Travel Tips: The Harlaxton College web site has a whole section with independent travel tips. Although it was written for students, there are many good resources for our alumni travelers. Check it out at:

http://www.harlaxton.ac.uk/travel/independent/index.cfm

Medicines and Medical Issues: If you take prescription medications or regularly use over-the-counter products, take a supply for the whole time you will be abroad. You cannot get a US prescription filled abroad. Take a copy of the prescription in case you need a doctor’s help finding an equivalent. Carry medications in your carry-on unless you have liquids. Work early with your physician to anticipate medical needs while abroad and to devise a strategy for meeting your needs.

Smoking: Harlaxton College is 100% non-smoking as are ALL public places in the UK.

Money Matters—plastic is the key: While there are many ways of moving and getting money, as explained in a separate handout, plastic is far and away the easiest choice. You get an excellent exchange rate and can find an ATM easily while at the manor, in Grantham or traveling. Be sure to notify your credit card and ATM card or debit card issuers that you plan to do transactions abroad so that your transactions are honored. Ask the bank what fees may apply when using the card abroad. Harlaxton has an ATM machine.

• Take a look at the currency rates in your newspaper, the Wall Street Journal, or through an online currency calculator such as www.x-rates.com. Be sure you understand how to compute the cost of British pounds. Bear in mind that the published rate reflects the rates in effect each day on international currency markets. When you exchange dollars for pounds, you will pay a small fee, often reflected in a less favorable exchange rate or in a commission charged by the bank or currency exchange.

• There is no reason to worry about obtaining British currency before you leave the U.S.; it’s simply not necessary. There are banks and ATM machines at the airport in London and an ATM at Harlaxton College. You will have a chance to change money, too, in Grantham the day after you arrive.

• When you return to the U.S., some banks will convert notes, i.e., paper money (check with your local bank before leaving). If you want to convert coins, do so before returning home.

• When abroad, you can exchange your money at banks and at currency exchanges, though there are substantial fees. Look at the posted exchange rate and understand the fees you are paying. Fees charged are generally a percentage of the amount exchanged beyond a minimum service charge.

• You will also find it convenient to have a credit card (Visa or MasterCard) to pay for unexpected expenses, emergencies, or to move cash from the U.S. Remember to tell your credit card issuer that you will be using the card abroad so that the transactions are not refused. Credit card companies are being very careful about identity theft. The Discover Card is not widely accepted outside North America, and American Express is not widely accepted by smaller businesses in Britain and Europe.
• Remember to keep your money, credit cards, etc. on your person while traveling. DO NOT pack them in your luggage. It is a good idea to have a small amount of ready cash in an easily accessible change purse or wallet with the rest in a safer “travel” wallet around your neck or inside clothing.

Electricity—converters and adapters: Converters are what change the electrical current so that you don’t blow up your electrical appliance. Virtually all laptops run on both US and UK current because the power supply is also a built-in converter. To verify this, read the label on the bottom of the laptop or on the bottom of the power supply unit. It should indicate a range between approximately 110-240 volts. That means it works in the USA and in Europe. You still need an adapter—it fastens onto the plug so you can insert the plug into the wall socket (differently shaped abroad!!). You can get adapters at Wal-Mart or Target or the airport (in the international departures area). If you have a digital camera that charges through the laptop, you should be safe. Otherwise, you will need a converter. Leave other electrical appliances at home if at all possible.

Packing: Before completing your packing for check-in and carry-on items, you should check with two sources regarding weight and content restrictions.

Your airline determines the number, type, size, and weight of baggage you may check in and carry-on. Go online to your airline’s Web site to verify the restrictions and to read their suggestions regarding the check-in process.

The Transportation Security Administration determines the restrictions regarding the content of your check-in and carry-on items for departure from US airports for both domestic and international travel. Because these guidelines and restrictions may change at any time, it is best to confirm on the day of your departure what are the restrictions in place. Go to www.tsa.gov to check on packing restrictions and to learn more about the screening process. Educate yourself today to avoid surprises, delays and disappointments at the airport. If you will travel through an airport outside the US before arriving in London, be sure you understand carry-on guidelines for that airport.

Technology at Harlaxton—computers, laptops, cell phones, etc.: Harlaxton has a nice WI-FI network accessible in most parts of the campus unless you are behind a very thick wall. We also have computer labs in the Manor and Carriage House—open 24 hours a day—just like the library. Many students use Skype to communicate with friends and family. Some use their US cell phone if it is able to work abroad. Others buy a simple pay-as-you-go cell phone in the UK—where they call them “mobiles.” The trick is to think about how much you think you will use a phone abroad and under what circumstances. If you want to have one, check first with your current service provider to understand options and costs.

The Grantham and Harlaxton Communities: Harlaxton Manor is named after the village at the foot of the drive, Harlaxton! It’s a quaint place with many beautiful homes from the 17th and 18th centuries and lovely gardens. Grantham, the closest town, is about 3 miles away, where you can shop, access the railway station for travel, or seek entertainment. The main shopping area in Grantham is the Sir Isaac Newton Shopping Center, where you can find Morrison’s, a large and convenient supermarket. ASDA, the British Wal-Mart, is about five minutes away by foot. The locals are kind to Americans and have been greeting them several times a year for nearly 40 years.
Cross-Cultural Issues:

- **Noise, Volume**: Americans are often more demonstrative than the British in public places, so remember that you may appear noisy to the British.

- **Space Issues, the Pack Mentality**: Try not to go in large groups into shops or pubs. While we are used to large and wide-open spaces, things in Britain are often smaller and close.

- **Eye Contact**: While Americans often make and hold eye contact, this isn’t so common in Britain. It might even send the wrong signal and is sometimes viewed as aggressive.

- **Pub Culture**: Pubs are great places to engage the local culture. “Pub” is short for “Public House.” Pubs are the neutral public spaces where people meet and eat and drink and socialize. Pubs come in all types, so look them over and find one that suits you. Pubs don’t usually have table service. Instead, you go to the counter and place your order and pay at that time. If you order something to drink, it will be served to you then. If you order food, it will be brought to you. Tipping is uncommon in pubs.

- **Language Issues; How to Communicate Effectively and Not Give Offense**: The British often seem to say “Sorry!” There’s a general unwillingness to appear to intrude. This is quite different from how Americans often interact—we tend to be more direct in speech and action. You’ll also notice that so much communication in Britain takes on the form of a question. “It’s a lovely day, isn’t it?” rather than “What a great day!” “Do you fancy a pint?” rather than “Let’s get a drink!” “Can you tell me how I can find a bank?” rather than “I need to find a bank!” (Do you see the pattern? Ask questions instead of exclaiming!) Take time to greet people and inquire about their health and engage in some small talk before rushing into your request.

- **Courtesy and Respecting the Host Culture**: Remember that you are a guest in another country. This isn’t the time to try to prove that all things American are best. Take time to see how others do things. Cultural comparisons are a natural part of travel; just remember to do it in a respectful manner. By doing so, you will be well received and not cause a “missed opportunity” to make contact with the locals.

- **Sharing Your Culture; Being an American Abroad**: The British will know a lot about Americans—or think they do—from American television, films, and mass media. Of course, some of their impressions will be on target, but not all. This may be your chance to show them how you are as an American, that there is more to being an American than “Desperate Housewives.” Don’t be afraid to strike up a discussion with the locals. Americans often have the impression that the British are a bit distant or reserved. In fact, it may be that they are simply more mindful of personal space and don’t want to intrude. If you speak first, you may find a very pleasant person willing to engage with you.