

40 Fundraising Ideas for Study Abroad



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Studying abroad can cost a (not-so) pretty penny... in fact, the price tag of the flights alone may be cause enough to make you cringe -- and that's before you even set foot in another country.

While the numbers might frighten interested students away, we are here to reassure you that **there are many avenues to help lessen the financial commitments of studying abroad**. In fact, you may come to find the hardest part of fundraising is just getting started!

If you're tired of filling out scholarship application after scholarship application, get creative. Start looking at various "non-traditional" locations for financial support. Energize others about your upcoming experience, and capitalize on an opportunity to further educate them about the present needs and issues in your intended destination. Be enthusiastic and committed, and have a game plan (including a clear idea of the amount of money you intend to raise).

The following are ideas that have been tried and tested, successful methods for raising funds for study abroad.



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1. Send Letters to Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, Old Teachers, Co-workers, Professors... You Get the Picture

If you opt to make contact with potential supporters via snail mail, be sure that your letter includes information about yourself (including a photo). Try to emit a contagious enthusiasm for your upcoming experience. Ease the reader into making a connection with you -- perhaps describe what has contributed to your decision to study abroad, more details on the nature of the program, or ways you believe your study abroad experience is an investment in your future.

Make donating as easy as possible and ask for a specific amount (\$50-100 is pretty standard). Always follow up with "Thank You" letters (preferably handwritten) and try to keep in touch with your supporters via email while you are studying abroad.

2. Use Your Contacts from #1 to Connect with Their Contacts

Networking is essential. If you receive support from somebody, it may not hurt to ask them if they would pass on your letter of interest to their colleagues, friends, and family. You never know who will be inspired by your story and willing to help in greater ways! Consider asking close friends and family to write letters on your behalf to their network.

3. Storm Local Businesses

Larger corporations can end up being a never-ending task of dealing with sales reps and managers (and those managers' managers); focus your energy on smaller businesses in your neighborhood or university town instead.

A great starting point is your local Chamber of Commerce, who may be able to provide a list of contact information for most nearby businesses. Establish connections with the businesses -- consider sending them letters (as in #1), or hand-deliver your sponsorship request and introduce yourself directly to the staff on site. Be direct and polite, and ask if they provide financial sponsorship for students. If so, ask for a specific but reasonable amount of money.

4. Have a fundraising party.

A common way to raise money is to host a community fundraising event. Events such as spaghetti dinners or pancake breakfasts have proven successful in the past, among hundreds of other creative parties. Raffles or entrance fees are a simple solution for raising money during the events. Consider asking local businesses to donate their product (merchandise, gift certificates, etc.) and opt to raffle them off at your event.

5. Tap into Your Hometown Resources

Did you grow up in one town your whole or life feel closely connected and involved with a particular city? Turn to community groups and alumni associations for support.

Research local civic groups such as Rotary, Elks, Kiwanis, Lions, or other special-interest groups who might be interested in sponsoring you. Additionally, an announcement in a high-school or college alumni newsletter (or fraternity/sorority organization letter) can help you gain attention and hopefully more financial support.

6. Connect with Your Place of Worship

Your personal church, mosque, or synagogue may be willing to hold a special collection during their religious service in your honor. Approach the proper leaders to organize this collection and provide any helpful information, including your mission, cause, and monetary need.

7. Get 15 Minutes of Fame

Alert local newspapers, radio, and television stations about your plans for studying abroad, and see if they are interested in partnering with you for your efforts. Pitch ideas that are mutually beneficial, such as writing regular letters to be published in the local paper or offering to do an interview upon returning. Write an article highlighting the program you're fundraising for, and ask for donations.

8. Have a Grassroots Sale

Tap into your inner-entrepreneur and discover just how generous the community can be. Host your own sale event, for instance -- whether a yard or bake sale -- and have friends and family volunteer to help pass out flyers and assist onsite.

The bonus of selling your old stuff? You'll make room for new memories from your study abroad trip.

9. Create a [Fund & Seek](#) Fundraising Campaign

Crowdfunding websites have been a popular way to fuel fundraisers in recent years, as they provide dedicated pages to showcase your cause. Like many others, Fund and Seek allows you to customize your own website and collect donations in a seamless process.

10. Sell Old or Used Books & Other Items

Some people are avid curators of vintage collections, used goods, and old tech. Take advantage of the market and gather old products lying around the house to sell on eBay or Craigslist. You just might hit the jackpot and cover your whole trip!



Photo credit: Pierre T. Lambert via Unsplash

11. Ask Family Members to Donate Frequent Flyer Miles

Most study abroad organizations aren't going to cover your flight to the country of your program (nor will they cover your transportation on the ground); same goes for most scholarships or grants if you end up getting the financial support that way.

If your loved ones are unable to support you monetarily, why not suggest they donate miles instead? Their frequent flyer miles can cover round-trip flights and even necessary hotel stays along the journey.

12. Waive Holiday & Birthday Gifts

Plan ahead and take advantage of upcoming holidays to raise money for your trip. Instead of a new phone for your birthday, request cash instead. With at least 2-3 gifting holidays in a year, you can end up saving hundreds of dollars (maybe even thousands)!

13. Ask a Sorority, Fraternity, or Campus Organization to Sponsor a Party for You

This is where being involved in student groups on campus really pay off. If you are part of a student organization that hosts events and gatherings, inquire about the possibility of them sponsoring a party in your honor. They charge admission for those weekend parties anyway, right? See if they'll add a few dollars to the entry fee to support your study abroad journey.

14. Offer Destination Photos for a \$10 Donation

People are always looking for "exotic" artwork. If you have a good eye, try setting up a postcard or photo agreement where you offer destination photos or postcards in exchange for a prepaid donation. Charge about \$10 for a high-res image that can be printed one time for personal use, or \$5 for a postmarked postcard.

15. Organize a Night of "Benefit Performances" by Local Talent

As you see from this list, events are a great way to get people into one room and gather donations. If you have the time and connections, put on your event planning hat and lead a benefit concert featuring local talent. While artists often charge to perform, they may be open to waiving their fees as an in-kind donation.

16. Shave Your Head

Surprisingly enough, shaving your head could lead to raising lots of money for your upcoming trip. A common fundraising event for cancer research, you can hold a similar fundraiser and get your loved ones involved to earn extra cash.

17. Sell Cookbooks with You & Your Friends' Favorite Recipes

Do you have a secret knack for creating the most delicious concoctions? Compile 50-100 of your favorite dishes and create a recipe book to sell. No need to be a fancy designer to create it -- use a website like [Canva](#) to create a nice cover page and convert your word document to a PDF for a digital recipe book totally worth buying.

18. Run Errands for People

We all get by with a little help from our friends -- but strangers need assistance too! Lend a helping hand and get paid for it by running errands for busy people. [Task Rabbit](#) is a popular app for finding errand gigs for some extra money.

19. Do Yard Work in Your Neighborhood

For a good workout and old-fashioned way to raise cash, beautify your neighborhood by offering to do yard work for your neighbors in exchange for a donation. Not everyone is from an area that has yards and lawns, so take advantage of the opportunity if you can!

20. Host a _____-a-Thon.

Everyone loves a bit of competition. Get creative and host a “-thon” event. Whether it is a cartwheel-a-thon, paint-a-thon, or car wash-a-thon, these fun activities can charge entrants a small fee to participate and make way for a great time. Remember how much people raced with the Ice Bucket Challenge?!



Photo credit: Maaria Lohiya via Unsplash

21. Profit Off Your Pipes

If you don't sound like a dying goat when you sing, enter a karaoke competition for a chance to win big bucks toward your study abroad program. The more people who come out and support you, the more prize money raised. It takes guts and talent but might be the perfect fit for you.

22. Partner with Your Local Market & Bag Those Groceries

There's nothing wrong with going back to money-saving basics. Talk to the manager of your local supermarket and tell them about your fundraising goal. They might give you a tip-based gig and allow you to spend a few hours a day bagging groceries for extra money. In a few weeks, you can earn a couple hundred bucks.

23. Offer Public Classes or Private Lessons

If you have extra time on your hands and a load of knowledge to share, try offering lessons and tutoring sessions to people online or in your neighborhood to raise extra money. Whether dance, language, or academic, you'll be surprised to learn how much people are willing to pay to learn or perfect a new skill--especially if it means they are supporting a greater goal.

24. Recycle Used Cell Phones & Ink Cartridges

Many electronic stores will reward you with cash or store credit for recycling old electronics and ink cartridges. While the money isn't a lot, every bit counts when you are saving for a study abroad program that costs a few thousand dollars. If you don't have much to recycle, stop by local businesses and ask to collect theirs; they might even pay you a small fee for picking up their items.

25. Stand on the Street Corner & Ask Pedestrians for Donations

It is really easy to be off-putting with this one, so tread carefully. Create a vibrant, appealing sign that highlights your cause and request donations from pedestrians on busy streets. Carry a clipboard with gridded pages to collect email addresses for anyone who wants an update on your trip. *Note: some towns may not allow this, so be sure to check your local laws and regulations.*

26. Decorate Donation Boxes & Place Them in High Traffic Areas

Stop by your local coffee shop, former school, or community center and ask if you can place a donations box in their establishment to help pay for your study abroad program. Decorate the box creatively and supply a fact sheet about the program to address frequently asked questions.

27. Virtual Network on Social Media Platforms

Today technology is more useful than ever before, offering a platform for individuals to take charge of their goals. Spend your time on Facebook venting about politics and swiping through memes OR use social media's wide reach to connect with people who can either help you raise more money, refer you to new scholarships, or introduce you to someone who can.

28. Hold an Auction

If you're artistic, showcase your work! Gather a collection of your best work (photographs, paintings, poetry, collages, etc.) to exhibit and auction. Tell the local newspaper and list the event on social sites like Eventbrite to get the word out.

29. Have a Friend Host a Mary Kay (or Other) Party in Your Honor

If you've heard of a "Mary Kay party," it probably involved an intimate get-together, snacks, and a number of products to test and ultimately purchase. You don't have to do a Mary Kay party to get the Mary Kay party benefit though -- whether skincare and beauty products (like Mary Kay), kitchenware or jewelry, these events can turn a profit and in turn be the perfect platform to raise money for your time abroad.

30. Create & Sell a Custom Calendar

We previously suggested you accept donations for your study abroad program in exchange for a photo or postcard of your trip. If you want to take it one step further, try taking preorders for a full custom calendar for the new year. All you need is 12 solid photographs and a printing program to order from. You can use [Shutterfly](#) to create calendars through a simple interface.



Photo credit: Victor Xok via Unsplash

31. Rent Out Your Property

Do you own any property that other people could use? It doesn't have to be land to be rentable. From your hobby guitar to extra tables and chairs, people need to rent items all the time and may not necessarily have the budget to rent from big-ticket companies. Spread the word in your community or list it on Craigslist. You might find people happy to rent a vacuum if it means they are supporting a cause.

32. Give a Few Haircuts for Donations

Some people have a natural knack for doing hair. Whether it is a buzz cut, braids, or blunt trim, making side cash for your skills is an easy way to get your friends involved in raising money for your study abroad trip. Start with your immediate friend circle and branch out on recommendations.

33. Makeup Your Own Money

No we don't mean printing your own money -- that's illegal! Instead, you can take your skills (and the potential money you can earn from them) to the next level if you know how to do makeup. Take advantage of your school's upcoming dance and search the community board to see if any student groups are hosting a fashion show. Charge a small donation-based fee for your services, but be sure not to spend heavily on expenses (like transportation and supplies).

34. Clean a Few Houses

It isn't uncommon for local residents to list their homes on school job boards seeking housekeeping assistance. Sign up for a couple of gigs and let homeowners know you are saving money to study abroad. Dedicate a few hours per week and you can earn a couple hundred bucks in under a month plus tips if you do a good job.

35. Organize a Tailgate Buffet for a Local Sports Competition

Football big in your town? Cash in on the tailgating culture and bring a stash of food items to resell. There's always one group of sports fans who brought the beer but forgot the hot dogs. Post a sign that reads, "Study Abroad Hot Dog Fundraiser" and people might feel extra generous.

36. Sign up to be an Uber or Lyft driver

The sharing economy is booming right now. If you have a qualified vehicle, sign up for Uber or Lyft to earn money toward your study abroad program fees. It isn't donation-based, but still a perfect way to earn extra cash.

37. Become a Mover

If your car doesn't qualify for a car-sharing service, not all hope is lost. A vehicle spacious enough for people *might* be spacious enough for someone moving too. Raise money in your neighborhood and school by offering to move household items in exchange for a small fee.

38. Showcase Your City

If you live or go to school in a fairly popular city, there may be companies that offer free tours to tourists in exchanges for tips. Many students become guides for these walking tours because they can earn a good amount of tips if they attract enough people. As a guide, let the tourists know you are a student raising tips toward your upcoming study abroad program--they might feel extra generous.

39. Become a Fitness Accountability Partner

You may not have enough time to become a certified trainer before you head off to study abroad, but that doesn't mean you can't earn extra money from your fitness habits. Offer to help people get back in shape by offering them tips, guidance, and accountability for a donation toward your study abroad program.

40. Organize a 5k Race

Running races are a special way to get the town involved in raising money for your time overseas. Though it may take a lot of time, effort, and planning, the participant fees raised can help you get closer to your goal than ever before!

Will These Ideas Really Help Raise Extra Money to Study Abroad?

Absolutely! Planning to study abroad can put you in a temporary funk when you realize how much it costs; don't let that deter you from going. There are many ways you can raise funds and you'll find people are eagerly willing to help young students experience global exposure. Plus, you may learn more about yourself, your capabilities, and the kindness of others along the way.

Remember: always remind donors exactly where their money is going and express gratitude for their help. Some creativity, a dose of confidence, and a great deal of perseverance will definitely help you achieve your financial goals and make study abroad a reality.

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