

Living and Working Abroad

Does the thought of living and working abroad excite you? Do you feel that now is the time to take the plunge and make your dream of living in Paris or Tokyo come true? Many college students are eager to turn these tantalizing ideas into reality, but don't know where to begin.

Before you start to plan your overseas adventure, try to clarify what you hope to gain from the experience. What areas of the world interest you most? Do you want to spend most of your time traveling, or would you rather live in one place? How much interaction do you want to have with local people? Would you rather study, work, or do some combination of the two? Try reading *The Harvard Guide to International Experience* if you need help clarifying your objectives.

The scope of international-related opportunities for students and recent graduates is quite broad. There are paid and voluntary types of work, as well as academic study and travel programs. Any of these can take place during the summer or after you leave

college. (Junior Year Abroad is an option that won't be covered here.)

Following is some information to begin acquainting you with these various types of overseas opportunities. The resources listed can be found in the Career Development Library, in the Employment and Internships section, or the Geographic Information/International section or on the web.

Summer Work Opportunities

For many college students, an idyllic summer is one spent combining overseas paid employment with travel. Perhaps you'd like to wait tables in Australia, do word processing in England, or work on a farm in Israel. How do you find out about these and other types of positions? One of the most successful strategies is to go through an employment organization that deals specifically with placing students abroad. Probably the largest such organization is the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). For a fee, CIEE will provide you with a work visa (essential

for legal employment), job listings, and housing information in participating countries. See www.ciee.org for more information. BUNAC (www.bunac.org) provides a similar service for Great Britain.

Finding work in other countries is entirely possible, but may take more effort on your part. *Overseas Summer Jobs* and the *Directory of International Internships* are excellent resources. You also could contact the Consulate of the country where you hope to work and ask about temporary employment opportunities. Locate the embassy or consulate for any country at www.embassyworld.com. Family members and friends may have useful contacts in your countries of interest, and you can check our Career Advisory Program (CAP) database for names and addresses of Vassar alumnae/i living abroad. Do some on-line searching as well: universities and colleges all over the world have web pages that could include job listings.

Academic Study Options

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Are you fascinated by a specific country or culture? Do you want to see that land and get acquainted with its people first-hand, or study the language intensively? If this description fits, you may be interested in a summer or post-graduate study program. Our office has a wealth of information on the topic; you also should look into the Dean of Studies Office and check departmental bulletin boards.

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Vacation Study Abroad and *Work, Study, Travel Abroad*, both published annually, describe a myriad of programs in countries all over the world--from university credit courses to family home-stay operations. We also subscribe to *Transitions Abroad* magazine, which features articles on international study and travel. Financing overseas study often is a major concern. While there are numerous fellowship opportunities for graduate students, it is more difficult to obtain money for undergraduate study. One source of funds is the Rotary Foundation (www.rotary.org), which provides undergraduate and graduate scholarships for study abroad in any field. Applications for Rotary scholarships must be submitted a year in advance of when you plan to leave. The Office of Pre-professional Advising and Fellowships has information on funding sources for post-

graduate study; also refer to the *Work, Study, and Travel Abroad* book mentioned previously.

Volunteer Programs

If you're interested in humanitarian service or aid to developing countries, you may want to look into volunteer service programs. There are short-term summer programs, often called work-camps, as well as ones for graduates which may require a one or two year commitment.

"Volunteer" typically means that you don't earn a salary. Although some programs, such as the Peace Corps, provide you with a stipend, that is the exception rather than the rule. Because volunteer service organizations are nonprofit and usually run on a tight budget, you may even be asked to pay a fee in order to participate.

Resource books to review include the annual edition of *Volunteer!*, *Alternatives to the Peace Corps*, and *The Peace Corps and More*.

Post-Graduate Work Opportunities

Typically heard in our office are phrases like this: "I want to work for an advertising agency in Japan..." or "I'd like to get involved with international business...." Can you define what kind of work sparks your interest to go abroad? Because the word "international" can be applied to almost any career

field, one of your first steps is to determine the type of industry or organization for which you'd like to work. You also need to examine your skills and background, and then try to decide what sorts of jobs within that industry or organization would be most appropriate for you.

Some employer options to consider include governmental agencies such as the Foreign Service, American or international schools, business firms which have foreign offices or interest, and nonprofit organizations. Although many U.S. students have the expectation that immediately upon graduation they can secure a career-related job in a foreign country, this usually is not the case. With a few notable exceptions, most employers do not hire Americans straight out of college and send them abroad. It usually takes time to develop skills, learn the ropes in the U.S. office, and establish your worth before an employer would feel comfortable sending you overseas. For certain occupational fields, however, there are international opportunities for recent graduates. The Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) program, for example, hires recent college graduates to teach English in schools all over Japan.

If you are a citizen of another country, or your citizenship enables you to work in more

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than one country, your employment options may be broader. Talk with a career development staff member for more information.

To find out about careers and hiring practices in your industry or geographic region of choice, you might look at *Guide to Careers in World Affairs* and *Careers in International Affairs*. For actual job listings, look on-line at E-recruiting and MonsterTRAK, and at the binders titled *International Employment Hotline*, *Global Alternatives*, and *The International Educator*, among others.

Employment, study, and volunteer opportunities exist all over the world, but discovering the ones of most interest to you takes time and careful organization. Don't despair, however, because in this situation the old maxim "where there's a will there's a way" holds true. A dose of realism, persistence, and optimism will take you far. *Bon voyage!*