

Searching for International Opportunities

Living and working abroad can be a wonderful experience that helps you grow professionally and personally, but getting overseas will take extra work and research on your part. First, narrow your search by asking yourself some key questions:

- What would you like to do while abroad and what skills can you offer an organization?
- Where do you want to go?
- When do you want to go?
- How long do you want to be abroad?
- What do you hope to do after this experience ends?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Answering why you want to go will be the determining factor in how you shape your search. Some “categories” to consider:

Study abroad as an undergraduate

- A great way to gain academic as well as practical experience in the international community. Contact our Study Abroad Office for more info (overseas.wustl.edu).

Intern abroad

- Start your search early in the year. The search is not that dissimilar from an internship search in the U.S. Make a target list of companies, network and practice your interviewing skills. A Career Center advisor can help you with all of these tasks.

Spend one to three years working/volunteering abroad

- Think about joining a transitional program such as the Peace Corps or JET Programme (see reference section). Transitional programs are often desirable because they help arrange plans as well as provide a support network while you are abroad.

Work abroad for an indefinite amount of time

- A search for this type of position is similar to how you would go about finding a job in the U.S. Foreign language skills are usually very important.

- You will more than likely need to find a full-time job at a company that will sponsor your working visa. Working visas may not be easy to come by and availability can vary from country to country (see reference section).

Work in the U.S. for a few years and then work abroad

- Many companies have international operations that require experience within the American company before an employee is sent abroad. Someone can also relocate to another country as a “skilled migrant worker” (requirements vary from country to country). Foreign language skills are essential in this area.

Go to graduate school abroad

- It is important to consider how your advanced degree will help you with your job search afterwards. Do you want to work in the country where you are studying? Would foreign degree standards be applicable to American positions?
- If possible, consider international scholarships and research grants. Contact Dean Joy Kiefer in the College of Arts & Sciences for more information (jkiefer@wustl.edu or (314) 935-8136).

Travel for an extended period of time

- People with this goal usually need temporary ways to support themselves while they pursue travel interests.
- Consider alternative programs such as “couch surfing” (www.couchsurfing.com) or “wwoofing” (Willing Workers on Organic Farms, www.wwoofing.com) to make travel affordable.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Once you feel mentally prepared and have goals in mind, start your search! There are literally hundreds of resources for finding opportunities abroad, so where do you begin?

1. Talk to people you know—professors, advisors, or friends and family who have international experience.
2. Do website searches. There are a lot of organizations that have international programs, many of them designed for students and recent graduates (see references section).
3. Read books about going abroad. Most guide books

will include websites that have been researched by the author and are more likely to be reliable resources.

4. Research international companies. This includes both foreign based companies and American companies who operate internationally.
5. Plan ahead. Some programs have early deadlines as well as language or course requirements. It will also take several months to get all of your documentation in order (passports, visas, contracts, etc).

HOW TO AVOID SCAMS

Many students find it convenient to use agencies or programs that simplify the search process and locate opportunities. Since going overseas has many complexities and unfamiliar aspects, there are more opportunities to encounter scams and lose money. Here are some tips to avoid such problems:

- Avoid firms that operate solely via telephone or email
- Get all promises or contracts in writing
- Research any information a firm gives you before making a commitment
- Never send cash or a money order through the mail
- Never give away your credit card or bank account number
- Have an attorney look over any documents you will be signing
- Do not make hasty decisions and beware of “Must act now” demands
- Verify the firm’s validity with the embassy of the firm’s country
- Never hesitate to ask questions and authenticate their answers
- ASK FOR REFERENCES

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE DIFFERENCES

It is necessary to consider cultural differences not only when relocating abroad, but also when you are applying and interviewing for a position (ex: a phone interview may be at midnight due to time differences).

Many international travelers experience “culture shock” and have difficulty adjusting to their new environment. Ask yourself if you are ready to encounter:

- Language barriers and misunderstandings
- Differences in food, meal times, and eating practices
- Differences in availability of medical, legal and financial services
- Differences in climates and time zones
- Separation from loved ones and convenient communication media
- The possibility of selling or storing most of your personal belongings
- The possibility of political corruption, financial instability or social conflicts within the country
- Discrimination based on your race, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin that is less common in the U.S.

RESOURCES TO START YOUR SEARCH

On the web:

- www.goabroad.com
- www.jetprogramme.org
- www.peacecorps.gov
- www.bunac.org.uk
- www.goinglobal.com
- www.worldlearning.org
- www.internationalcenter.umich.edu/swt
- www.unitedplanet.org
- www.iie.hu
- www.artsci.wustl.edu/~ias/grants.html
- www.artsci.wustl.edu/~overseas/students/otheropportunities.html

Books in the Career Center Library:

- *Backdoor Guide to Short Term Job Adventures*
by Michael Landes
- *Work Your Way Around the World* by Susan Griffith

- *The Big Guide to Living and Working Abroad*
by Jean-Marc Hachey

- *Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Third*

World and U.S. Volunteer Opportunities
by First Food Publishing

- *So, You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go* by Dillon Banerjee

- *Work Abroad: The Complete Guide to Finding a Job Overseas*

- *The Global Citizen* by Elizabeth Kruempelmann

- *Transitions Abroad* (magazine)

For information on teaching English abroad:

- www.americantesol.com

- *Teaching English Abroad* by Susan Griffith

For information on passports and visas:

- www.travisa.com

- www.embassyworld.com