

You're different. Now what?

Perspectives on your new culture as an expat

1. Defining "different"
 - 1.1. Culture - different histories and world views
 - 1.2. Language - different languages, dialects, and different pronunciations
 - 1.3. Appearance - they may look really different from you
 - 1.4. Customs - what is important (time with friends vs being on time, food, celebrations)
 - 1.5. Relationships - what are people expected to do in relationships, give and take
2. Blending in and localizing
 - 2.1. Work - what is the work environment like? Greetings in stores, working in restaurants, different job prospects
 - 2.2. Normalcy - you will feel out of your element for a while
 - 2.3. Home life - what rhythm will you have? Will your neighbors have? Outside versus inside, seasonal differences?
 - 2.4. Social norms and community - expected to "contribute"? How are kids supposed to behave? How are elderly people treated?
 - 2.5. Money - how is money perceived? Should you pay? Is talking about money normal or frowned upon?
3. Advantages and disadvantages
 - 3.1. Advantages
 - 3.1.1. Language - learning a new language is fun!
 - 3.1.2. Cultural awareness - as you get to know people, you will become more aware of the cultural norms
 - 3.1.3. "Bridging" between cultures at work or home - you may make new connections because you are an expat - or because someone else has been an expat in the past
 - 3.1.4. Experience interpretation - opportunities to be the spokesperson
 - 3.2. Disadvantages
 - 3.2.1. Language - be prepared to struggle expressing your feelings, and to make mistakes
 - 3.2.2. Two homes = no home - you will find that you won't fit any more in one place or the other
 - 3.2.3. Homesickness - very real

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- 3.2.4. Cognitive changes - you will think differently as you adopt a new culture.
- 3.2.5. Sense of belonging - over time, you will have a new sense of belonging.

4. Next steps

4.1. Study and prepare

- 4.1.1. Language - learn the language now!!!!
- 4.1.2. Culture - Study the culture and the main defining characteristics.
- 4.1.3. Community - Study a map of the area so you know the nearby local cities and neighborhoods
- 4.1.4. Expectations - reset your expectations about the experience. Journal or reflect periodically on your experiences

4.2. Adventure

- 4.2.1. Excitement + Terror = Adventure
- 4.2.2. Save for the unexpected - have an emergency fund
- 4.2.3. Pre-connect - join Internations.org, facebook groups, Meetup groups, local "explore" groups

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Reading links

5 ways to embrace cultural differences while traveling:

<https://www.worldpackers.com/articles/ways-to-embrace-cultural-differences-while-traveling>

10 things that change forever when you live abroad:

<https://www.ef.edu/blog/language/10-things-that-change-forever-when-you-live-abroad/>

As a foreigner, you will be treated like a foreigner. Live with it.

<https://medium.com/intercultural-mindset/as-a-foreigner-you-will-be-treated-like-a-foreigner-live-with-it-859fc778cad3>

Intercultural Mindset: How to Adapt to Any Culture Quickly

<https://magazine.vunela.com/intercultural-mindset-how-to-adapt-to-any-culture-quickly-4c22d6c58d0a>

Cultural Awareness: Being a Good Guest in a Foreign Country (this article is a good read, even if you aren't planning on studying abroad!)

<https://www.studyabroad.com/resources/cultural-awareness-being-good-guest-foreign-country>

Being Different In America: Moving to another part of the country. (this article is a great, perhaps more relatable, way to think about being different)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201707/being-different-in-america>

How to Be Polite in 20 Different Countries

<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/how-polite-countries.html>

How to Find Strength in Being Different (this is an interesting interview to support a book about being different and growing from the experience)

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_find_strength_in_being_different

Feeling at Home in a Foreign Land

<https://www.internations.org/guide/global/feeling-at-home-in-a-foreign-land-18831>