

Life Abroad

Your Host Country

These questions are designed to help spark your curiosity about the country, to direct your reading and research, and to sharpen your knowledge. How many can you answer? Once you arrive overseas, you might use them to fill a quiet moment with your host family, or to strike up a conversation at a pub.

People:

1. How many people can you name who are prominent in the affairs (politics, athletics, religion, the arts, etc.) of your host country?
2. Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?
3. Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language? What are the social and political implications of language usage?
4. What things are taboos in this society? How do people greet one another? Shake hands? Embrace or kiss? How do they leave one another? What does any variation from the usual greeting or leave-taking signify?

Customs:

1. Can you recognize the national anthem?
2. What are the most common forms of marriage ceremonies and celebrations?
3. What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Plural marriages?
4. What is the attitude toward gambling?
5. What is the attitude toward drinking?
6. Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain? How is the bargaining conducted?
7. If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale, will the storekeeper think you are knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, completely outside your rights? Other?
8. How do people organize their daily activities? What is the normal meal schedule? Is there a daytime rest period? What is the customary time for visiting friends?
9. On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts from people in the country? What kinds of gifts would you exchange?
10. Do some flowers have a particular significance?
11. What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
12. How are children disciplined at home?
13. Are children usually present at social occasions? At ceremonial occasions? If they are not present, how are they cared for in the absence of their parents?
14. How does society observe children's "coming of age?"

Religion:

1. What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion?
2. What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How regularly do people participate in them?
3. How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religions?

Food and Entertainment:

1. What foods are most popular and how are they prepared?
2. If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early, on time or late? If late, how late?
3. What is the usual dress for women? For men? Are slacks or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions?
4. What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities?
5. What sports are popular?
6. What kinds of television programs are shown?

Gender Issues:

1. What are the special privileges of age and/or sex?
2. What are the minority groups in your host country? Are you a minority in that country?
3. What are men's, women's, and minorities' roles (social, professional, religious, etc.) in your host country?
4. Do men, women, and minorities have equal opportunity/protection under the law?
5. Do men, women, and minorities have the same educational opportunities? Job opportunities?
6. Do women and minorities serve in the military?

7. Do women work outside the home?
8. What type of leadership roles do women and minorities hold?
9. How do men treat local women? American women?
10. How does your host country view minorities within the country and elsewhere?
11. Are pay scales equal for men, women, and minorities?
12. Is there a women's rights or civil rights movement?
13. Are there special concerns/issues that women and minorities should be aware of before they study abroad in your host country?
14. Where do women and minorities fall within the social hierarchy?

Transport:

1. What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
2. Who has the right of way in traffic: vehicles, animals or pedestrians?

Politics:

1. Is military training compulsory?
2. Are the largest circulation newspapers generally friendly in their attitude toward the United States?
3. What is the history of the relationships between this country and the U.S.?
4. How many people have emigrated from this country to the United States? Other countries? Are many doing so at present?

Medicine:

1. What kinds of health services are available?
2. What are the common home remedies for minor ailments? Where can medicines be purchased?

Education:

1. Is education free? Compulsory?
2. What kinds of schools are considered best: public, private, parochial?
3. Where are the important universities of the country? If university education is sought abroad, to what countries and universities do students go?