

MEANINGFUL TRAVEL TIPS AND TALES

ASIAN TRAVELERS' PERSPECTIVES



An Initiative to Make Travel More Inclusive



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WHY WE CREATED THIS BOOK FOR ASIAN TRAVELERS

A NOTE FROM GOABROAD



Only about **8.1 percent of U.S. students studying abroad are Asian American while 66.1 percent of international students in the U.S. are from Asia**. Not only do we want to provide resources and encourage more Asian American students to travel abroad, we also want to make sure we 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, as members of the GoAbroad Diversity Squad, 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 guide was created to help ensure that Asian 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



Christine O'dea's passion for the world is limitless, taking her far from where she grew up in New Jersey, to Seoul, where she currently lives. Her concept of home crosses continents; her curiosity for the world craves human connection; and her sentimental heart shares—and loves listening to—stories. When she's not inspiring her students, she's crushing personal goals, climbing mountains, and creating highlight reels that'll bring you to tears. With an ice cream cone in hand and a smile across her face, Christine is always up for an adventure and a chance to tell a story.



Julie Cao is a full-time travel blogger and a lover of books, wine, soccer, landscape photography, and the Aurora Borealis. She was born and raised in China, has lived in Hawaii, and has currently made her way in Toronto, Canada.



Teresa Purugganan is a wanderer of the Earth, teaching English as a foreign language once in Thailand, after in the United States, and now in Spain. She is a lover of books and jigsaw puzzles, long mealversations, and compact items that fit neatly and quietly in carry-ons. She daydreams and wonders what the world would be like if we all let our souls tribal dance to nature's rhythm. You can read more from her at [her personal website](#).



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



TOP STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ASIAN STUDENTS

By The GoAbroad Writing Team

Regardless of your identity, the decision to study abroad is daunting enough. Now factor in being an underrepresented student. Yeah. Daunting might not be a strong enough word, it's a downright hair-pulling, nail-biting, stressful time. Now factor in the cost of study abroad? Au revoir cuticles!

Most students will cite finances as the biggest thing holding them back from taking the plunge and signing up for their dream study abroad program. Not only do students have program fees to deal with, possibly in addition to tuition at their home institution, but exchange rates on top of differences in cost of living; it's just a lot to undertake. And while there is a lot of funding to promote study abroad programs, there aren't so many geared toward diverse students and travelers.

Here are a few top scholarship geared toward Asian American and other minority students. 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!

Diversity Abroad Scholarships

DiversityAbroad.com connects diverse students, recent grads, and young professionals to international programs and job opportunities. The organization offers a wide variety of exclusive grants and scholarships to minority, low-income, and first generation students. Most are co-sponsored with specific program providers and eligibility requirements, submission requirements, and deadlines will vary between scholarships.

A few to consider are:

- [Diversity Abroad Consortium Summer Scholarship](#)
- [Diversity Abroad AIFS Achievement Scholarship](#)
- [Diversity Abroad Overseas Ambassador Scholarship](#)

Fund for Education Abroad

The Fund for Education Abroad (FEA Scholarships) was established in 2010 to help independent study abroad programs. Since then, they have sent roughly 100 students abroad from all over the United States. Applicants should be participating in an academically rigorous and immersive study abroad program that ideally includes a language component. FEA offers Dedicated Scholarships to applicants that meet general eligibility requirements and fit specific demographic, regional, or semester criteria.

Award Amount: Up to \$10,000 per year (\$5,000 per semester)

Deadline: Cycle of applications accepted annually in the fall, check their website for the most up-to-date info.

Eligibility Requirements:

- U.S. citizen or permanent resident of the U.S.
- Currently enrolled as an undergraduate at a college or university in the U.S. (graduate students are not eligible)
- Study abroad program must be eligible for credit at the student's educational institution
- Study abroad program must be at least four weeks long (30 days)

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program

This scholarship is not only geared toward minority students, but all students of limited financial means to pursue academic studies abroad. While most students from the U.S. end up choosing countries in Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand for their study abroad destination, this scholarship encourages students to choose more challenging locations. The Gilman scholarship program supports students who traditionally have been underrepresented in study abroad, including, but not limited to, students with high financial need, community college students, students in underrepresented fields such as the sciences and engineering, students with diverse ethnic backgrounds, and students with disabilities.

Award Amount: \$5,000

Deadline: Depends on when student chooses to go abroad

Eligibility Requirements:

- U.S. citizen or permanent resident of the U.S.
- Good academic standing as undergraduate student (both four-year and two-year institutions are acceptable)
- Must receive a Federal Pell Grant during the term abroad
- Must be in the process of applying to, or accepted for, a study abroad or internship program of at least two weeks for community college students and four weeks for students from four-year institutions, in a single country and eligible for credit from the student's home institution

API Diversity Scholarship

API's diversity scholarship seeks to support participants from a variety of backgrounds. It provides the opportunity for students with traditionally marginalized identities to study abroad. API awards up to \$500,000 to students annually ranging from \$250-1,000 per student. Students are encouraged to apply for multiple API scholarships in addition to outside scholarships, however, in order to maximize the number of students receiving financial aid, API's total contribution cannot exceed \$1,000 per student (so read this list thoroughly and get going on all those applications).

Award Amount: \$250 to \$750

Deadline: Depends on when student chooses to go abroad

Eligibility Requirements:

- Minority students, U.S. military veterans, non-traditional students (30 years old or older), students with a disability, and/or LGBTQ students
- Participant in an API program

David Porter Need-Based Diversity Scholarship

The David Porter Need-Based Diversity Scholarship was created to give minority students the opportunity of studying abroad. This scholarship, also affiliated with IES Abroad, was named in honor of David Porter from the IES Board of Directors. It seeks to provide opportunity to groups traditionally underrepresented in study abroad and international education.

Award Amount: \$5,000 off the IES Abroad program fee

Eligibility Requirements:

- Recipients must attend a private college or university that is a Member or Associate Member of the [IES Abroad Consortium](#). In addition, your home school must have a policy of transferring at least 75 percent of institutional aid for study abroad.

With one round of scholarship research out of the way, all that's left is for you to apply and start stamping that passport! **You want to make sure you're making them an offer they can't refuse, so [follow these guidelines](#) to send in a seriously kick-a\$% application and cinch that scholarship.**

With any of these scholarships in your back pocket, your dream of studying abroad will become a reality. You'll have every opportunity to go out and explore this big beautiful world and pursue your education and passion abroad.

"I knew if these bars were lifted I would see much wider gates of opportunity open to me, opportunity as existed for everybody else..."

– Dalip Singh Saund, first Indian U.S. Congressman

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT: TRAVEL PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS

"I stayed at a homestay family, a family of three... Virginia, the 15 year old teenage girl, was the one who I connected with the most. She loved Japanese culture, and since I am Japanese we were able to exchange cultural information and differences with each other. I would speak Italian with her on a daily basis (although the mother wanted me to speak English to her), while other times I would sit down with her and teach her some Japanese grammar and vocabulary."

- Nana Ishikawa, [IES Abroad Milan 2015](#)

"I met people from different countries with all kinds of life experiences, which did inspire me to travel to more places and to explore this amazing world. Besides, through the process of cooperating with international friends, I feel that I am much more open-minded now and able to think in both western and eastern ways."

- Yu Xiang, [IVHQ Indonesia 2015](#)



"Most locals understood and spoke English, so [communicating] was fine. With my Indian accent and their South African accent it was a joy for others to hear me converse with the locals."

- Pranav Dixit, [IVHQ South Africa 2015](#)

"Traveling gives me the opportunity to compare my culture and the host country's, thereby reflecting on my roots, noticing elements of my culture that I have always taken for granted, and looking into myself."

- Chau Vu, [IES Abroad Germany 2014](#)



10 THINGS ASIAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN THE U.S. NEED TO KNOW

By Julie Cao

When Asian students study in the U.S. they face unique challenges; a different culture, a language barrier, and different educational systems, to name just a few. As a student making this life-changing decision, you may want to know how to prepare for your study abroad journey in America to make the transition smooth and get the most out of your time abroad.

Cue this article. To help Asian students who are planning to pursue their study in the U.S., I put together a collection of tips to help you reach your collegiate dreams, adjust to American culture, and hence, make your study abroad trip a breeze.

1. Get a BIG Head Start on Working on Your English

Speaking with fast-talking, sometimes mumbling, Americans is not the only difficult part of studying abroad in U.S. as a non-native English speaker; there are signs, textbooks, and nuances in English literature that can be difficult to understand. Americans use slang and terminology most Asian students have never heard before. Your professor and your classmates will likely not offer you any special treatment just because English is your second language.

Although living and studying in-country is the best way to become fluent in a language, getting a jump on your English language skills will make adjusting to your study abroad program in the U.S. easier.

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Take an ESL class before even boarding the plane if you can. Once you're in-country, watch American movies and TV programs, listen to broadcasts, read articles, write journals and blog posts, and stay out of ethnic enclaves and mingle with Americans. All of these tactics will tremendously help you hone your language skills.

2. Cars are King

Except for major metropolises, such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Chicago, other U.S. cities do not have convenient access to public transport. Cars are king, here. So, once you have arrived in the U.S. – if you haven't already – learn to drive a car. Research driving schools, tips, and advice about road safety and how to keep your vehicle under control. Make sure you shop around several driving schools for the best instructors and a decent price, and advise them about your expectations and when you plan to take the driving test.

3. You'll Need Health Insurance

International students are required to purchase health insurance once they arrive on campus. There are different types of student insurance offered through your program provider or university in order to help cover the cost of any medical expenses at the student health center, medical practice outside the campus, and, specifically, hospitals. There is also dental insurance to cover dental bills should you need to check in on those chompers. This insurance policy will be valid for the duration of your program.

4. Stock Up On Your Faves

Before you leave for America, make a shopping list and get your favorite Asian snacks and ingredients to take with you. You might not have easy access to an international or Asian market in the U.S. They do exist! But, mostly in where there are larger cities and international hubs like New York, California, and Hawaii, you will find the chance of finding truly authentic ramen, dim sum, or Thai green curry and their ingredients is slim pickings.

5. Location, Location, Location

Or maybe it should be: Research, research, re-research. You'll want to do a little pre-study abroad studying to find out everything there is to know about your university, where it is, and what the campus, town, and state, are like. If you're used to living in a big city like Shanghai, Tokyo, or Hong Kong, it may make your time abroad easier if you choose a host city with traits similar to home, that way, you can have easy access to the shops, malls, and public transport. But, maybe that's not what you're going for and you want a taste of small town America. Either way, you'll need to check your weather app. If you prefer a warm and moderate climate, consider Florida, Texas, southern California or Hawaii. If you have a hard time enduring long winters, do not choose universities in Alaska, New England/the Northeast, or the Midwest.

6. Get Your Hand Up in the Air (Like You DO Care)

In American classrooms, participation is an obligation and counts for a (usually pretty substantial) portion of your final grade. Students are required to participate in group discussions, express their thoughts, and present their ideas in front of the class. This interactive academic setting is different from the more traditional chalk and duster classroom in East-Asian countries.

Be friendly to your classmates and professors, learn to speak up, and seek advice from your professors and other students to get the most out of your classes. Your peers and professors will be able to encourage you to engage in the class.

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7. Search for Scholarships and Fellowships

The tuition fee for international students is much higher than that of domestic and in-state students. Luckily, there are plenty of scholarships with most U.S. universities designed specifically for international students in addition to scholarships and funding from third-party organizations. Teaching assistantships and research fellowships are also available to help you reduce your financial burden during your time in the U.S.

8. Go All in on U.S. Holidays

Celebrating U.S. holidays like Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, or even Christmas will give you the best picture of American family life and culture at its most over-the-top.

You might feel uncomfortable spending the holidays in an American household, but your host family and/or friends' families will welcome you as part of the family. The secret is simply to be open and willing to make new friends. It's always a nice gesture to bring small gifts for whomever is hosting, such as souvenirs from your own country or a bottle of wine.

9. Get Domestic

If you have only ever lived with your family and haven't struck out on your own yet, it is essential to learn how to perform those household chores you might usually avoid—cooking, cleaning, laundry, the whole domestic enchilada. Take time to learn and practice these skills before studying abroad to ensure that you can live independently and take care of yourself on your own in a foreign country.

10. Homesickness Happens

One of the most common aspects of studying in the U.S., beyond the initial culture shock, is the homesickness. Regardless of how strong you are and how fast you can integrate into American culture, homesickness is almost unavoidable, especially when comes to holidays like New Year's and Christmas.

You'll want to stay connected with friends and family back home whenever bouts of homesickness hit; so, make sure you get a webcam and install Skype or a similar video chat application, so you can talk with your family and friends face to face. Getting involved with campus activities and clubs to fill your schedule, meet a new set of friends, and participate in new activities and hobbies will also help fight off homesickness. That way, you will be too busy having fun to feel lonely and homesick.

The decision to pursue your studies in the U.S., so far from home – whether you're from South Asia, East Asia, or Southeast Asia – is a big one, and not to be taken lightly. But, it is certainly a decision you won't regret.

The life lessons we learn while traveling and studying abroad cannot be matched in any classroom in any of your home institutions. If you take these tips to heart, there's no doubt your time abroad will bring about change—only the best kind. You will learn and you will grow and you will be better for all of it, even in the face of challenges.

International exchange and study abroad goes both ways. As international students, we should take advantage of every opportunity. So, get out there, get traveling and get learning!

CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS: BREAKING STEROTYPES TEACHING IN SOUTH KOREA

By Christine O'Dea

A Quick History Lesson:

In the last several years, South Korea has become very well known around the world for its rapid economic growth and futuristic advancements in technology. When it comes to economy, high-tech systems, and industrialization, it has set an example on the world stage of how quickly and successfully an entire country can change.

When I first arrived in South Korea all of my expectations in these departments were not let down; there were stores, restaurants, and businesses being built everywhere I turned, the cost of living felt noticeably lower (especially because I was a recent college grad), the metropolitan cities were clean with tall buildings and bright lights, and the Internet connection really was as fast as lightning. How did they do it? After just a few weeks of working as an English teacher in South Korea, this was a question I found my own answer to.

As I became more exposed to the deep ins and outs of its highly distinguished and intense education system while also forming friendships and relationships with Korean people, I realized that I wanted to teach them a lot more than just English. While Korea's economy is growing faster than its Internet speed, its societal standings on certain issues like gender or racial equality remain traditional and conservative. I want my students to grow up to be well-rounded and open-minded global citizens (read: decent human beings in general), and I knew it would take a lot more than just learning English as a second language for that to happen.

The Education Effect:

South Korea's quick rise in the economy gave Koreans, especially older generations, a very well deserved sense of pride for what they have accomplished in the last few decades. The country holds a resolute belief in what surely helped to bring them success: hard work and education. Or better yet—hard work in education.

Around the world South Korean students are known for being among the smartest, most obedient, and dedicated in the world. They consistently score at the top of global standardized tests, particularly in math and science. They attend academies to learn everything from math and art to sports and traditional Korean board games, and many of them begin learning English as toddlers. They are trained from young ages to memorize information and to learn, learn, learn, and learn.

Some foreign teachers joke that they are teaching robots instead of humans, and I would agree that there are times it feels that way. But, at the end of every day they are just little people—literally—trying to figure out the world and as their teacher I consider it a significant part of my job description. After teaching my Korean kindergarteners about English grammar rules and how to add dollars and cents, I try to squeeze in some important life lessons.

We All Have Bellybuttons

On one particular day during lunch, my entire class of fourteen was taking polls. "Raise your hand if you like today's lunch," someone would ask. Some raise their hand. "Raise your hand if you'll get a sticker today." Some raise their hand. "Raise your hand if you like pink." Some raise their hand. This went on for a few minutes as I sat back and just observed. Finally my role as teacher was needed.

"Raise your hand if you have a bellybutton," called a little voice. Everyone raised their hands, and they all looked around at each other in excitement. I laughed because it was adorable and also at the fact that some of them might have thought that their friends didn't have bellybuttons. They asked me if I had a bellybutton too. Much to their surprise I confirmed that I did, and went on to explain that we are all human, we all have bellybuttons, and that in so many ways we are the same.

For a few minutes we talked about equality, and how to treat each other with kindness. We talked about how people are just people, and soon I also found myself explaining the contrary fact that we are all different, and that this is a good thing.

"I Want to be Someone Else!"

When only one of my students gets a star for good behavior next to his or her name on the board, the latter are almost guaranteed to simultaneously say, "Ugh! I want to be [insert name with star here]!" Followed by this complaint is my attempt to teach the lesson that contradicts the last— that we are all unique and individual.

When I first met my students, they asked me if I was Korean. "Your hair is black and your eyes are black so you are not America people. You are Korean people!" they said to me. And when I asked them what they thought "America people" looked like, they described (with a seven year-old's vocabulary) a Caucasian person. Cue one of my very first teaching moments.



With only 2.5% of its population being foreigners, South Korea is not a very culturally or ethnically diverse country, and undeniably it shapes the way that children learn and grow. The country is also known for their booming plastic surgery industry, which some argue cause many young people, girls especially, to grow up and feel the pressure to undergo a procedure or two. The fight against conformity is in every country and culture, and in Korea I take every chance to remind my students that their individuality and uniqueness is beautiful they are loved for who they are.

I know that wishing for a star next to a name isn't the same as getting plastic surgery to change one's appearance, but to me the lesson underneath is the same. They might not quite understand yet how important and irreplaceable they are as individuals, but at least I got them to stop wishing to be anyone else for now.

Say How You Feel

If I've learned anything about how children express themselves, it's that they don't need words to do it. I once witnessed two little girls have an impromptu glaring side-eye exchange over the fact that they both wanted the same person to be their partner for a game. For the entire six seconds the stare down lasted, they both had eyes that I hope I'll never see again. This incident was followed by a classroom discussion about the importance of communication. It felt like what I imagine a family therapy session is like. I told them: It's okay to be angry, it's okay to disagree, it's okay to be sad, and it's okay to cry. But, we always have to be honest and use our words to explain how we feel.

A hand went up and a small voice with a precious question reminded me that I am but a student to my own students. "Then if we love someone we can say it and hug them too?" Everyone laughed and hugged and confessed their love for each other. It was all love and hugs until the hugs got stronger and the day ended with a discussion about how we need to keep our hands to ourselves. I just can't make this stuff up.

"Always Think it's Your Birthday"

At the end of most days, my students and I sit together on the mat and talk about what we're grateful for, what we can do better tomorrow, and how the day went in general. I teach them how to be grateful and how to show it, and why it's so important.

At age seven it's hard for my students to recognize that people around the world lead drastically different lifestyles. They laugh when I remind them that their own parents and grandparents didn't grow up surrounded by iPhones, BluRay, and tablets, but they seem to understand when I tell them that there are children in the world right now who don't even know what those things are. They are genuinely in disbelief hopefully even more so, grateful and humbled.

"Always Think It's Your Birthday" was the quote on the cover of a birthday card that one of my students made. As an ESL teacher, I feel good when my students say or write things with no mistakes, but somehow I feel even better when they say or write things that I wish I thought of myself. I asked her what she meant by the phrase and she just said, "What? Because everyone is happy on their birthday!"

Open Minds Learn the Most

As a kindergarten teacher I didn't think there would be days that I'd be teaching about racism, stereotyping, adoption, gay marriage, religion, and violence, but I've come to realize that these are issues that children are exposed to and shouldn't necessarily be sheltered from.

Most English academies in Korea use American curricula and textbooks, so there are stories in our books about American culture, history, and lifestyle. We've read about Helen Keller, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and have even had discussions about the 2016 election while it was happening. Korean children grow up in a very different world than most American children do, and as a result some concepts are hard for them to grasp.

In Korea, homosexuality remains taboo, guns are not owned or carried by anyone including police, and many Korean people have never even met a foreign person. The media and popular culture often shape their views toward other countries and other people. As a Filipino-American living and working in Korea, I often have the honor of feeling that I don't fit many Korean's image of "American." Older Koreans often say things like, "You don't look American" or, "But you look Asian" and as the years passed I've taken less offense and more pride in showing the world that America is not just one face.

When these topics come up, I do my best to teach them always to have an open mind, to be kind, and to learn as much as they can before they forming any opinion. And every day I can see them learning that it's okay to be wrong, it's okay to be different, and sometimes it's okay to break the rules.

Staying a Student

Being an educator is a kind of power, a gift and a curse at once. It's incredible to be the source of so much information for a young person, and it is just as incredible to think about the influence I have on the minds of our world's future. After coming to understand the great respect and dedication that Koreans feel for education, and after working in Korea as a teacher, the most important lesson that I have learned is that we are all and always will be students. We are never intended to stop learning not just from our books, but also from each other.

"When you learn something from people, or from a culture, you accept it as a gift, and it is your lifelong commitment to preserve it and build on it."

– Yo-yo Ma, Cellist



HOW TO TURN YOUR HERITAGE INTO A TEACHABLE MOMENT IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

By Teresa Purugganan



Some of my Thai students asked almost immediately, during my first lesson where I introduce myself, and some were more timid and reserved, hanging back until they had a moment alone in the teacher's room, afraid to be seen as disrespectful to the new, foreign teacher.

"Teacher, why you look like Thai people?" ("Do" and other auxiliary verbs used in questions was a complicated concept for my students to grasp, so they often left them out.)

I am a first generation Filipino-American with the propensity to darken if exposed to even a little bit of sun. I have black hair, dark eyes, and an American accent. When I had arrived at my school to teach English in a public Thai secondary school, my students had been familiar with foreign teachers, but they had never come across a foreigner that didn't have the light brown or blonde hair, the height, or the lighter-colored eyes that they had now become accustomed to from their previous English teachers or from what they'd seen in the movies.

After my first year of being asked why I looked Thai, I decided I would formally teach my ESL students why. It was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up – to be invited here into their country to teach them not only my language, but my culture. How the way I look, and the culture my looks come from, fused with the culture I grew up in is a long history, but it tells the story of many immigrants living in the United States. I thought it was time to break the stereotype, no matter how small the contribution, that an American should look a certain way.

So if you find yourself facing the same curiosity or even apprehension teaching in your monocultural classrooms, instead of getting frustrated at the injustice, use it as fuel to put your ideals into action. Here are some ideas to help you take your English teaching beyond the mechanics of pronunciation and grammar and turn it into a lively and open exploration of cultural exchange.

Use Realia

Using realia, or tangible objects and materials from everyday life, is rarely ever a bad thing in the ESL classroom, but when you have an abstract concept such as “race” or “immigration,” realia allows the students to see the theory in practice, and, hopefully, connect to the idea more fully. Bring in photos of you and your family at Christmas with a meal spread that includes both the turkey and pansit, rice, or the traditional staple celebration food from your heritage. Explain what the foods are. If your school allows it, bring in some of the **foods** for them to taste.

Show them the place where your parents come from. **Maps** of where your heritage country is located, marked by the trail your parents followed to get to where they live now. Show them pictures of both your home in your current country and your home or your relatives' home in your heritage country. These things will help make the connection that you are more than the sum of your parts and there are layers to where you come from.

Yearbooks (or pictures of your yearbooks if yours are as gigantic as mine are) are a great way to show your students the diversity of your home country. That your background isn't the only type. In my yearbooks, we had Indian students, Lebanese, and Pakistani students, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean students all on one page. Make it a lesson point. Elicit or teach the vocabulary for nationalities and have them describe the people they see. (Often “describing people” lessons can get quite boring when the students were asked to describe their classmates and everyone had black hair and dark eyes.)

Teach the Vocabulary

Especially for high school students or adults, you can teach an entire lexicon of words that will enrich their vocabulary and allow them to talk about more substantial topics, using your heritage as a jumping off point. Words like “immigration,” “assimilation,” “race/racism,” “diversity,” and so on can help you initiate a discussion around these issues.

Teach and discuss the idea of “subculture,” a phenomenon that occurs when we are between two cultures. From break-dancing to bubble tea, diversity shows, stand-up comedians, and YouTube stars that make jokes about pronouncing English words with a Filipino, Vietnamese, or Chinese accent, Asian-American communities across the United States celebrate a culture that fuses their Asian heritage with their American one. The idea of subculture can be a complicated one, so save it for an advanced class that might be able to grasp the concept without being confused. Using realia to help you, students can research and develop projects based various subcultures in their own countries or in the United States.

Share Stories Using Literature or Your Own Experience

Use history books or literature to track the plight of many communities— books that explain how ethnicity groups ended up in their respective areas across the United States. There are myriad American literature available to describe the daily details of immigrant and first-generation Asian-American life. Authors like Gish Jen, Amy Tan and Jhumpa Lahiri use the immigrant experience at the center of their novels and short stories.

Tell your own stories of having grown up in a country different from where your parents had. Read the stories together as a class or give it as a homework assignment and use the material to start a discussion. As a follow up, have students write a story of their own, imagining what it would be like to be an immigrant.

Create a Discussion (or Debate) Around These Hot Button Issues

There may be a chance your students can relate to the issues you have faced. Perhaps immigration, racism, and multiculturalism are issues that are important and relevant in the country you are teaching in. Use this as a way for students to research these ideas further. Have the students brainstorm advantages and disadvantages to these issues.

Suggest interviewing a neighbor or a family member who has immigrated from another country. Hold an open-question session, where students can write any questions they have for you concerning your heritage, all while practicing question structures. Bonus!

While it's always a good idea to stay mindful of cultural sensitivities in the country you are teaching in, discussing these issues in depth and allowing your students room to connect to and explore their curiosity can make your classroom a place where ideas are welcome and where differences are celebrated.

Stay open, have fun, and remember you can use this opportunity to be more than just about the English language. You are there to share yourself and your unique experiences with students on the other side of the world, breaking stereotypes and cultural boundaries. Give them the real story. Give them you.

“You are there to share yourself and your unique experiences with students on the other side of the world, breaking stereotypes and cultural boundaries. Give them the real story. Give them you.”



4 TIPS FOR FACING PREJUDICE ABROAD AS AN ASIAN TRAVELER

By Teresa Purugganan

I have a Spanish friend who calls me “negrita” even though he knows I’m a Filipino-American. After a beach vacation once, a Thai co-teacher of mine told me I looked prettier when my skin wasn’t so dark. Then there are the people who try to guess which country I’m from, running down the list of Asian or South American countries because they can’t seem to peg me down.

These things might happen to you, too. And yes, they may offend and frustrate you, as they did me. And yes, you will get angry.

But, these interactions, along with many questions about my ethnic background and country of origin, happen frequently on the road. Each interaction is different depending on the person and the country. Don’t be surprised if this should happen to you, and on more than one occasion, as you travel. By using a couple of simple (and maybe not always so easy) techniques, you might be able to navigate these situations with ease and grace.

Try Your Very Best Not to Get Offended

Continuously having to explain yourself can get frustrating. Continuously having to explain yourself because of your looks can be even more so. You might start to feel put on parade, but remember who you are interacting with.

Remember why you booked the flight, packed your suitcase, and went on the adventure in the first place. At the root of it all, you know nothing about them and they know nothing about you. Yet here you are, from opposite ends of the planet, conversing. How freaking lucky!

Give people the benefit of the doubt. Most ask or make comments about your skin or your hair or your eyes out of curiosity, a curiosity that is often driven by the internationally popular and quite outdated American media that portrays Asians as a token character and reinforces the idea that all Americans are blonde-haired and blue-eyed. Speculate the reasons yourself, but we are all conditioned to believe one way or another and not all cultures carry the same racial sensitivities as people who come from multicultural populations do. Consider this when they ask you why your eyes are shaped the way they are, or why you look same-same as they do, or if they say or do something off the cuff.

Do Your Research

Before you go, anticipate these situations and lighten the blow by asking questions.



Ask questions like:

- *What's the history of race relations (if any) in the country?*
- *Have they been colonized? How, when, and by whom?*
- *What's the country's current or past relationship with my home country?*
- *What do skin color, facial features, and other physical aspects represent within the culture? In many Asian cultures, for example, the darkness of the skin often denotes socioeconomic class – if you have dark skin, you must work outside, so having lighter skin implies higher economic status.*
- *Are people talking about these issues or are they part of the cultural subconscious?*

Asking questions like these and trying to find the answers to them as best you can will help you have, at least, a general understanding of the people whom you are about to meet, and any sort of understanding will help you in the long run. You will learn more as you travel, but being aware of some of the trials and tribulations of the country can help inform how you experience the place.

Be Compassionate

Be mindful of how you're feeling in these situations. Take that little pinch of pain inside you you feel when you're called a chino, pause and feel it, label it as “hurt” or “anger” or whatever it is and let it subside. Remember the research you've done and employ it. Try as much as you can to understand where they are coming from. It could just be a result of how they were taught, as is your reaction.

Communicate in the same way you would at home: tell them how what they're saying makes you feel. If it doesn't work in English, try it in their language. Ask them questions about why they said or did that. Be firm, but friendly. People are people no matter where you are in the world, and they will react or say things they don't realize are harmful or behave in a certain way.

In some cases, you may just have to walk away. In other cases, telling them how you feel might lead to a more meaningful connection. Don't rob yourself of an opportunity like this because you weren't able to manage your emotions more gracefully.

Try to Be Polite Anyway

Especially if you're living and working in a country, you don't want to fly off the handle so easily. Often you're trying to integrate yourself into the community, and so a little tact will go a long way. If you're not invited to an activity or the photo-op at school, for example, because you don't look "foreign" enough, or whatever the reason, go anyway. It will show that you are making an attempt to become involved in your school and that you care about being there. If it happens continually, and you feel continually offended, perhaps the situation isn't for you, communicate why it isn't, and make the decision to stay or leave.

If you're just passing through, remember that you're just passing through. You are the visitor. This is their turf. If you get angry and things escalate, you might find yourself in a situation you never wanted to be in to begin with. You will associate the place with an unwelcome memory, and why would you want to return home with a souvenir like that? Take advantage of the opportunity and, if you're not in the mood for being polite, at the very least always be respectful.

Facing prejudice abroad doesn't have to be as heavy as it seems. You can decide how you want to handle interactions that frustrate you, but even when it feels like an injustice, always remember that travel is a privilege. Even the most difficult moments can be your teacher and you'll come across many as you travel. But, these are the things that make travel so special, so try not to see these moments as evidence of an unjust world, but rather as moments that can, and ultimately will, shape you into a better person.

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TALES OF A LONG-TERM ASIAN TRAVELER: 10 THINGS TO LEARN FROM MY 10 YEARS ABROAD

By Julie Cao

There are some lessons that can only be learned through a lifetime of travel. But, maybe I can give you a jump on the rest of the class with these 10 things I learned as a long-term traveler.

1. Make the Most of Your Time Abroad

The big “DUH!” Living and working abroad gives you a lot of time to really get to know a country and a culture. To make your time abroad count, *carpe diem* and seize weekends and holidays off to explore your city and your host country. If you have four month long summer holidays like some universities do, it is highly recommend that you spend a few weeks traveling around your host country, instead of just going back home to binge watch your favorite summer shows. You may have concerns about your budget, or miss home, but you will be glad you stuck around and really got everything you could possibly get out of your time traveling.

2. Travel is a Privilege

Many people in Asian countries are struggling at or below the poverty line, need to take care of their family, have to work multiple jobs to make the ends meet, or are even fleeing conflict. We are the selected few that have the opportunity to travel around the world, so we need to be grateful, enjoy our adventure, and learn to give back to the community.

3. Solo Travel is Not Nearly as Scary as You Think it is

Even as you participate in international programs, taking the time to do a little solo travel will boost your confidence, develop your communication and problem-solving skills, and help you to gain independence. Moreover, you will never be alone during your solo trip. Just smile, open up, talk to people, and ask about their lives. That is all it takes to make new friends on the road.

4. The World is Safer Than We are Told it is

And on that note: It is not unusual for news media to portray the world as more dangerous than it actually is. While there are definitely dangerous areas, war zones, and unfortunate tragedies across the globe, most places are safe and people are very welcoming. Once you hit the open road, you will be surprised by the kindness of strangers. There are many people who will welcome you into their homes, share everything with you, and go out of their way to help you instead. You will learn to leave your perceptions and misconceptions of the world at the door, and instead explore the beauty of it.

5. You Have to Leave Your Comfort Zone

Traveling and moving abroad can be difficult for many of us because it means leaving our family, our job, our friends, and everything else that makes behind. Rather than fighting this and being overwhelmed or uncomfortable, embrace this opportunity, learn to harness that slight discomfort, and be happy that you have this chance to see new corners of the world. Do not be afraid to face the tough situations alone. It will make you independent and build critical problem-solving skills. Homesick, shmomesick. Don't dwell too much on the people and places you miss. You are guaranteed new friends and amazing experiences to make that little ache in your chest worth it. There are always return flights, but you won't want to book them right away.

6. Not Weird, Different. Not Bad, Different

There are several aspects of western culture that are different from the East. It is easy for us to resist and judge cultures that are different from ours. However, the decision to travel and live in a new country gives us the time to explore and to appreciate the cultural differences and let's us take a step back and really put everything into perspective.

Take time to learn about, and interact with, people from different backgrounds. You will learn more, experience more, and become a more empathetic person.

7. Use Your Voice

In Asian culture, you listen to your parents and teachers and strictly obey them as they are the authority. It takes a lot of courage to speak up and share your ideas, thoughts, and dreams, especially after learning to stay quiet and listen. Once you speak, there will always be people who support you and others who will disagree with you. However, life is too short to waste time only fulfilling other people's needs and wants. Empower yourself to tell people what you really think and want, instead of sacrificing yourself to make others happy.

8. Prioritize Your Health

This is a no-brainer for any traveler, of course – but coming from China, we are so concerned about our job and our academic performance, that it is common to stay up all night to finish assignments, work till early morning on projects, and constantly eat quick takeout meals. The stress caused by meeting deadlines, surviving today's world, and keeping your job is something most of us face, but, in the end, I do not think it really matters as long as we are healthy. Without our health, we cannot perform daily routines and function in social settings. Without our health, we will not be happy and be wealthy. Health is the most important thing above all, so learn to take care of yourself—your body and your mind.

9. There's No Time Like the Present

Many people postpone traveling because they want to be responsible, find a career, get married, build up a life and a family, and then plan to travel when they're older or retired. However, it is a mistake to wait for that perfect moment to come. There will always be a reason not to. So, while you may be able to travel over the next few decades, you never know what might happen tomorrow.

Nothing in life is guaranteed, so take every opportunity presented to you at this moment. Without sounding too cliched or trite: #YOLO.

10. Re-Entry Shock is REAL and Painful

Possibly one of the most difficult parts of studying abroad is re-entry shock. As your return flight pulls into the familiar gateway of your home airport, you will experience excitement and great relief. Soon, however, you will realize that your journey is far from ending. Re-adjusting to your culture and bidding farewell to your international friends will be a huge shock to your system. It's nothing you can't handle and you will get back into the swing of things eventually, but you will definitely be planning your next adventure sooner, rather than later.

So, there it is: my advice to a new generation of young Asian travelers. Whether you're traveling from your home country in East, South, or Southeast Asia, or even if you're a first, second, maybe even third generation Asian-American, I hope you can take all that I've learned in my 10 years abroad and make it your own. Take these lessons to heart, but never fail to keep making mistakes and learning from them as you live and travel. Remember that your journey will always be entirely your own.

“There will always be a reason not to.”



"I think people are universal."

– Ang Lee



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