

Starting the Search

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 do 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 (www.artsci.wustl.edu/~ias).

Intern abroad

- It is important to start this search early in the year. Many organizations offer to find you an internship for a fee (usually hundreds or thousands of dollars) but it is not necessary to go through them to find a quality internship.
- If you choose not to go through an organization, the search is not that dissimilar from an internship search in the U.S. You need to 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 ideal because they help arrange plans as well as provide a support network while you are abroad.

Work abroad for an indefinite amount of time

- 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).
- 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.

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 usually very important in this area as well.

Go to graduate school abroad

- Studying abroad can be very rewarding as well, but 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 other interests.
- Consider alternative programs such as “couch surfing” (www.couchsurfing.com) or “woofing” (Willing Workers on Organic Farms, www.woofing.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?

- Talk to people you know—professors, advisors, or friends and family who have international experience
- Do Web searches. There are lots organizations that have international programs, many of them designed for students and recent graduates (see references section).
- 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.
- Research international companies. This includes both foreign based companies and American companies who operate internationally.
- 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).

Prepare Yourself for the Differences

Once you have decided where, when, and why you want to travel, it is important to consider that many international travelers experience “culture shock” and have difficulty adjusting to their new environment. 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). 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, sex, or origin that is not as common in the U.S.

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

Resources to Start Your Search

On the web:

- www.internabroad.com
- www.jobsabroad.com
- www.teachabroad.com
- www.idealists.org
- www.jetprogramme.org
- www.peacecorps.gov
- www.bunac.org.uk
- www.goinglobal.com
- www.councilexchanges.org
- www.worldlearning.org/hr/jobs.html
- www.umich.edu/~icenter/overseas/work/workabroad1.html
- 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
- *The Big Guide to Living and Working Abroad* by Jean-Marc Hachey
- *Teaching English Abroad* by Susan Griffith
- *Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Third World and U.S. Volunteer Opportunities* by First Food Publishing
- *Transitions Abroad* (magazine)

For information on passports and visas:

- www.travisa.com
- www.embassyworld.com