

SEXUAL AND GENDER EXPRESSION ABROAD

“Studying abroad is a golden opportunity to live another culture, soak up a second language, and transform yourself as a citizen and as a human being. If you’re lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersexed, or an ally (LGBTQIA, for short) this could include experimenting with and expressing alternate identities, both sexual and non-sexual.

Take that into account when you choose a study abroad location and program. Of course you’ll want to satisfy your academic and extracurricular needs, but also evaluate the aspects of the environment that could affect how you express your sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQIA life exists almost everywhere, but the degree to which it’s visible at first glance varies. As you get to know people and places more intimately, you’ll usually find a plethora of welcoming institutions and hangouts. Approach expressing your sexual identity as just another cross-cultural challenge. Be positive, flexible, use sensitivity and openness in every interaction, and your time abroad will be the most satisfying of your life.”

- CIEE, *Identity: sexual and gender expression abroad*. The CIEE Knowledge Series.

RESOURCES

- Office of LGBTQ Initiatives in The Shaw Wellness Center, lgbtq@colgate.edu
- Office of Off-Campus Study 101 Lathrop Hall, ocsip@mail.colgate.edu
- Information on Laws per Country: www.ilga.org
- European Specific Information: www.ilga-europe.org
- Middle East Specific Information: www.gaymiddleeast.com
- Asia/Pacific Specific Information: www.utopia-asia.com
- Overall Africa Information: www.overseas.iu.edu/lesbigay/resourcesafrica.htm
- Latin and South America: www.clam.org.br
- Information on Potential Scholarships: www.fundforeducationabroad.org/applicants/scholarships



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LGBTQ Abroad

**Tips for Studying or
Traveling Abroad**



**STUDY ABROAD
SPOTLIGHT SERIES**

BEFORE LEAVING: PLAN AHEAD

Before you leave, it is important to review the policies and laws in your host area. They may differ from those in New York or in the United States. It is important to inform yourself about your host country.

Things to consider before you leave campus

- Is your identity **legal** in your new location? Are there any aspects of the law that you should be aware of?
- Are **behaviors** (eye contact, smiling, hand holding) **perceived differently** in your new location?
- Are there **cultural differences** based on sexuality that differ from the U.S. that you should know about?
- What are the **laws on assault** and sexual identification? Countries may have more or fewer laws than the U.S. when it comes to protecting LGBTQ people from assault.
- What are the **support systems** available for LGBTQ people?
- Are you “out” as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or an ally? Cultures vary on how sexual identities and genders are defined and understood.
- Some LGBTQ identifying people have described going abroad as a second coming out. How will you **reestablish your identity** in your new location?
 - Will you come out to the students going with you?
 - What about the professor in charge of the trip?

WHILE AWAY: WHAT TO CONSIDER

You will find that attitudes and tolerance towards LGBTQ identifying people vary depending on location, even within the U.S. Most likely, you will not have any problems abroad related to your identity. However, if you do, contact the U.S. Embassy (or the embassy of your home country) as well as your program leader immediately.

Health care systems differ around the world and may be different in their level of awareness of LGBTQ health needs. Be aware that while abroad, you may need to advocate for yourself when in need of health care or to maintain current treatment (i.e. prescriptions, HRT, etc.)



COMING BACK: WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND

It is important to keep in mind that others around you did not have the same experience as you, and you may have changed while away! Take it into consideration and think about how those changes may affect those around you.

Prepare yourself to experience some amount of reverse culture shock, as the unexpected confrontation with the familiar can be difficult. You may think differently about the U.S. after your experience as you reflect on the differences between it and your host country. Friends and family may try but not fully understand, but remember that others who went abroad may feel the same way.

If you decided to come out while abroad, consider the implications of coming out when back home. Family and friends may want to dismiss your sexual orientation as temporary due to your study abroad instead of acknowledging it as a lifelong identity, or they may be interested to find out about the LGBTQ customs and attitudes you experienced in your host country.

This brochure brought to you by:

The Office of LGBTQ Initiatives in the Shaw
Wellness Institute

The Office of Off-Campus Study in 101 Lathrop
Hall