

Adjusting to a new culture and environment can present students of diverse backgrounds with a variety of thoughts and feelings. Some locations may be more challenging to adjust to than others due to the differences related to race, ethnicity, identity and status.

Racism and discrimination may be viewed, performed, and addressed differently than you are used to. Preparing yourself is a sure way to ease the adjustment period and cultural shock. A worthwhile study abroad experience is all about researching the country and city you will be living in.



[All Abroad](#) comprehensive site for diversity issues abroad

[DiversityAbroad.com](#) offers many resources and information to assist students from diverse backgrounds

[PLATO](#) Project for Learning Abroad, Training and Outreach

[Diversity at Gonzaga](#) Unity Multicultural Education Center

[Cultural Grams](#)

[Culture Crossing Guide](#)

## Before You Leave, find out:

- Where do people of my race/ethnicity fit into my host country's society? Am I likely to be a target of racism/classism, or am I going to be treated the same way in my host country as I am in the US?
- What are the cultural norms of my host country? Are there religious/cultural institutions or rituals that they adhere to?
- What is the history of ethnic or racial tension in the country? Is the situation currently hostile to members of a minority race, majority race, or particular ethnicity or religion?
- Are issues of racism/ethnic discrimination influenced by immigration in my host country? How do politicized immigration concerns fuel racial tensions? What is the character of immigrant communities?
- Are there laws in the host country governing race relations? Ethnic relations? What protections are offered to ethnic or racial minorities?

You may experience anxiety regarding your acceptance in, or ability to adapt socially and academically to, your new culture. As a student with a diverse background, you may be concerned about facing potential racial bias and prejudice without the comfort of your usual support system. On the other hand, you may be looking forward to being part of the majority population for the first time in your life. Or, you may be planning a self-discovery sojourn to the country or region of your family's heritage. Whatever reasons you have for studying abroad, you will find that confronting and coping with your adjustment abroad, as painful as it may be at times, can be a positive growth experience. It may not always be fun but, in fact, it can present a unique learning opportunity that will serve you well in the future.

*-from Michigan State University, Office of Study Abroad*