

MEANINGFUL TRAVEL TIPS AND TALES

ARAB-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES



An Initiative to Make Travel More Inclusive



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WHY WE CREATED THIS EBOOK FOR ARAB & ARAB-AMERICAN TRAVELERS

A NOTE FROM GOABROAD



Though we have little demographic data about the number of students who identify as Arab or Arab-American going abroad or studying in the U.S., it's exceedingly important that we—as international educators—support all students, provide resources and encourage more Arab and Arab-American students to travel abroad, and do all that we can to make studying in the U.S. more accessible for international students. This guide is part of GoAbroad's push for more inclusivity in travel and international education.

Accessibility is an issue for most students who want to study, intern, teach, or volunteer abroad, but don't have the resources to do so. Beyond just financial resources, if students can't see themselves in the stories, articles, and blog posts, written by alumni, going abroad won't seem like a viable option. In a field centered around diversity and cultural exchange, this is a shame. Our contributors are sharing their personal stories and travel expertise in order to change that.

More and more, studying, interning, working, and teaching abroad is becoming somewhat of a standard endeavor of college students and recent graduates; this ebook was created to help ensure that Arab-American students and travelers have all the resources they need to participate in these experiences safely, happily, and successfully. Everyone deserves the opportunity to travel, and GoAbroad is dedicated to providing every student with the tools, knowledge, and confidence they need to do so.

This is an open book (pun intended). It will continue to grow as we share more stories and add more voices.

Interested in joining this initiative? [Partner with us!](#)

OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Souad Kadi is a social worker, teacher, and lover of hugs. She is the Training Manager at Amal Women's Center, a nonprofit restaurant in Marrakech, Morocco that helps marginalized women prepare for employment in the hospitality industry. In the past she managed a youth environmental education program at NGO Dar Si Hmad, and participated in a professional fellowship in the United States. She has a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Ibn Zohr in Agadir, Morocco.



Renda Nazzal is a Palestinian-American with a love for travel and cross-cultural connection. She studied Anthropology and International Affairs at Lewis & Clark College and received a Fulbright fellowship to Morocco. She worked as a liaison for international students and aided in several income-generating projects for rural communities in Morocco. Renda now runs The Argan Project, her own fair-trade venture that empowers Berber artisans in Morocco with sustainable incomes from their traditional craftwork.



Raneem Taleb-Agha is a Syrian-American traveler, teacher and writer. After college, she taught English in Madrid for two years, and is now making her way across South America. When not traveling or writing, she can be found learning a new song on the guitar, singing songs in Spanish, English, and Arabic.



← This could be you! Want to share your own travel tips and tales? [Give us a shout!](#)



6 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE VOLUNTEERING IN NORTH AFRICA/ THE MIDDLE EAST

by Souad Kadi

Lately, I've noticed so many of my friends getting excited about traveling in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA fo' short) to volunteer, which is really gaining popularity as a destination despite current geopolitics. Volunteering abroad has always been a bridge into discovering other cultures, so it's no surprise that it's regarded as an awesome way to travel and learn more about the MENA region.

Okay, now before you start packing your bags and applying to volunteer in the Middle East, you'll need to take these six tips into consideration to ensure a safe and enriching experience (and calm your worried Arab parents back home!). Without further ado, *yalla bina, asshab!*

1. Choose a volunteer project that suits your style and skills set

"Do I want to teach the language to kids? Volunteer at an orphanage? Help on a farm?" You certainly need to know what you are most into, as well as how your skills best fit for a volunteering experience. Do some research and seek out advice from friends who have been to the MENA to choose the right placement for you.

The most popular volunteer projects in the Middle East include:

- [Community development](#)
- [Education and teaching English](#)
- [Youth development](#)
- [Peace and conflict resolution](#)
- [Women's empowerment](#)

You want to strike a balance between finding a volunteer project that matches your skills and interests, and is in a location/community you want to be part of.

2. Think wisely about the country that interests you the most

What part of the MENA region would you like to volunteer in? You might love the peace and quiet of rural areas, or maybe you're a big city kid. Maybe you want to get outside your comfort zone by visiting a non-English speaking country like Algeria or Tunisia? Or perhaps you prefer the comfort of English as a second national language – this is common in cosmopolitan cities like Dubai and Doha.

If I were you, I'd ask myself all of these questions:

- What volunteering program fits me the best?
- Do you I have the right skills for the program I'm applying to?
- Will my experience make any social change?

Before making a decision, do some research (seeing a common thread here?) about the many volunteering options in MENA countries to narrow down your options. Trust your gut, and choose the country that checks all your boxes.

If you're looking for a budget destination, **Egypt**, **Tunisia**, and **Morocco** are good options. If quality hummus is your #1 priority, you'll want to head to **Jordan**, **Lebanon**, or **Palestine**. Volunteer projects with the most need for helping hands will differ from a country to another. For example, Morocco is particularly popular for volunteering in education and teaching English, while Jordan has large populations of refugees that could use an extra hand.

3. At least try to pick up the language

Even if it's just basic survival phrases! You should plan for a considerable amount of time to learn the language/dialect of your destined country. It is essential to know the local language, because it will save you the struggle of being just a random girl/guy coming from another country. Interact with a curious, loving spirit, and always show a willingness to learn.

Keep in mind that not all MENA countries speak the same language. Some may speak Arabic, Farsi, or Hebrew. And not all Arabic-speaking countries will speak the same dialect, which is CRAZY! For instance, Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia share the Arabic language, but the dialects spoken in each country vary widely. The good thing is that all the countries understand Standard Arabic, while others speak French and English as well, and most people will not struggle in communicating with you.

4. Keep an open mind about religion

Not all MENA countries share the same religious beliefs and practices, and that's awesome: from the Druze of Lebanon to the Copts of Egypt, and from Sunni to Shi'a, and all the secular atheists in between. Being religiously different should not raise any issue, as much as it should help you accept the other religions and understand other existing faiths. Knowing the religion beforehand, will help you choose appropriate attire and avoid embarrassing cultural faux pas.

5. Embrace the cultural differences

Maybe most Westerners don't greet each other with kisses on the forehead or cheeks. But in the MENA, we are extra LOVEY-DOVEY with our hellos. Don't be shocked if someone tries to squeeze in a few *bisous* with their greeting.

When it comes to eating manners, think about ditching the royal silverware manners. Most MENA countries connect with the food with their hands. In Morocco people love dipping khubz (bread) in everything they eat, while in the Levant, hummus is a common part of everyday meals. Also most meals are served on one big, shared plate on a round table, because families are tight and breaking bread together is important!

Don't be surprised if the older brother or sister is still living in the house, either by themselves or with their partners. That's not uncommon in the region and it is a sign of family bonding and strength. Usually the older siblings stay with their families until they get married and sometimes stay at home, because most grandparents love to have their grandchildren around.

6. Packing your bags doesn't have to be stressful!

Now the real fun begins! Don't stress out about what you should wear, or whether it will be hot/cold in the country you have chosen. Take a deep breath and don't freak out. All you need is the basics, get tips from other travelers who travelled before to the same country and yes, you can buy clothes once you're there if you need them.

No matter of where you go, you'll need to adjust your wardrobe, especially if you're a woman. Wearing shorts in Dubai or in Marrakech might be okay, but even in very tourist/traveler heavy cities and countries, you'll want to err on the side of modesty.

By and large, it's best to always wear long pants or long skirts, or long-sleeved shirts—especially in the more conservative countries in the region. The idea is to be respectful of the culture and not draw unnecessary and unwanted attention to yourself.

Now you have enough information to apply for a volunteering program in MENA and pack your bags. Be ready for a guaranteed life changing adventure that will shape all the notions you had about this part of the world. Prepare yourself to learn about a fascinating history, eat delicious food, learn complex, vastly interesting languages, and experience loving hospitality.



LEARNING MORE ABOUT MY PALESTINIAN HERITAGE THROUGH TRAVEL

by Renda Nazzal

"Blood can never turn into water."

"Ddam 3omro ma biseer mayyeh."

Growing up Palestinian, this phrase was said time and time again. I quickly understood what it meant because my great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles were always reminding us kids of the importance of family. "It's our blood which connects us," they'd say, and "it's our responsibility to be there for our family."

These words resonated with me as a child and even more so as an adult who has spent almost a decade living in cities apart from my family. Though I was born and raised in California, as a first-generation Palestinian on my father's side, and second-generation Palestinian on my mother's side, family was always the common denominator which held us together.

As a kid I often spent so much time at my great-grandparents' house surrounded by our large family, that in order to find time to hang out with my friends, I'd have to bring them along. My friends would love coming with me to Tete and Sedo's house. There was a beautiful garden to play in, trees to climb, cats to cuddle with, flawed English translations to laugh at, and without fail, there was something delicious brewing in the kitchen; a grand meal made for an army that was often completely foreign to my American friends' culinary palettes. Needless to say, my childhood was rich with gratitude for health, pride for a life free from suffering, and love. Lots and lots of love.

From a young age I've always wanted to travel. I knew that I would attend college away from home and that I wanted to study abroad. Thus, when my college anthropology professor announced that he would take his first group of students to Morocco, I jumped at the opportunity.

I had just turned 21 when I set foot for the first time in Morocco. The juxtaposition and diversity of the buzzing medina streets, coupled with its humbled and hospitable people, were clear to me that Morocco was exactly where I wanted to be. This visit to Morocco marked the start of my travels through North Africa, the Middle East and Europe—and more importantly, my personal pursuit for deeper growth and self-awareness. **Here are the significant ways in which traveling has helped me to learn more about myself and my heritage as a Palestinian woman.**

Experiencing compassion for the Palestinian people

Moroccans love Palestine. Throughout the country, no matter the region, no matter the demographic or community, Moroccans are sympathetic and compassionate for the Palestinian people. Despite their consumption of current affairs for that region of the world, most Moroccans have never actually met a Palestinian person before, especially while in their own country.

So, as I arrived to the home of my first ever host family in Marrakech, the family took one look at me, with my olive skin, big brown eyes and dark hair, and asked, "So, where are you from again?"

"Southern California."

"No, no. Where are you REALLY from? Where's your family from?" They insisted.

"Well," I admitted, "my family is from Ramallah. I'm Palestinian."

This was the first of dozens, if not hundreds of interactions that I had with Moroccans and other locals throughout North Africa and the Middle East about my heritage. They all play out the same: After I tell someone that I'm Palestinian, they immediately open their arms for a hug and say, "See! You are not American. You are Palestinian. You are Arab. It's in your blood!"

During the first year that I lived in Morocco, I would always tell people that I was an American from California, but given the nature of my skin color and facial features, they'd quickly refuse to accept it. They were sure that I was Arab, that we were connected. It almost seemed as if everyone else was so sure of who I was before I even knew.

One time in Marrakech at a neighborhood celebration, after learning that I was Palestinian, a group of children were reciting the Fida'i, or the Palestinian National Anthem. They urged me to chant along but I felt shameful and burdened because I didn't know the words. These type of interactions with Moroccans made me feel as if I was carrying the Palestinian people, culture, identities, language, traditions and way of life, all on my back. Since it was likely that I was the first and only Palestinian person they'd meet, it felt as if I was Palestine's only representation. This was difficult for me, because I wanted solidarity and connection with Moroccans, but the truth is that I lacked the confidence in both language and first-hand experience to be what I wanted to be for them. At this point in my life, I had yet to actually step foot in Palestine, coupled with my mediocre Arabic skills to actually hold a conversation on the topic, I was left feeling dishonorable.

As my years in Morocco went on, however, my language skills improved and eventually when people inquired about my "real" ethnicity, I responded with "I was born in California, but I'm Palestinian."



To put it simply, there was a confidence and pride that changed within me. Even the locals in my small neighborhood at Hay Nahda in Agadir addressed me as "the Palestinian girl with the yellow bike." At this point I had spent time in Jordan and had similar encounters about Palestine, except this time I was speaking with people in a country where Palestinians lived as refugees. The interactions and discussions I had with locals in Morocco and Jordan sparked a yearning for a deeper connection with my heritage. People were connected to Palestine—and this encouraged me to take more pride in the place where my family calls home.

Learning through language

Since my upbringing was surrounded by a large, tight-knit Palestinian family, you'd think that I'd be fluent in our own Arabic dialect. On the contrary, my parents were more concerned with our English-speaking skills as children that they didn't speak much Arabic to me and my brother.

As a teenager, I felt there were missing parts to my understanding of what it meant to be Palestinian. I carried numerous stories of my family's personal experiences; their victories, tragedies, nostalgia and more, but I hadn't yet visited Palestine and experienced the homeland of my family first-hand and I hadn't grasped the language well enough to hold conversations.

By the time I was in high school I was seriously questioning why I was studying Spanish verbs when instead all I wanted was to learn Arabic. Language is culture. It's identity, it's cross-culture understanding, it's expression and voice. Much of Palestinian culture is expressed through proverbs, euphemisms, poetry and other written and oratory forms. So I decided to officially learn the language of my family, like really learn. No more broken phrases with my great-grandparents, no more asking my mother to translate what I missed in family discussions. I knew that learning Arabic would bring me closer to understanding the traditions of my family.

In high school I enrolled in my first Arabic course at the local community college. Those studies, coupled with help from my grandmother, taught me to read and write Arabic and understand its basic roots. A few years later, once I immersed myself in Morocco, learning Arabic was a main goal of mine. Though the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, Darija, is much different than the Arabic that my family speaks, my learning in Darija allowed me to further grasp the language and develop comfort in listening to it and speaking it.

Speaking another language on a daily basis allows you to actually think like a native speaker, whether it's making a purchase at the local corner store, haggling with a shopkeeper, visiting the pharmacy or addressing a taxi driver. The words we learn and eventually adopt in everyday life while living in a new place allows us to better relate to one another, despite our differences.

Appreciating a simpler life

Throughout North Africa and the Middle East, many people endure lifelong careers as small business owners, farmers or artisans. The souk, or marketplace, are busy outdoor venues where locals sell their produce or artisanal wares to the public. Daily and weekly Souks are found in small mountain villages and in large cities alike. Dozens of conversations with local Moroccans make believe that life is quite simple when you're working for yourself.

I come from a family of shoemakers. When my family immigrated to the United States in the early 1960s, they landed in Chicago and San Francisco. In Chicago, my uncles started their own shoe repair business which still thrives today. In San Francisco, other uncles bought and managed several grocery stores which they still operate today.

Later, in San Diego, my grandfather started his own food truck and catering business. Another uncle owns and operates a food business in San Diego. Lastly, in 2015 I founded my own venture working directly with rural Moroccan producers. Needless to say, **visiting the souk everyday in Morocco made me reflect on my family and realized that I, too, come from a family of entrepreneurs; I, too, can relate to the life of a souk vendor.**

Above all else: family

"It's our blood that connect us," my grandmother would tell me. Our family has endured an incredible amount of challenges, as do many families who immigrated to the U.S. in pursuit of a different, more stable life. No matter the hardship, we've learned together and grew stronger each time.

As I reflect on the almost 10 years that I was traveling and living apart from my family—with only one or two annual visits—I cannot help but feel an immense gratitude and pride for the woman they've helped me become.

"My journey as a Palestinian American woman has no end."

Being away from family for such a long time showed me just how important their love and support really is in my life.

Though technology allowed us to speak on the phone or video chat often, their physical presence and energy in my life was absent during those years. This was especially difficult for me while living in Morocco because Moroccans are very family-oriented; family unity is vital to the strength and stability of a whole community. However, I was grateful to have kind and generous friends, colleagues and neighbors in Morocco who aided me when I needed it.

Even though I've had multiple trips booked and planned, I've still never visited Palestine. Each time I was about to board the plane to Tel Aviv or while in Jordan, pursue a trip from the border, there was a sudden occurrence that took my attention away; a family member was sick in California or my flight was cancelled and never rebooked. I take them as signs that perhaps they just weren't the right times for me to visit.

I still have many family members living in their childhood homes in Ramallah and we've been lucky to receive visits from them here in California. I know in my heart that one day very soon I will walk the streets where my great-grandparents grew up and pick olives from the tree grove that my grandfather planted.

My journey as a Palestinian-American woman has no end. I've never believed myself to be a finished being; I am forever changing, growing and learning. There is still so much to discover about myself and how I fit in this world. Though I can tell you this, **my own self-love and appreciation grew when given the opportunity to seek new experiences through travel and cross-cultural exchange.**



TEACHING ENGLISH ABROAD WHEN YOU DON'T "LOOK THE PART"

by Raneem Taleb-Agha

At home in the States, Arab-Americans battle stereotypes everyday. People we meet constantly make assumptions about where we're from, what we should look like and how we live—I have now come to expect, "But where are you really from?" as part of any first-time conversation with a stranger. When we teach abroad, however, our identities as both Arabs and Americans follow us into the classroom—not only do we face the same stereotypes we get as Arabs in America, but we must also deal with assumptions about Americans from our students in a way that we'd never face at home.

What's okay to say...and what isn't

In the United States, teacher-student relationships are quite formal, and we are taught not to ask too much about our teachers' personal lives. Depending on where you go to teach English, these cultural expectations can change. Students may ask questions and make comments that you would have never dared to say your teacher back when you were in school.

Questions about about boyfriends/husbands/partners, children, and yes—when you introduce yourself to a classroom with an Arabic name or with anything but blonde hair and blue eyes, they might just tell you, "But you don't look American!"

That's okay—of course there are cultural differences in terms of what's polite to say and what's not. When I taught in Spain, even my coworkers would say things I would consider inappropriate back in the States: when I presented myself to the school secretary on my first day, she shamelessly looked me up and down and asked me “Are you Indian?” However, sometimes students say things or ask questions about both Arabs and Americans that perpetuate dangerous prejudices and misconceptions about both cultures, and about our identity as both. As teachers, we have to prepare students to approach the world with an open heart and mind towards people of all backgrounds.

Questions I've gotten as an ESL teacher abroad:

- Do you have a gun?
- How come you don't wear a burka?
- Do you always eat with your hands?
- When did you move to America?
- Is everybody fat where you live?
- Do you consider yourself Arab or American?

As Arab-American teachers abroad, we have to work double duty when discussing identity.

When American movies, music, and television are exported all across the globe, American stereotypes about other cultures, both negative and positive, spread along with them. When we go abroad to teach English, we face many of the same misconceptions about our identity that we get in the States—that we are angry terrorists, oppressed women, religious zealots, mysterious desert-dwellers—and students may not be afraid to ask about them directly.

On top of that, however, there are the American stereotypes that we must address. Guns, obesity, big houses with white picket fences—don't be surprised if your students assume that you are familiar with or even live in conjunction with all of those things. When national tragedies, such as the Las Vegas shooting, make international news, students may ask if you own a gun, for example.

This strange combination of misconceptions may create some uncomfortable situations, yes. (During one of my first lessons, a student asked me “Why are you guys so violent?” Someone had asked me this before back in California, but in this case I didn't know if he was referring to Americans or Arabs until I asked him to clarify what he meant—he was referring to a shooting that had recently occurred in the States.)

However, it also creates the opportunity to teach lessons on important issues about identity, acceptance, and tolerance. Hello, teachable moment!

Our job as English teachers is to teach the subject material, but that doesn't mean we have to just dole out grammar structures all day. One of the best ways for students to practice their English is to use the language to think critically, analyze concepts, and talk about topics that really matter.

When students make off-the-mark jokes or comments about our heritage, it is important to remember that these remarks come from a place of ignorance, not prejudice. As a teacher, you should use your unique perspective and identity to teach students about stereotypes—what they are, why they are wrong, and what we can do to combat them.

Try out this lesson-plan (depending on the age/English proficiency of your students)

Begin by identifying stereotypes about their own culture, and discuss, as a class, how these stereotypes make them feel: misrepresented. One-dimensional. Hurt. My Spanish students passionately rejected being thought of as fiery bullfighters who spend their afternoons taking a long siesta. Once they learn to recognize stereotypes about themselves, students can then look outwards: What stereotypes exist within their city? How about within their country? And finally, what stereotypes does their country have about others?



This is where our identity as Arab-Americans comes into play. As soon as students have the ability to recognize assumptions about different cultures, they should also be able to recognize the stereotypes they've applied to you and your background.

This is a great opportunity to clarify your identity and, more importantly, built trust and open communication between you, the teacher, and your students.

We struggle with our identities as Arab Americans, yes. But in your classroom, it is very likely that some of your students are dealing with the very same issues in a different context—immigrants or children of immigrants who face all kinds of assumptions about their backgrounds. In Spain, you might have some Colombian-Spanish, Romanian-Spanish or Moroccan-Spanish students; in Germany you may have some students of Turkish or Syrian heritage.

By addressing these issues in the classroom directly, you serve as inspiration for others struggling with their cultural identities, and you open communication not only between yourself and the students, but also amongst the students themselves.

“At the end of the day, our Arab-American heritage is just one part of who we are.”

Perhaps your first day of class, your students will be met with disbelief or confusion—after all, just your name, look, or even presence could be challenging years of preconceptions of what Americans should be like. They might ask stereotypical questions you've heard back home a thousand times before, or make comments you never thought you'd hear (“You eat hamburgers all the time, huh?”).

After building trust, however, these superficial assumptions will fade, and your students will begin to see you as you—not as just “the Arab teacher” or “the American teacher.” After all, our identities as Arab-Americans abroad gives us the unique opportunity to show students first-hand the diversity and multiculturalism that is the very basis of American culture.

DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT! HERE'S WHAT YOUR FELLOW TRAVELERS ARE SAYING...



"We could get Opera tickets, attend rehearsals, have a Heuriger trip and Thanksgiving celebration and much more. Every month there were at least 2 or 3 events that the IES Staff and RA's (Resident Austrians who were living with some of the students and were in charge of technical things like talking to the landlady/landlord etc. --they were pretty cool and great way to learn more about the Austrian culture and make Austrian friends!)"

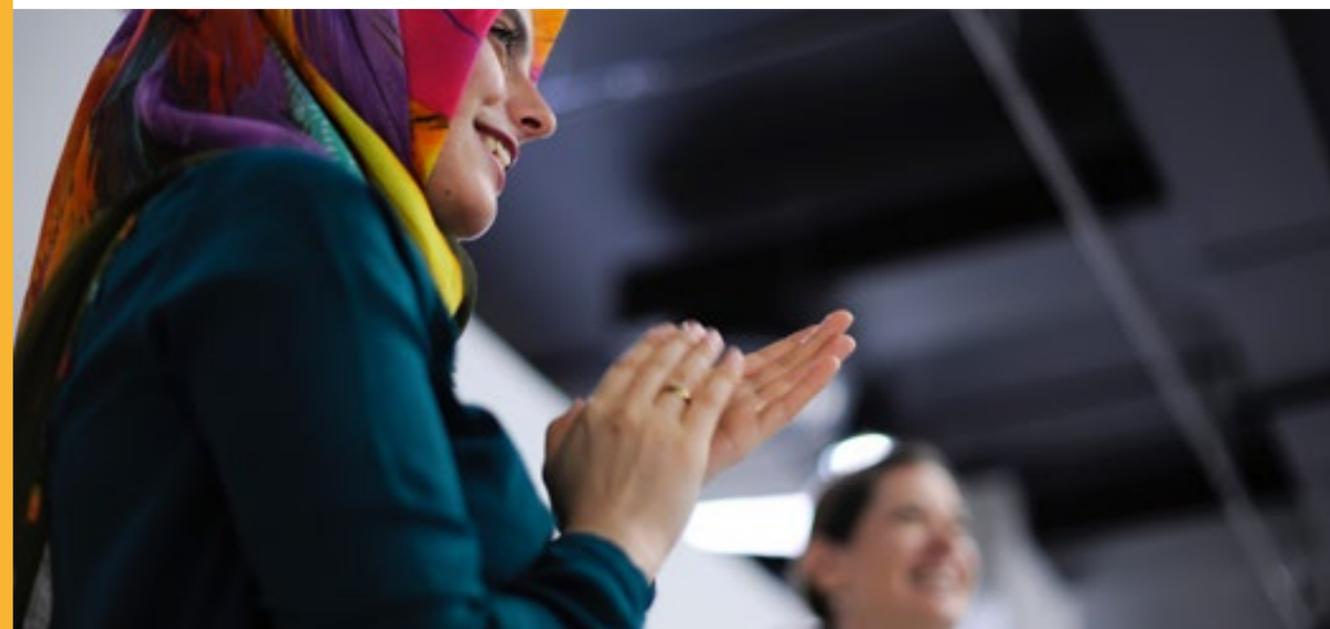
—Yasemin Tekgurler, Davidson College
IES Abroad student in Vienna

"I studied abroad at AUB during the spring semester of 2017, and I must say it was one of the best experiences of my life. AUB has a very vibrant campus and student life, and it is very easy to meet people and immerse yourself in the local culture and adopt the Lebanese lifestyle. The classes were for the most part very interesting, and I left with a brand new take on the region's culture and societies."

— Walid Beramdane, UPenn
American University of Beirut Student

"I made many so many friends in such a short amount of time. All it took for me to get to know the children was stand next to them and play football with them... From there, their questions and remarkable inquisitive natures made it hard not to get attached to all of them. My only regret was that I didn't stay longer..."

— Shaheer Hashmi, Saudi Arabia
Love Volunteer in Nepal



WHY PAINTING ARAB AND MUSLIM CULTURE WITH A BROAD BRUSH IS SO *NOT* MEANINGFUL TRAVEL

by Souad Kadi

Growing up in a traditional rural environment in the South of Morocco limited my knowledge and understanding of the various cultures we have in our country and the world. But, when I traveled to the U.K. and United States and other parts of Morocco, my understanding of the outside world and how it functioned totally expanded and changed. Limited cultural exposure in my childhood hindered me from understanding the world, but traveling changed that.

So, what if we banned an entire country's population just because few guys represent them negatively? Without being too reductive, what if we limited travel visas because of a few of those "ugly Americans" we've all heard of? Limiting travel limits all the chances to develop understanding and learning to coexist with the other cultures.

And yet, we're seeing that happen. In order to understand what I'm talking about, let us first have some info about this most recent "travel ban":

What is the travel ban and who was most affected by it?

When the U.S. proposed a ban on travel, so many people were shocked. All travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen were not permitted to enter the U.S. for 90 days, or be issued an immigrant or non-immigrant visa.

Families were prevented from visiting their kids, sick people were stopped from traveling for planned treatments, students missed their classes and exams, and airports across the U.S. seemed to erupt into chaos with some people being detained and many grounded at airports across the globe. Most of families back in the States were negatively affected and for a moment felt threatened and insecure in a country they called "home."

"Good guys" vs. "bad guys"

The logic behind the travel ban centers around the belief that people from specific Arab countries are more dangerous/likely to be terrorists just because of their passport and national religion, or just because they wear a Hijab or a beard. But, how can we many more times can we remind people that the "bad guys" are not and do not represent the "good guys?"

An entire people can't be misjudged because of a hateful action committed by a vocal minority that have no clear identity and blame these Muslim countries to be the reason behind it. For many years, the U.S. has been such a melting pot of many cultures, ethnic groups, and religions. And, to ban people from living their normal lives says so much about stopping the coexistence flow.

4 Reasons banning travel is a bad idea

Well, to start, tourism in general is beneficial for any country's economy. The latter is also raised up by the presence of so many immigrants who work in several industries even for little salaries.

Equal exchange is a precious value that every country should have access to. The access to opportunities in this globalized world is limited by where you were born, and things like this travel ban make this even worse.

Banning people from traveling to any country is a bad idea for a lot of reasons, but mostly because travel can be used as a vehicle for social change. It helps travelers discover their inner souls as well as develop empathy towards other cultures.

1. Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer

Travelling can change the way you think and act, but HOW? When you travel meaningfully you get to know a new culture (or two or three!), a country's struggles, a people's language, religious diversity, and many different traditions and customs. But **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, you expose yourself to diversity and learn to embrace difference.

2. Travel makes the one story becomes different stories

Just because one person from a specific country commits an act of terrorism doesn't make the whole country's population terrorists. Whatever the media displays isn't the ultimate reality, and you should take it all with a huge grain of salt.

So if you hear a story about a certain country, it's not necessarily an accurate portrayal. But, how do you know for sure? Discover for yourself. Dig deep. Travel and talk to people. The Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says:

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

Reducing negative perception and stereotypes is travel's main goal.

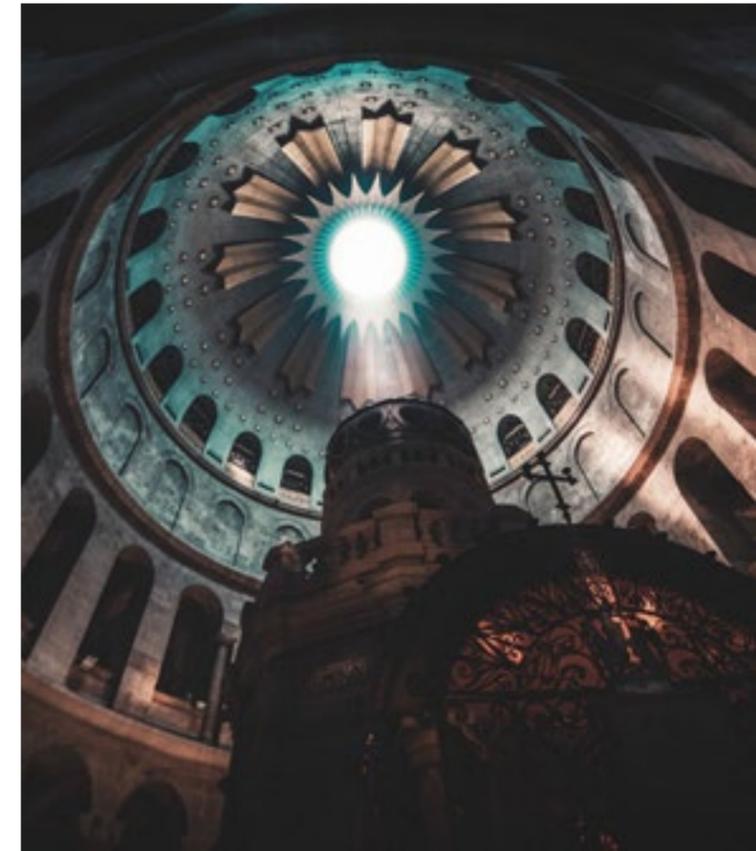
3. Travel makes you think about how your existence can be meaningful

Coming from a developed nation, you are probably not really aware of what's happening in most corners of the world. When you travel, you get to know the struggles of the other countries. Also, it pushes you outside of your comfort zone, and you get to know your own limits—what you can and can't handle. You remove every shred of fear, any lack of confidence, and any stress you may feel.

4. Travel brings out the best (and sometimes the worst) in us

I once got lost in the bus station in Rabat, Morocco, but I found out my way after reaching out to some passengers and asking for help. A lot of travelers have similar stories where they're rescued by kind locals or other travelers who know their way around a bit better. It's an important lesson in knowing when to ask for help and the kindness of strangers. It's a lesson in survival and empowerment, bringing out our own best selves.

There are also plenty of stories that don't end so happily. Yes, sometimes travel can bring out the worst in us and we don't always experience the kindness of strangers. It happens, but we can't let ignorance and stereotypes take over, even when things go a little wrong.



Remember:

"We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next to find ourselves. We travel to open our hearts and eyes and learn more about the world than our newspapers will accommodate. We travel to bring what little we can, in our ignorance and knowledge, to those parts of the globe whose riches are differently dispersed."

– Pico Iyer

Travel is a source of international amity, peace, and understanding. Interactions between travelers and locals results in common appreciation, tolerance, awareness, learning, friendship development, and banding. The more you travel the more you understand. **And THAT is so meaningful travel.**



TOP 5 GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ARAB-AMERICANS TO STUDY ABROAD

by the GoAbroad Writing Team

For most students, finances pose the biggest barrier. Not only are there program fees to deal with, but there's still tuition at home to pay for. Don't even get us started on exchange rates and the differences in cost of living. Those dollar signs can really start to stack up. While there is a lot of [funding to promote study abroad programs](#), there aren't as many geared toward diverse students and travelers.

Here are a few top grants and scholarships for Arab Americans to help you go abroad. The programs listed below all have the common goal of promoting financial accessibility and diversity in study abroad. So, now you just have to track due dates and apply!

1. [AAIF Youth Leadership Scholarship](#)

The AAI Foundation's Youth Leadership Awards honors Arab Americans 30 years old or younger for their public and community service. **The Helen Abbott Community Service Awards** honor students and student orgs whose devotion to community service and interest in improving the lives of others reflect the life of Helen Abbott herself.

The Helen Abbott Community Service Awards is given in two categories: (1) achievement by a college/university student and (2) achievement by a high school student. Each year the Foundation awards a maximum of two \$1,000 scholarships and one \$500 grant to a high school student.

Be sure to check each year for application deadlines and any changing requirements.

2. [LAHC Scholarship Program](#)

The Lebanese American Heritage Club is one of the largest Scholarship assistance programs. Throughout its past twenty eight years, the LAHC has awarded over 1,200 students of high academic distinction more than \$1.3 million dollars in scholarships. That's not chump change!

Scholarships are available to high school students, undergraduate and graduate students, and will vary between institutions and programs. Be sure to check each year for application deadlines and any changing requirements.

3. [Ibn Battuta Scholarship for Peace & Diplomacy](#)

The Ibn Battuta Merit Scholarships aim to reward students for dedication to the study of the Arabic language while promoting the study of Arabic as a foreign language. Prospective students may apply to either one of the semester programs (fall, spring) or to short term winter and summer programs.

There are both full and partial scholarships offered. Full Scholarships cover all tuition and housing costs for the duration of the program (about \$3715.00 for semester programs, and \$1250.00 for the winter and summer sessions). White partial scholarships cover tuition-only costs for the duration of the program (an estimated \$2100 for semester programs, and \$700 for the winter and summer sessions).

If you can answer the question, "What do you hope to achieve through your study of the Arabic language?" you're that much closer to scoring a SWEET schollie and heading off to Morocco. Be sure to check each year for application deadlines and any changing requirements.

4. [AMIDEAST Scholarship Programs](#)

AMIDEAST is a leading American non-profit engaged in international education, training, and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa. They offer both need-based and blogging scholarships to students participating in AMIDEAST programs in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, and Tunisia. Awards may vary, and you should double check application requirements and deadlines to make sure you don't miss out on these scholarship opportunities.

All applications will be reviewed, but students who fit the following criteria will be given priority:

- First-generation college students and/or members of groups that historically have been underrepresented on study abroad programs
- Demonstrated serious financial need
- Demonstrated academic excellence
- Currently enrolled at a college or university that is either a member of the AMIDEAST Academic Consortium or an AMIDEAST Affiliate.

5. [A Few More Major/Program Specific Scholarships](#)

If you're working towards becoming an expert in any of these fields or studying at one of these universities, these are the scholarships for you. All place emphasis on how globalization changes these fields and will play a role in your future career. Application deadlines and scholarship amounts will vary for each.

- [Jack G. Shaheen Mass Communications Scholarship](#)
- [National Security Language Initiative \(NSLI\), U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#)
- [The American University in Cairo Scholarships listings](#)



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