Selecting Safe Housing Abroad

Use this document to gain a brief understanding of what safe housing is, why it is important, and factors to consider when selecting housing overseas.

What is safe housing abroad?

Definition:
Living in safe housing means that your mental and physical well-being are protected and you are in an environment in which you can stay healthy. When you leave your accommodation, you are confident your belongings are secure, you can explore your neighborhood without fear, and you have access to clean water and healthy foods on a daily basis.

Why it’s important:
Safe housing minimizes risks, allows you to feel comfortable, and can help you thrive in an unfamiliar environment. Safe housing helps you to fully immerse, enjoy, and learn while abroad.

What factors should I consider when choosing housing?

Country and community context:
Housing styles and standards differ across the world and researching your chosen country and/or community is the first step to understanding the local housing context. What is realistic for where you are going? What are common or standard housing features in your host location? How will this be different than what you are used to in the U.S.? How will these differences affect the type of housing you choose?

Personal priorities:
You may need to adjust your expectations in order to adapt to the local context. What are your current priorities for housing? Are those realistic for where you are going? If not, how will you adjust? What preferences are you willing to compromise on? Keep in mind that you will rarely find housing that fulfills your entire wish-list.

The difference between being uncomfortable and unsafe:
You may be stepping outside of your comfort zone by living with a host family, other international students, or completely alone for the first time. Feeling uncomfortable in any new experience is normal, but there is a difference between feeling uncomfortable and being unsafe. Everyone has a different tolerance for new experiences, but if at any point you feel your housing situation compromises your health and safety, you should immediately reach out to your in-country or stateside contact and consider alternative options.

Visit global.umich.edu to find more pre-departure resources.