be prepared. Very little cooler weather items are needed. Keep in mind that most places are air conditioned and you should pack a light sweater or long sleeve shirt for these situations.

CLOTHING

- Casual pants (jeans are okay)
- Several shirts, long- and short-sleeved (mostly short-sleeved)
- Plenty of socks and underwear
- Lightweight pajamas for warm weather
- Slippers to wear around the dorms
- Shower sandals for the bathroom
- Comfortable shoes for walking
- One pair of sneakers, just in case
- One or two dressy outfits
- Bathing suit*
- Shorts, capri pants, and/or skirts
- Swim cap to use the pool

*** Chicas: For the USC swimming pool, swim suits must be one piece; two piece swimsuits are not allowed.**

Pack as lightly as possible, since you'll have to carry everything. Keep in mind that you'll probably buy some clothing in San Juan, as well, and you'll have a laundry facility in your residence hall. **The A/C cannot be regulated in the dorms. The temperature in the rooms is usually cool, so bring a cardigan, sweater or jacket, in case you get cold.**

OTHER ITEMS

- Bedding, including pillow, for a twin bed
- Bath towel and washcloth
- Water bottle
- Beach towel
- Backpack (or bookbag)
- Any cosmetics/products you use
- Medicines for cold and upset stomach
- Vitamins
- **Prescription medications, if needed***
- Sunscreen
- Umbrella

Most "other items" can be bought once you arrive at your destination. It is up to you how much you want to pack.

*** If you take any prescription medication or wear contacts, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay. Refer to "Prescriptions" under the "Health Insurance and Medical Care" section of this handbook.**

Note: Many of these items are for your room in the residence hall and can be bought when you arrive in Puerto Rico.

SECURITY AND PERSONAL CARE

We suggest taking a suitcase that locks so you can keep valuable items secure at all times. This would be the place to keep your passport*, airline tickets, extra cash, and anything else of value that you don't want to leave lying around. Students should maintain a clean room, as there are periodic inspections by dorm staff.

*** If you do choose to bring your passport, you should not be carrying it around with you in San Juan. You can also bring a photocopy of your passport which you can keep in your wallet just in case you need it.**

You will be able to find a lot of everyday products you need in San Juan, so there is no need to stock up on shampoo, soap, feminine hygiene products, etc. Take just enough for the first part of the trip so you'll be able to get settled in, but don't over pack these products. You can get medicines at

pharmacies in San Juan which are the same as in the mainland U.S. (Walgreens, CVS, etc). Keep in mind that some products might be more expensive on the island.

PLUG-IN APPLIANCES

The electrical current in Puerto Rico is 110V, which is exactly the same as in North America. Any electronic devices that you have should work without converters. The outlets are the same.

Getting to San Juan

Travel Information

PASSPORT AND DOCUMENTS

Make sure your documents are in order before traveling to Puerto Rico. While passports are not required for U.S. citizens to travel to Puerto Rico, you will need to make sure you have valid federal identification, whether that is a driver's license, passport card, Real ID, etc. Starting May 7, 2025, travelers will need a [Real ID](#). Canadian citizens must have a passport to enter Puerto Rico with an end of at least 6 months after the program ends. [Here](#) Canadian citizens can learn more about applying for a Canadian passport and more information.

BOOKING YOUR FLIGHT

Please note that **when booking your flight, you should always refer to your program calendar** which is located in your acceptance packet link. Please plan on arriving on the start date of the program before 3 p.m.

Note: Students should plan to arrive in Puerto Rico on the start date indicated in your program calendar. Students should make their flight arrangements from their departure city to the city of San Juan and must be sure to check their baggage the whole way through to San Juan. For return flights, students should plan to depart from their housing no later than noon on the last day of the program.

Once you have your flight itinerary, you must submit the information via your SSA online account or email it to info@spanishstudies.org. If you have any delays or last-minute changes in your flight itinerary, please email info@spanishstudies.org and your parents or guardians. **If you are en route to San Juan, you will need to also inform the San Juan Resident Director, Dr. Alexandra Vega. Her email is: alexandra.vega@spanishstudies.org and her phone number is (787)587-0747.** When calling a PR number, you might need to add a +1 before.

ARRIVAL

SSA staff will be at the airport on the program start date typically between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.* to greet students and transfer them to the student dorms. If you arrive after 3 p.m., you will be responsible for making transportation arrangements to the campus residence hall on your own and for all costs involved. You should plan on arriving at the residence hall no later than 5 p.m.

***Please note that the time the staff will be at the airport is subject to change** and will be confirmed in the Departure Newsletter that will be sent to you a few weeks before the start date of the program.

If you arrive after 3 p.m., you will take a taxi or Uber. A taxi or Uber from the airport should cost about \$25 and take about 15 minutes. Tell the taxi driver to take you to Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, Avenida Ponce de León, Parada 26 ½, in Santurce. When you arrive at the university, tell the security guard that you are going to *la Residencia de Estudiantes*. The guard can tell the taxi driver how to get there. When you arrive at the residence hall, there will be someone at the front desk to greet you.

ORIENTATION

When you first arrive in San Juan, you will have an orientation and important introductory meetings before settling into the program. **Orientation is mandatory for all students.**

Note: Orientation is a busy time, and you may not get a chance to call home immediately upon arrival. If your family would like confirmation of your arrival, they should email info@spanishstudies.org or call (413) 256-0011. We will have information on the safe arrival of our students.

Housing

Students will be housed in single-sex floors, on-campus dorms. The dormitories will be double-occupancy, with air conditioning, a desk and chair, and a closet. There is a kitchen on each floor with a refrigerator, stove, and microwave. Students will need to bring or buy their own pots and pans, dishes, cutlery, etc. During the semester they will be sharing a room with a local student, however, it is not guaranteed during the summer due to limited locals taking classes over the summer.

Students will also have access to a washer and dryer, game room, infirmary, study room, TV room, computer rooms with internet access, and access to the gym, pool, and other sports facilities on campus. You will be responsible for providing your own sheets, pillows, towels, etc. You may bring these items from home, mail them to the student residence prior to your arrival in Puerto Rico, or purchase them once in San Juan.

If you ever have a problem with your dorm assignment, **tell the San Juan Resident Director right away** so that she may help you to resolve the difficulty. The San Juan Resident Director will assist you in working out whatever problems come up, and if things don't get resolved, help you to decide if you should move to another room. There is also a Resident Advisor (Asistente de Piso) on every floor, who is usually a local student, who ensures that the kitchens and bathrooms are kept clean and cares for the general order and tidiness of the floor.

*Dining Hall Hours -Vary per term, especially in the summer, make sure to check or ask once your term begins.

Note: SSA does not offer housing in the student residences during the days prior to the start of the program or days beyond the end dates of the program. If you are arriving early in San Juan or plan on staying later, you should book your own hotel or hostel.

Note to Academic-Year Students: The USC dorms are closed between semesters and students will have to arrange their own accommodations for this period of time.

Special Dietary Needs: Vegetarians, Vegans, and Gluten-Free

Puerto Rican cuisine is not particularly vegetarian-friendly. It is possible, however, to be a vegetarian in Puerto Rico. You will have access to a kitchen in your dormitory; therefore, you can buy groceries that suit your needs and prepare your own meals. Keep in mind that the selection may be somewhat different than what you are accustomed to. You should be very careful in restaurants and make sure that the bean dishes you are ordering don't have meat in them. Lard may be used to prepare food. Many vegetarians will opt to eat fish while in Puerto Rico; this will give you more options and probably allow you to eat more healthily while abroad.

If you plan to change your diet and begin eating fish, meat, or dairy, you should start incorporating these foods into your diet before you leave so that you will not become sick at the start of your program. Vegans may find it difficult to eat very well in Puerto Rico, but again, you will have the ability to prepare all of your meals.

Public Transportation

USC is a 5 minute walk from the metro stop Sagrado Corazón and offers a free shuttle service called "El Dolphy" to and from the metro stop. On campus there are two stops where you can board the Dolphy: the Student Center stop and the Barat Building stop.

There are two bus systems to get you around the city. During orientation at the start of the program, you will learn the details of the buses and the train.

The most popular method of transportation in Puerto Rico is Uber, and taxis aren't used as much.

BUS AND METRO

The closest metro stop to USC is Sagrado Corazón. Both the metro and buses service this station. Keep in mind that most buses only run until 10 p.m. and the metro runs until 11:30 p.m. This means you may have to plan accordingly to catch the last bus/metro, or find other means of transportation.

Public transportation is not reliable on the island. However, previous students have managed to use it without much inconvenience.

Emergencies and Emergency Contact Information

In the U.S.

Spanish Studies Abroad
433 West Street, Suite 8
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002-2314
tel: (413) 256-0011
fax: (413) 256-1968

After-hours emergency line: (413) 687-7069
info@spanishstudies.org

In San Juan, Puerto Rico

Resident Director: Dr. Alexandra Vega
Spanish Studies Abroad
Universidad del Sagrado Corazón
San Antonio & Rosales St
Santurce, Puerto Rico 00914-0989

After-hours emergency: (787) 587-0747
USC tel: (1) (787) 728-1515
USC fax: (1) (787) 728-1692
alexandra.vega@spanishstudies.org

Cultural Activities & Study Trips Coordinator:
Annette Jiménez Collet
(1) (787) 599-7273
annette.jimenez@spanishstudies.org

Note: For the San Juan numbers given above, the (1) code at the beginning of the number is only necessary to add for making a call from the U.S. to Puerto Rico. If calling within Puerto Rico, you can skip the code and just dial the phone number. If calling to the U.S. from Puerto Rico, add the (1) code before dialing the normal U.S. ten-digit number.

Should an emergency arise, U.S. family members may call the San Juan Resident Director, Dr. Alexandra Vega, at +1 (787) 587-0747 in San Juan, or at our U.S. office telephone, (413) 256-0011. The U.S. office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST, and Dr. Alexandra Vega is available weekdays and weekends if needed.

In the unlikely event of an emergency, please be sure to check these web pages. Up-to-date information on Emergency Procedures and Security can be found on our website at www.spanishstudies.org/safety or at the Department of State website <http://studentsabroad.state.gov>.

For Canadian citizens, in case of an emergency such as losing your passport or natural disaster, there is a Canadian Consulate on the island. [Here](#) is the link with information and location.

[Registration](#) of Canadians Abroad is a free service that allows the Government of Canada to notify you in case of an emergency abroad or a personal emergency at home. The service also enables you to receive important information before or during a natural disaster or civil unrest.

Health and Wellness

HEALTH INSURANCE AND MEDICAL HELP

Most U.S. health insurances should work in Puerto Rico since it is a U.S. commonwealth, but you should confirm that your insurance provider has coverage in Puerto Rico before you start your program. You will also be covered under the health insurance provided by USC, and will be enrolled in Emergency Evacuation Insurance provided by [CISI Worldwide Insurance](#). This will already be included in your program fees.

If you plan on using the medical insurance you have at home, it is a good idea to take along one or two claims forms. These would be used if you need treatment for a pre-existing medical or psychological condition, medical attention while traveling outside of Puerto Rico, or if you encounter health issues while traveling outside of the SSA program dates. **Please note that you are only covered through SSA for the dates of the program and within Puerto Rico**, so you should also plan to bring claims forms if you are traveling before or after the program, or to any other country. If you have dental insurance at home, you should also bring some dental insurance claims forms with you, in case you need dental treatment while you are abroad.

Note: Psychological conditions and pre-existing conditions are not covered by the USC insurance.

If you are under medical or psychological treatment at home, you should speak with your doctor about the possible effects of study abroad and cultural change on your condition. If you have any pre-existing medical or psychological conditions, you should bring a copy of your medical records, in case you need treatment in Puerto Rico.

We request that all students make us aware of any previous or current medical conditions, including eating disorders, via their Health Statement in their SSA account. Refusal to do so could create a substantial risk of harm. Information is treated confidentially and used in circumstances judged by the San Juan Resident Director to be essential to your wellbeing. Withholding medical information could result in your dismissal from the program.

PRESCRIPTIONS

If you take any prescription medication, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay. Contact your health professional and insurance company several weeks before leaving; some medication requests require several weeks to be fully processed. These should be in their original containers, that is, labeled with your name and the name of the prescription drug. In the case that you are unable to acquire enough for the entire stay, or just in case your medication is lost, you should take a written prescription for replacement of the drugs. The prescription should bear the generic name (chemical composition) of the drug, **not** the brand name, since medicines purchased in other countries usually have different brand names; though this prescription may not be enough at pharmacies, it will help a doctor make a valid prescription.

If you wear contacts you should bring enough for the entire stay plus extras, and if you wear glasses you should bring an extra pair.

INJECTIONS

If you require regular medical injections, you should bring syringes with you from home. The cost of having injections administered by a healthcare professional is not covered by your SSA insurance, so be prepared for that expense. In order to get your injections at a clinic in San Juan, your doctor at home must write you a letter with the following information:

- Directions on how to administer the injection
- How often the medication is administered
- Generic name of the medication
- Components of the medication
- Exact dosage of medication needed and any other relevant information for administering the injection
- Any possible side effects

Email a copy of this letter to SSA and take another copy to San Juan. **Again, you must have a written prescription and/or letter from your doctor to get through airport security with your injection materials.**

HEALTH SERVICES ON CAMPUS

If you need health-related services while you are on campus, you can visit the Health Services Office on the second floor of the Student Center (Centro de Estudiantes). For free mental health support, you can visit Centro Sofía in the Building Barat Norte 245 or call them at (787) 728-1515, extension 5171 or 5176. You can also make a private appointment for psychological and personal growth services at Centro Sofía. The services provided at the Health Services Office and Centro Sofía are free. SSA does not cover medical or psychological assistance off campus, so please clarify the coverage provided by your own U.S. health insurance plan.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL HELP

Should a medical emergency arise, students may contact the campus health office directly or ask the Residence Hall staff to call for them. The campus health office will determine whether care can be provided on campus or not. The health services office at USC is located on the second floor of our Student Center and students can visit the office for minor health issues. In the case of medical emergencies, the staff can contact the campus paramedics who are also USC security guards, 24 hours – 7 days a week. Students can call for emergency assistance by a paramedic at (787) 728-1515, extension 5430 or 5555, or call Security at (939) 244-6706.

If the student is over 21 years of age, and the staff determines that they can go alone to the ER, the Campus Security Supervisor on duty will transport the student in a university vehicle. The student will be transported to the nearest local hospital. If students request it, their parents/guardians will be notified.

If the student is under 21 years of age, the Resident Director will communicate with the student's parent/guardian to notify them about the situation, and will travel with the Campus Security Supervisor and student to the ER with the student's signed Authorization for Medical Services form in a sealed envelope. The staff member or companion will remain with the affected student in the Emergency Room until the emergency room medical staff stabilizes the affected student, or the parent/guardian arrives.

HEALTH INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS TO PUERTO RICO

Please check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) or Public Health Agency of Canada [website](#) for up-to-date information on required vaccinations and tips on staying healthy while in Argentina.

Please check the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [website](#) for up-to-date information on required vaccinations and tips on staying healthy in Puerto Rico. The CDC website also has health information available for other countries to which you may choose to travel during your time abroad. A list of countries with available health information can be found [here](#).

FITNESS

All students can use the college sports facilities, including gym, pool, basketball and volleyball courts, as well as the baseball and soccer fields and the track for walking or running. All students have access to the university pool, but please note that **swim caps must be worn and two piece bathing suits are not allowed**.

Students can also jog around the city but, like in every big city, there are certain places and times that are better to avoid. You should always jog during the day, not at night. You can also jog throughout campus.

Students can take an Uber to the San Juan Central Park for other exercise alternatives. There are also private gyms available.

Academics with SSA and Universidad del Sagrado Corazón

Your SSA program at Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (USC) is academically rigorous, and you will generally have class from Monday to Thursday with Fridays off for weekend travel. Additionally, there is a 2-day Thanksgiving Holiday in the fall semester and a weeklong recess during Holy Week in the spring semester. If you intend to do extensive traveling while in Puerto Rico, we encourage you to do so during the holiday breaks or at the end of your program; so plan your return flight home accordingly. Housing through SSA ends the last day of the program.

SSA offers programs in San Juan in cooperation with the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (USC). We offer semester and academic-year programs, as well as 4-week or 8-week programs in the summer. Courses are available in Spanish or English.

SSA programming is academically rigorous; you can expect 1 to 2 hours of study at home for each hour of class time. This is probably comparable to the amount of work you have at your home college or university. What will be especially challenging, at first, is that some classes are taught in Spanish. The first week or so of those classes will probably be the most frustrating in that respect; just stick with it and remember that your peers and professors will be supportive. Before you know it, you'll be following your classes taught in Spanish without any trouble at all.

PUERTO RICO PLACEMENT EXAM

Students taking Spanish language courses in San Juan will take a Spanish language placement exam at Universidad del Sagrado Corazón during orientation, before classes start. The university will place students in the appropriate language classes and activities as determined by the placement exam results. For this reason, please note that the Spanish language courses you choose in your Course Selection form of your online account are simply used for pre-registration and will not be finalized until after the start of the program.

COURSE REGISTRATION

The preliminary Course Selection form you submit with your Pre-Departure materials will be the first step in selecting your classes for the program.

A few factors may change your original course selection:

- If you have not met the prerequisites for a class you have chosen
- If the class you want is already full
- If you have too many or too few credits and need to alter your schedule accordingly
- If a particular course is canceled due to under-enrollment

- If your performance on the Spanish language placement exam in San Juan indicates a need for a change

Any changes that you would like to make to your course registration, once your Course Selection form has been received, must be sent via email to info@spanishstudies.org after you consult with your home university academic advisor. Once in San Juan, there will be a short 2 day add/drop period during which you may change your schedule on a space-available basis.

NOTE: Before choosing your courses, make sure you know how many credits your home university requires you to complete in Puerto Rico. Verify this information with your university advisor. With that number in mind, as you explore the course options, pay close attention to the number of credits each class offers. There is a great diversity of options, and the number of credits vary from 0 to 4 credits depending on the course and the department. Let your university advisor or a member of SSA know if you have any questions.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Students may add or drop courses without penalty during the brief add/drop period. Students that drop a course after the add/drop period will receive a "W." Any student who is not present for the final examination and has not previously withdrawn from the course will receive an "F."

ACADEMIC HONESTY

SSA holds students to the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating. Any student who is academically dishonest will face disciplinary sanctions, which may range from a failing grade on the assignment to dismissal from the program. **Incidents of academic dishonesty may be reported to the student's home campus.**

FINAL EXAMINATIONS

Refer to the calendar included in your online Pre-Departure Information section to see when final exams take place. You must take your final exams as scheduled, so arrange your flight home for the program end date. While some final examinations may take place prior to the dates scheduled on the calendar, this is in no way guaranteed. Therefore, make sure you will be in San Juan during the final exams week indicated on the calendar. Under certain special circumstances (such as a wedding, graduation, etc.), students may petition SSA in writing before the start of the program to have their final exams administered early.

TRANSCRIPTS

SSA issues academic transcripts at the end of each program. Your official transcript will be emailed to your home school and to you.

Note: Transcripts will be delayed due to the USC academic schedule. If you have an outstanding balance on your account, your transcript will be held until the balance is paid.

SSA transcripts show course numbers and titles, the number of contact hours and credits, and the grades for all coursework undertaken on the program, internships completed through SSA, Intensive Research Projects (IRP), and coursework completed at USC. Grades and credits are reported according to the semester-hour system.

Universidad del Sagrado Corazón is an accredited U.S. degree-granting institution, so you will most likely not need to request any additional transcripts (unless you need an IRP on a transcript from a U.S. degree-granting institution). Please contact SSA for more information about this transcript option.

As a general rule, students should have all courses, internships, and outside studies approved for transfer credit by their home institution before the start of a program. This can normally be arranged through your study abroad advisor or registrar at your home institution.

Additional Transcript Requests

Once the program ends, an official transcript will be emailed to you and to your home school. If you need an official transcript in the future, there is a fee of \$10. If you'd like to order multiple transcripts at once, each additional transcript in the batch will cost an additional \$5. If the receiving institution requires a printed, original copy of the USC transcript, the student is responsible for postage.

You can access the SSA Transcript Request Form [here](#).

Note: If you received a transcript from a U.S. degree-granting institution (Heidelberg University), you will need to contact Heidelberg University to request an additional transcript. Please visit the university's [website](#) for a transcript request form and information about associated fees.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

SSA semester or academic year students with an advanced level of Spanish are strongly encouraged to pursue one of our experiential learning opportunities.

These include completing an internship, a service learning project, volunteering, or conducting an independent research project. If you have any questions, you can find more information [here](#) or you may contact SSA.

INTERNSHIP AND SERVICE LEARNING COURSE OPTIONS

Qualified students have the opportunity to pursue an unpaid internship or service learning experience. Internships and service learning are available in local businesses, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. A high level of Spanish is also required for the Internship or Service Learning Course Option.

An internship or service learning involving 135 academic contact hours (112.5 clock hours) over the course of a semester is awarded three academic credits, while one of 180 contact hours (150 clock hours) receives four credits.

Your performance will be evaluated in the following ways:

- Regular meetings with the Internship Supervisor (the Resident Director or appointed Faculty), in which students discuss progress and brainstorm solutions to issues encountered in the field
- Workplace supervisor observation and evaluation
- Anthropological tools, such as blogging, dialog, and memoir, which enhance understanding of the process of integration and the local culture
- A written report submitted at the end of the internship/service learning experience
- Additional criteria for evaluation, grading, and granting of credit may be established by your academic advisor on your home campus.

Internship and Service Learning Deadlines

If you would like to be considered for an internship or service learning course option, you will need to submit the corresponding application to SSA. The application for an Internship or Service Learning Course Option can be found [here](#). **Please note that these applications require the written approval of your academic advisor at your home institution.**

Please note that internships and service learning projects are not guaranteed. Students must select an alternate course or an Independent Research Project in the event that the requested internship or service learning option is not available.



INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Independent Research Project (IRP) gives you the opportunity to study a topic of interest to you that may not be covered in another class. Your proposal must be approved by SSA and by your home institution before you go to San Juan. Once your project is approved, SSA and university professors in San Juan will assist you in completing it. Home institution faculty may be involved with your IRP by helping to create your proposal and/or evaluating your completed project. Interested students can visit [here](#) for more information. You may conduct one IRP per semester.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer opportunities give students a chance to get to know the local community and improve their Spanish in the process. Past volunteer projects have been available in schools and nonprofit organizations. While a volunteer opportunity is more flexible than an internship or service learning experience, students are still expected to make a solid commitment and to maintain a set schedule. Interested students may inquire about this opportunity during the first week of their program.

GROUP MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

The Resident Director periodically holds group meetings with students. These meetings give you the opportunity to discuss any questions you may have, as well as to share experiences and information.

SSA sponsors a number of activities throughout the program, including cultural visits and field trips. More information will be made available at the initial orientation and throughout the course of the program. Some activities may entail an additional cost.

Note: Due to insurance regulations, it is not possible to bring guests, including visiting family members and friends, on official SSA program excursions and visits.

Travel and Visits from Family and Friends

Since the Summer Terms are intensive programs, classes are held Monday through Friday. Cultural visits in the afternoons and weekend travel will provide plenty of opportunities to get to know Puerto Rico outside the classroom. There are plenty of towns near San Juan that make for great day trips during the weekend.

During the semester, classes are held Monday through Thursday. This means that you have plenty of time to plan trips and weekend outings and will not need to miss any of your scheduled classes, which could affect your final grade.

You received a link to your program calendar in your acceptance email to which you can refer for academic dates, holidays, vacation dates. Though most of these dates are firm, some of the holiday dates are subject to change by the Puerto Rican civil authorities, which may force SSA to change some of the vacation dates. Therefore, you and your family should make only tentative plans for independent travel until you arrive in San Juan. At the beginning of each term, you are given a more definitive calendar. Please do not plan trips with your family when classes are in session. Also, be aware that if you transfer programs (e.g. International Studies Program to Integrated Studies Program) for any reason, you must follow the calendar of the new program, adjusting travel arrangements accordingly.

Notes:

- Travel and excursions that are included in the program are mandatory for all students.
- Visiting friends and family members are not allowed to stay in the student residence.

VACATIONS AND LONG WEEKENDS

Vacations are a great chance to travel to places that may be hard to get to on a regular weekend. You may want to take this opportunity to travel around Puerto Rico and become acquainted with other regions of the country. You may also wish to travel to other countries if time permits.

Note: Although U.S. citizens are not required to bring a passport to Puerto Rico, you should bring one if you intend on traveling to a non-U.S. territory during your stay in San Juan.

Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends

CELL PHONE

You may use your U.S. cell phone in Puerto Rico; however, it is important to contact your cell phone provider to make sure there are no additional calling or data usage charges.

Canadian citizens might need to use an international plan for their cell phone or buy a SIM card once you arrive on the island.

INTERNET AND COMPUTERS

Each dormitory has a computer lab with internet access. Since you will be a part of the USC community, you will have access to the computer facilities and campus-wide WiFi. Most students bring their own laptop from home to use for their schoolwork.

Places to Stay in San Juan

The following accommodations come recommended by our staff. Prices can be found on each property's website or online search engines.

Hostería del Mar (bed & breakfast at the beach) 1 Calle Tapia San Juan +1 787-727-3302	Courtyard by Marriott (10 min from the USC campus) 801 Ponce de León San Juan 1-800-593-8620 (toll free reservation center)
Caribe Hilton Hotel (home of the <i>piña colada</i> , beachfront) 1 San Geronimo Street San Juan +1 787-721-0303	Hotel El Convento (in historic Old San Juan) 100 Calle del Cristo Old San Juan +1 787-723-9020
Conturce Hostel (Condado area) 1507 C. Loíza, San Juan +1 787-520-8855	Santurcia Hostel (Santurce area) 353 Avenida José de Diego, San Juan +1 787-385-3588
Mango Mansion (near beach & breakfast provided) 159 Cll Primavera San Juan +1 787-339-2113	Fortel Hostel (Old San Juan) 309 C. de la Fortaleza 2nd floor San Juan +1 787-675-2193



Program Conditions and Release Statement

I hereby release and discharge Spanish Studies Abroad/The Center for Cross-Cultural Study Inc. and The Center for Cross-Cultural Study, S.L. (CC-CS) and its agents, employees, and representatives from all suits, claims, or liability of any nature arising out of or related to my participation in an SSA/CC-CS program including, without limitation, claims for personal injury or property damage.

As a program participant, I authorize SSA/CC-CS to share details of my program with my family, my home school, and my host school, as needed. I also authorize SSA/CC-CS to share details of my academic record, such as my home school transcript, with my host school abroad. Furthermore, I authorize SSA/CC-CS to provide my home school with a transcript of the coursework I complete as an SSA/CC-CS participant. I understand that if I am rendered ineligible for a program after my initial acceptance, I am not entitled to any refund from SSA/CC-CS. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to maintain the minimum eligibility requirements from the point of my acceptance until the commencement of my program.

I release all materials from my experience abroad to be used by SSA/CC-CS and its affiliates exclusively for promotional reasons. This includes, but is not limited to, photo, print, video, digital mediums and social media posts or pictures. I understand that I can be removed or dismissed from the SSA/CC-CS programs at any time, either prior to or after departure, for violating the Academic Pledge and other published SSA/CC-CS policies.

In the event that program participants become incompetent for any reason, including (but not limited to) injury, accident, mental illness, disease, or loss of consciousness, they appoint SSA/CC-CS as their guardian, and authorize SSA/CC-CS to take any action which it deems appropriate under the circumstances, including (but not limited to) arranging for medical or psychiatric treatment, administering prescription drugs, or transporting them to their home country.



Academic Pledge

SSA Code of Conduct

Studying abroad requires a significant commitment to personal responsibility. While on an SSA program, you are, in effect, a cultural ambassador for your home country, a representative of your home institution, and a member of your adoptive community.

In addition to the Program Conditions and Release Statement that all students sign as part of the application process to SSA, you also agree to apply the same standards of conduct and academic integrity while abroad as you would at your home institution. These standards include, but are not limited to:

1. Following honest academic standards and maintaining your commitment to academic growth.
2. Strict adherence to host country laws and customs.
3. Respect for your host families and fellow program participants.
4. Respect for SSA property, professors and staff.
5. General personal and academic practices in line with those outlined by your home institution.

Spanish-Only Language Policy (Applicable to students in the Spanish Studies Program and the Integrated Studies Program only)

The Spanish-Only Language Policy is fundamental to the educational philosophy of SSA. It is a tool that promotes cultural integration and active learning, where students put into practice what they are learning. This is the best way to develop both fluency in Spanish and a deeper understanding of Spanish culture. The benefits of adhering to the Spanish-Only Language Policy, no matter your initial language level, are great:

- You will improve your ability to understand and express yourself in Spanish.
- As fluency increases, you will gain a greater awareness of the local culture as you develop relationships with your host family, professors, and friends.

- You will experience a greater feeling of accomplishment in your integration, while demonstrating a higher level of respect towards the local culture.

Living abroad provides an opportunity for total immersion in the language and culture – but only if each and every student actively seeks out this experience. The immersion experience begins NOW, as you get to know your fellow students on the SSA program. You may find that speaking only in Spanish is awkward and even somewhat isolating at first, but years of experience have proven that it is the best way to improve your language ability. While each student makes an individual commitment to using

only Spanish, this is also a collective effort that contributes to the progress of every student. To help you get the most out of your experience, you and all of your fellow students attending programs with SSA are required to adhere to the Spanish-Only Language Policy.

Students are expected to use Spanish in all written and verbal communications while abroad. Students are NOT expected to speak in Spanish when they are faced with an emergency, when speaking with family members, and on occasions when it is absolutely necessary to use English. However, speaking English in the presence of other SSA students is considered a violation of the policy and must be avoided at all times.

Academic Pledge

1. In signing this Language Pledge, I agree to use Spanish as my sole language of communication while participating in SSA programs. I understand that failure to comply with this Pledge will result in a five-point deduction from the final grade of the mandatory course required of that program and may also result in expulsion from the program without receiving a refund or academic credit.
2. I have read and understood the Academic Pledge and agree to the conditions.