International Jobs – Overview

Thinking about living and working in a foreign country? There are many, many options to choose from, but quite a few restrictions, too. So you'll need to think carefully about the options and recognize that the path you had imagined may be much more round-about than what you originally hoped for.

WHY GO ABROAD?

Before you dive into the process of looking for work abroad, ask yourself what you want to gain from your experience. Are you looking for:

1. A fun time exploring a new country and culture?
2. A life-changing experience?
3. A full-time service opportunity in a developing country?
4. An opportunity to improve your language skills?
5. A way to make some cash to fund some travel?
6. An experience that will provide some preparation for an international career?

• If your main goals are to improve your language skills and have a good time, maybe working at that Latin restaurant would serve you better than an internship working with Americans at the U.S. Embassy in Paris.

• On the other hand, if your goal is to begin an international career, perhaps the State Department internship is better suited to your interests. Many Americans start their international careers with a job or internship at an international organization in the U.S.

• If you are hoping to save money for study or travel abroad, you may be better off finding paid work in this country, and then traveling later. Contrary to the myths about making lots of money working abroad, most short-term jobs in foreign countries will allow you to cover your living expenses and not much more.

• Consider all your options. For example, paid work in developing countries is rare, but "volunteering" with a service agency could provide you with your housing and your food, and perhaps a small stipend to cover your living expenses.

Careers abroad - It is important to understand that, without first establishing a career in the U.S, it is extremely difficult to land a career position abroad. But we do offer a brief discussion of the various paths to professional, career-oriented jobs abroad (see below), and most of the
opportunities discussed on our various international pages (internships, short-term paid work, volunteering, and teaching abroad) can serve as building blocks to an international career.

**Timing** - the widest range of options is available to you while you are a student or soon after you graduate. Many programs are designed specifically for undergraduate and graduate students and for recent graduates.

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**A FEW ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES**

1. **Keep a notebook**, preferably a three-ring binder, in which you can place website printouts, photocopies of book pages, and your own notes.

   - *Why keep a notebook?* Your international job search is likely to involve a lot of research and many different possibilities. Without a notebook (or an organized filing system), you'll end up with piles of pages floating around everywhere.

2. **Ask for help.** Books and the Internet offer great resources, but there will be plenty of times when you need advice and details, or you'll just want to bounce some ideas off somebody.

   - Ask for help at the Nova Career Development Office.
   - Speak with representatives of any organization with which you are considering participation.
   - Ask trusted friends and family for encouragement.

3. **Don't rely solely on the Internet for information.** There are some great resources online, but there are also plenty of books that offer much more detail and depth than you'll find anywhere on the Web. Visit the Nova Career Resource Library to view many of these resources.

**VISAS AND WORK PERMITS**

*Perhaps the most difficult aspect of finding work abroad is arranging for a work permit visa.* While short-term tourists often do not need a visa, and a student visa is obtained relatively easily, work permit visas are issued only to employers who have offered you a job. And in order to offer you a job, an employer must prove to the appropriate government agency that they have made a concerted effort to find someone within their country who can perform the job.

This is an expensive process for the employer, so most will not offer a job to a foreigner who does not already hold a work permit visa. And the penalties for hiring someone without a work
permit can be severe. Though Americans do sometimes work "under the table" in foreign
countries, we cannot recommend this option, as the penalties can be severe, including serious
fines and even expulsion from the country.

*Student work exchange programs* offer the one of the few legal ways around this obstacle.
These types of programs are discussed in the sections on teaching English abroad and short-term
work abroad.

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**OPTIONS FOR WORKING ABROAD**

**Short-term work abroad**

- In a select few countries where work permits are easily obtainable through U.S.-based
  agencies, short-term jobs are relatively easy to find - Britain, Ireland, Australia, New
  Zealand, and Canada. Depending on the country, work permits are available for three to
  six months (up to a full year in New Zealand).

- A number of U.S. and international exchange organizations offer work experiences
  abroad, though you must usually pay a fee up front for training, placement and/or health
  insurance.

**Volunteering abroad**

- Most volunteer positions lasting more than a few months will provide you with **housing,**
  **meals and a stipend to cover your expenses.**

- Volunteering can be an **excellent** way to gain experience abroad. Opportunities are
  plentiful, and some volunteer opportunities will provide greater challenges and
  opportunities for professional growth than your average entry-level job in the U.S.

- Though most long-term volunteer opportunities abroad (over six months) are in
  developing nations, there are plenty of shorter-term opportunities all over the world,
  though you may have to pay a fee to participate in the shorter programs.

**Teaching English abroad**

- Tremendous opportunities exist for teaching English around the world. *If teaching is
  something you enjoy,* this can be a great way to live and work abroad.

- The easiest places to find jobs teaching English abroad are Asia, Latin America and the
  former Soviet republics. The toughest place to find these jobs is in Western Europe.
• Your students will usually be business people, seeking to improve their English language skills for the workplace.

• Some helpful web resources for teaching English abroad:
  o The Council on International Educational Exchange
    http://www.ciee.org
  o FAQ's about Teaching English Abroad
    http://www.english-international.com/FAQ's.html
  o LanguageCorps:
    http://www.languagecorps.com
  o TeachAbroad Homepage
    http://www.teachabroad.com
  o TEFL Professional Network
    http://www.tefl.com
  o The International Educator
    http://www.tieonline.com

Teaching K-12 abroad

• For those with U.S. teacher certification and some teaching experience, abundant opportunities exist to teach in K-12 schools around the world.

• Even for those without certification or experience, some possibilities do exist, particularly in developing nations.

Internships abroad

• A number of organizations and U.S. universities offer internship experiences abroad, often as part of a study abroad program. You must usually pay a fairly significant fee up front to participate in these programs.

• Some international internships are open to American students, mostly in the areas of government and international relations. Most of these internships are unpaid.

Professional, career-oriented jobs

• Very difficult to obtain without having previously established a professional career in the U.S.

• With persistence and/or excellent connections in their country of choice, graduating students and recent alumni are sometimes able to land a professional job in a foreign country.