

TRAVELLER'S GUIDE

by GlobAlong



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Why do I need to prepare for my stay abroad ?

A stay that will change your life!

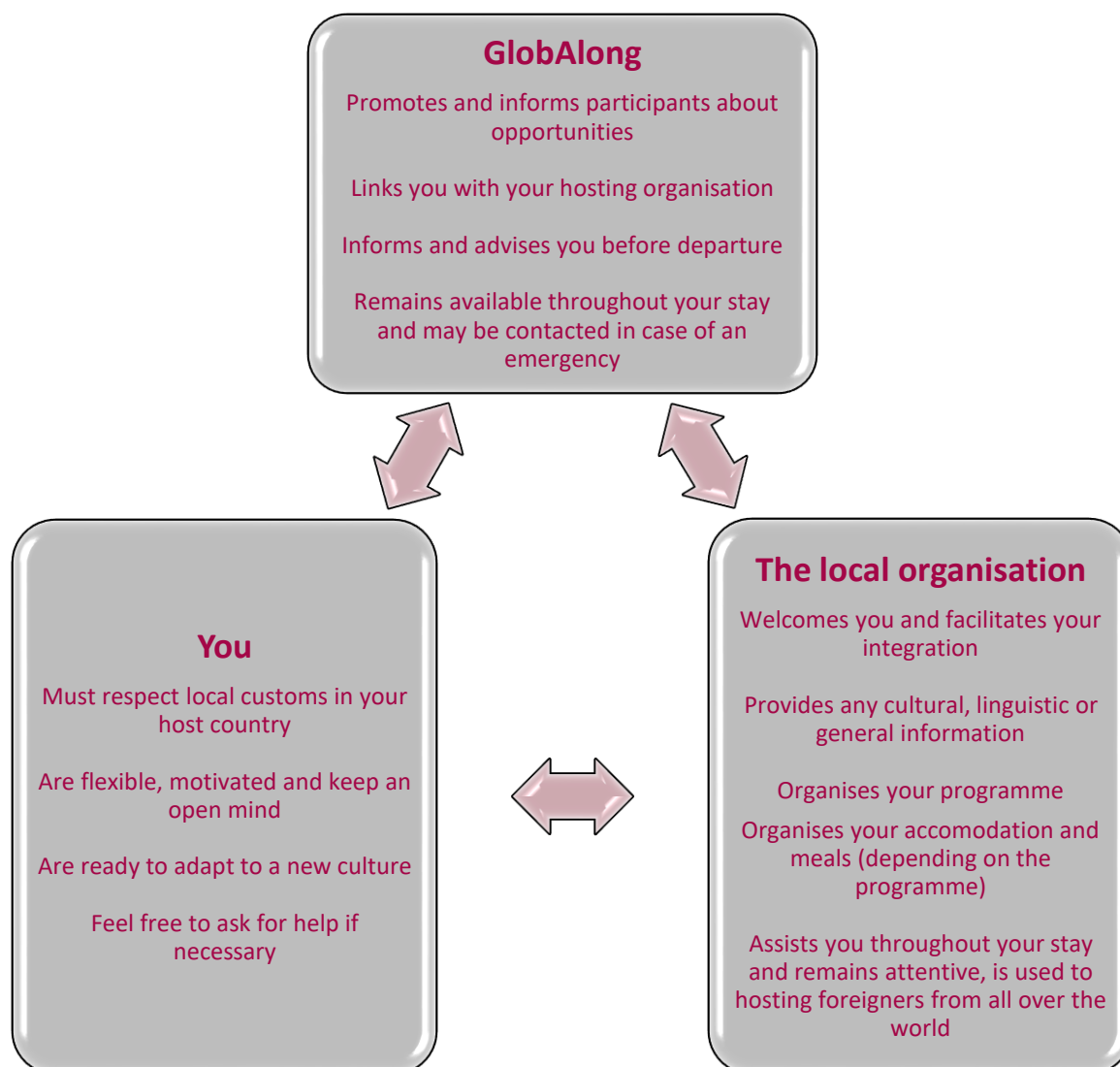
Unless you are an unparalleled traveller and adventurer, you would rather prepare for your trip before leaving. This guide will help you prepare:

- mentally: to meet a new culture and discover yourself too
- physically: your luggage, vaccinations, administrative formalities, etc.

Who is in charge of what ?

All the programmes available from our site are based on a partnership between GlobAlong, the hosting organisation and the participant (you).

But how does this work ?



A stay abroad can only be successful if everyone does their part!

Taking the time to prepare for your trip will prove to be a definite asset. Experience with former participants has shown that any participant who had fully read this guide was better prepared and equipped to deal with a new culture than participants who had not read it. That is why we advise you to take the time to read all the documents that we send you.

There is no rush, you can read them at your own pace and prepare your trip little by little. Please note however that despite the best preparation in the world, you are about to face the unknown and will have to deal with all kinds of unplanned situations. When this happens, do not panic: we are only one e-mail away and the local team in your host country is available 24/7. The local coordinator is the person who will assist you throughout your stay. Because of his/her experience and because he/she is on site with you in your host country, your local coordinator knows how to handle common situations that may arise and is aware of current needs on your project. If you wish to bring any gifts or make donations, please talk to your coordinator. For safety and organisation reasons, it is essential for your coordinator to be present in order for him/her to help you distribute them.

The mind when travelling:

Travellers - rookie and experienced travellers alike – usually are in a great mood. This could be explained by the joy of discovery, the amazement felt when facing the unknown and the excitement of adventure! However, travellers remain human and like any human being, they can go through tough times. Caused by stress, misunderstanding, tiredness or fear, this phenomenon is known as **culture shock**.

Below, you will learn about culture shock, how to prepare for it and how to deal with it so that your adaptation period in your host country does not last too long.

When taking part in a humanitarian programme and depending on the destination, you will generally have a cultural and linguistic induction period in order for you to adjust. You may also learn about your host country before leaving and read our country-specific advice on each destination. Pre-departure preparation is very important.

Culture shock

If you are travelling abroad for the first time, you can expect to experience culture shock. The symptoms can be more or less intense, some people may not even notice them! It is however a normal phenomenon for travellers to experience, which is natural and can even help you adapt. The most experienced travellers may go through culture shock, which can manifest itself when you are feeling lonely and isolated from your familiar environment. It may impact people differently and can be more intense the further and the longer you leave home. It is quite easy to understand actually, since we all have experienced it before, one way or another. Cultural differences are everywhere, even though they may be more pronounced when you compare, for instance, Ireland and India. Even in Europe, there are differences between the English, the French, the German and the Italian but there are also differences between Londoners and Mancunians! Even within the same country, cultural differences are visible!

Symptoms of culture shock are: irritability, unexplained fatigue, apathy, depression, compulsive eating, negative thoughts about the place or the people, minor aches, a refusal to integrate, the will to isolate yourself. Even though it is harmless and temporary, the best way for you to fight against this phenomenon is to prepare for it.



Whether you are taking part in a language course or in a humanitarian programme, we do everything we can to help you prepare and guide you throughout your adventure. Apart from this general traveller's guide, you have received (or are about to receive) advice on your specific destination. Feel free to contact us anytime to ask any questions you may have – remember that there are no stupid questions!

You will benefit from a good support network as soon as you land in your host country. Local teams are attentive and available throughout your stay. They are used to hosting foreigners and have experienced culture shock first hand while travelling.

Why do we experience culture shock ? Because in spite of ourselves, we all have cultural baggage : the way we act, think, react, everything that we consider to be « normal ». What we consider to be normal is not necessarily normal to others! Culture shock happens when everything you know, the rules you have been living by your whole life, are questioned and shaken.

For instance, in Western countries, street works take place during the day, in order for the noise not to disturb people at night. In India, it is the opposite : street works take place at night in order not to disturb everyday life, which can be quite unpleasant for Westerners! Actually, in Western cultures, the individual is considered to be more important than the community while in many countries, the opposite is true.

The main cultural differences which you may come across are as follows :

- **The importance of intimacy and modesty:** in some countries, in order to know how you are doing, people may ask you whether you have been to the toilet today!
- **The notion of time:** Westerners, especially Nordic people, are very punctual. In the South, people are much less in a hurry but this cannot even compare to Asia, where people can turn up several hours late, which is totally acceptable!
- **Autonomy:** being autonomous may be something that you are proud of, however, this can seem strange to some communities where family is at the centre of everything and people would not consider going on a trip abroad alone.
- **Cleanliness:** Westerners are quite worried about germs, best-before dates, etc. but in developing countries, you cannot expect to find fridges set to 3 or 4°C or houses scrubbed with bleach everyday– but this does not mean that people are dirty!
- **Woman's place in society**
- **Politics**

In order to best illustrate culture shock, just imagine how a person from an African tribe may feel if you bring him/her to Paris or London, on their own. Imagine the shock and distress this person may experience! Even though this person has been dreaming of visiting these foreign cities, after hearing about them or seeing them on TV, the cultural difference is so great that the barrier seems unsurmountable once there. This is how you could feel, in a more or less intense way, depending on the destination and the duration of your stay.

If you feel that you may be experiencing culture shock, please follow the advice below, which will help you best deal with the situation:

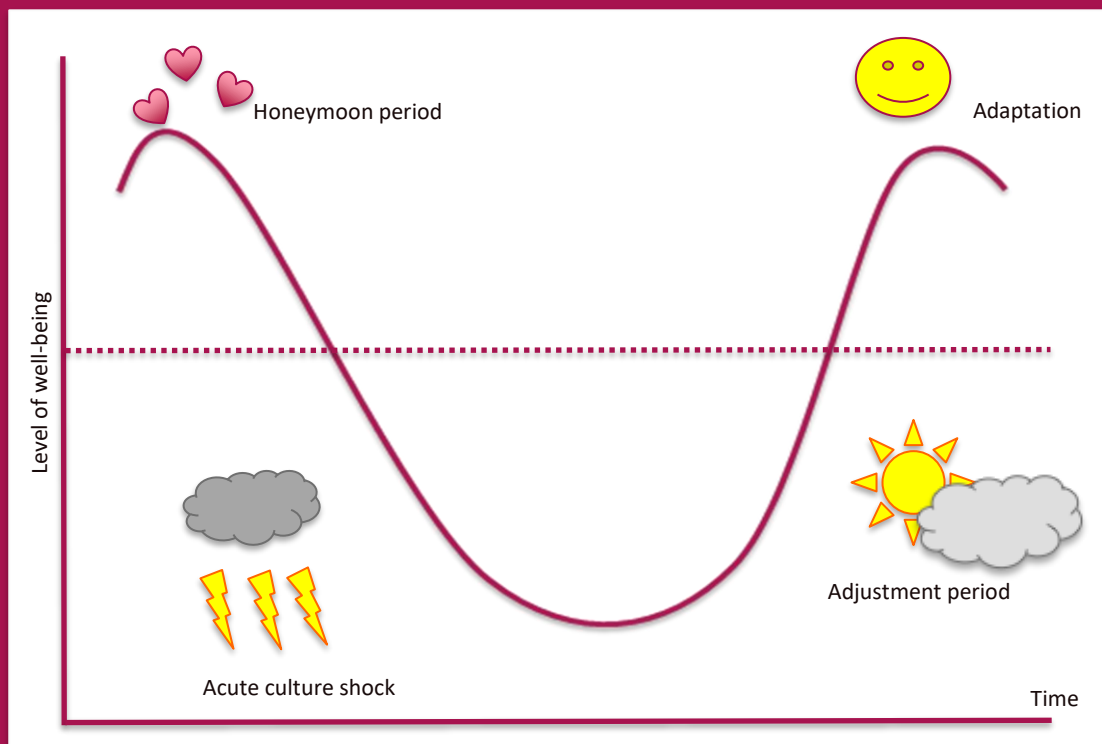
- **Accept** the fact that you are feeling a bit lost. This is not a sign of weakness because

culture shock is normal!

- **Try to understand** local people's behaviours and reactions. Please do not judge them: the way people do things is not better or worse than yours, it is just different.
- **Memorise basic vocabulary**, greet people in their local language. You will see: the more efforts you make to integrate, the less you will be treated like a foreigner.
- **Take care of yourself**, eat healthily and get enough sleep. Tiredness only makes things worse.
- **Visit the region**, discover your surroundings and the beauty of your host country.
- Try and **develop a social network**, make friends. You are surrounded by many people : fellow volunteers, the local team, children at the orphanage where your mission takes place, etc.
- **Remain in contact** with your friends and family.
- Do something that **reminds you of home**: listen to some music, read a book, check your favourite Internet sites, etc.

Concretely speaking, a trip takes you through several phases, which we have assembled together on the graph below. This is what your stay might look like:

A description of the various phases travellers may go through



- 1 The Honeymoon Period:** the joy of anticipation, you are looking forward to visiting the country, dreaming of what your stay may be like. You are feeling euphoric! This phase is called the Honeymoon period as everything is nice and exciting... You can't wait to discover your new environment!
- 2 Culture shock :** as euphoria vanishes, you must deal with everyday tasks and integrate. Not only will you face a language barrier but you may also sometimes struggle to understand local people and their reactions. You may fear the unknown, feel lonely, find it hard to find your

place. You are simply realising that you are a foreigner.

3 The Adjustment Period : You are starting to understand local codes and customs, you have achieved a better understanding of people's reactions around you and are starting to feel comfortable.

4 Adaptation : Stabilisation and end of stay. You are accepting your new life. You may experience one of the following three possibilities: either **you cannot accept the culture you are integrating**, or **you become perfectly integrated while keeping your own culture**, or **you have completely appropriated the new culture**.

Below, you will find feedback from former participants who have experienced culture shock. These types of observations are quite common – you will probably experience similar situations.

Lets' try and detail these situations, then find a strategy in order to overcome the problem:

It is very different from what I expected!

Of course, it is different! Most tourists visiting a country have a stereotyped vision of the country, of its people and customs. Your vision may reflect the reality, may differ slightly or may turn out to be the exact opposite! Take the time to learn more about your host country before leaving, talk to someone who has been there before but most of all, please do not judge hastily. Take the time to observe your surroundings first.

I do not like the food, most of the time I just do not eat.

Adapting to a different diet may be the most common difficulty travellers may face. Please appreciate that sharing food is part of experiencing your new culture. Respect all food that is prepared for you, especially if you are staying with a host family. If you dislike some foods, please let your host family know as soon as possible. Communication is the best way for everyone to feel comfortable about the situation. If you do not feel hungry, there might be another problem – do you tend to eat less when you are in a stressful situation? Are you missing familiar food? If so, ask for help from your coordinator or explain how you are feeling to fellow volunteers.

I can't understand what people are saying and I can't communicate.

Language can be a barrier, especially if you are most comfortable with verbal communication. Try and communicate differently – through visual communication, gestures and writing/drawing. You will instinctively develop new non-verbal communication skills. Before leaving, take the time to imagine how you will cope. What other modes of communication can you use? Use your imagination and do learn basic vocabulary. Focus on what you can do, rather than on what you cannot do.

Specific to humanitarian missions abroad:

I cannot see how what I am doing is going to make a difference.

By choosing to volunteer abroad, you are already making a difference! Learn as much as possible about your project before you leave, so that you can have a realistic expectation of what your experience will be like. Look at the big picture! Each volunteer makes their contribution but together, we do make a difference! “Think globally, act locally”. Many volunteers start their project wanting to make an immediate impact and help. It is a difficult thing to do within a few weeks, even a few months. Individual action may not be visible right away, while you are still in your host country, as substantive change takes time, may not be apparent at first but will have more of an impact on the lives of children or on the protection of the environment. You will not change the world on your own but your actions will contribute to a long term positive change.

The tasks I am in charge of are not hard. The problem is that there often is not enough for me to do.

This issue can be hard for volunteers to deal with. On some projects, you may have to use your imagination or take initiatives in order to be busy. If you have any new idea, feel free to discuss it with your local coordinator before taking action, making sure that it actually corresponds to current needs. After arriving, you will discover your project and observe how the local team handles things. Individual involvement comes little by little, you must show interest and communicate your desire to get more involved.

I get very angry seeing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Our way of thinking is hugely influenced by what we experience and see everyday. People naturally resort to using their value system (which is part of everyone’s cultural baggage) to judge how other people live their lives. Be quick to observe but slow to judge. Please appreciate and respect that you are in a different country and culture. Be sensitive about voicing your opinion in public, however feel free to talk to your local coordinator, who can tell you more about how society works in your host country.

I feel frustrated that I have travelled so far and I have not seen anything of the country apart from this small village and the people that live here.

The primary purpose of this programme is to volunteer. Travelling only comes next. If you wish to visit the country, please try and stay after your mission is over (if visa restrictions allow it). Your local coordinator will help you and may even provide you with an itinerary. In the meantime, make the most of your time and of your new surroundings because this experience in itself is well worth it!

The only difference between us and the staff is that they are paid.

Local organisations need help from volunteers for various reasons. Some volunteers might feel like unpaid staff, since they are performing the exact same tasks. Feel free to discuss this with your coordinator, who will explain the importance of

volunteers' involvement in humanitarian action. Most organisations do not receive any support from their government so they cannot hire any extra staff. Help from volunteers is thus fundamental for the survival of these organisations so keep that in mind. Try and remain positive and motivated!

I am finding the climate hard to stand. I am tired all the time.

A change in altitude, temperature or humidity can have a dramatic effect on the body. Find out about the climatic conditions before travelling. Remember to keep hydrated. Please inform your coordinator or the people around you immediately if you feel unwell.

A few of the qualities that will facilitate your adaptation into a new culture:

Having one or several of these qualities will enable you to integrate more easily:

- **An open mind:** being open to the world, without being affected by prejudice or sectarianism, being flexible and open to new experiences.
- **A sense of humour:** you will face confusing, frustrating or irritating situations which may make you lose your motivation, feel like crying or getting angry. Thanks to a good sense of humour, you can just laugh it off and keep on going.
- **The ability to cope with failure:** the ability to tolerate failure is critical because everyone fails at something once in a while. People who go overseas are often those who have been the most successful in their home environments and have seldom experienced failure, thus they may never have developed ways of coping with it. Accept the fact that you are only human and that failure is ok sometimes.
- **Good communication skills:** the ability and willingness to communicate one's feelings and thoughts to others, verbally or non-verbally, has been suggested as an important skill for successful intercultural communication. Moreover, it helps you feel integrated.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** the ability to respond to or tolerate the ambiguity of new situations is very important to intercultural success. Keeping options open and judgmental behaviour to a minimum describes an adaptable or flexible person.
- **Curiosity:** curiosity is the demonstrated desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc. This skill or personality trait is important for intercultural travellers because they need to learn many things in order to adapt to their new environment.
- **Positive and realistic expectations:** it has been shown frequently that there are strong correlations between positive expectations for an intercultural experience and successful adjustment overseas.
- **Tolerance:** a sympathetic understanding of beliefs or practices differing from one's own is important to experience successful intercultural adjustment.
- **A positive attitude:** the ability to express warmth, empathy, respect and a positive outlook on life has been suggested as an important component of effective intercultural relations.
- **Self confidence:** a clear, secure feeling about oneself results in individuals who are neither weak nor overbearing in their relations with others. People with a strong sense of self stand up for what they believe in but do not cling to those beliefs despite new information, perspectives or understandings which they may encounter.

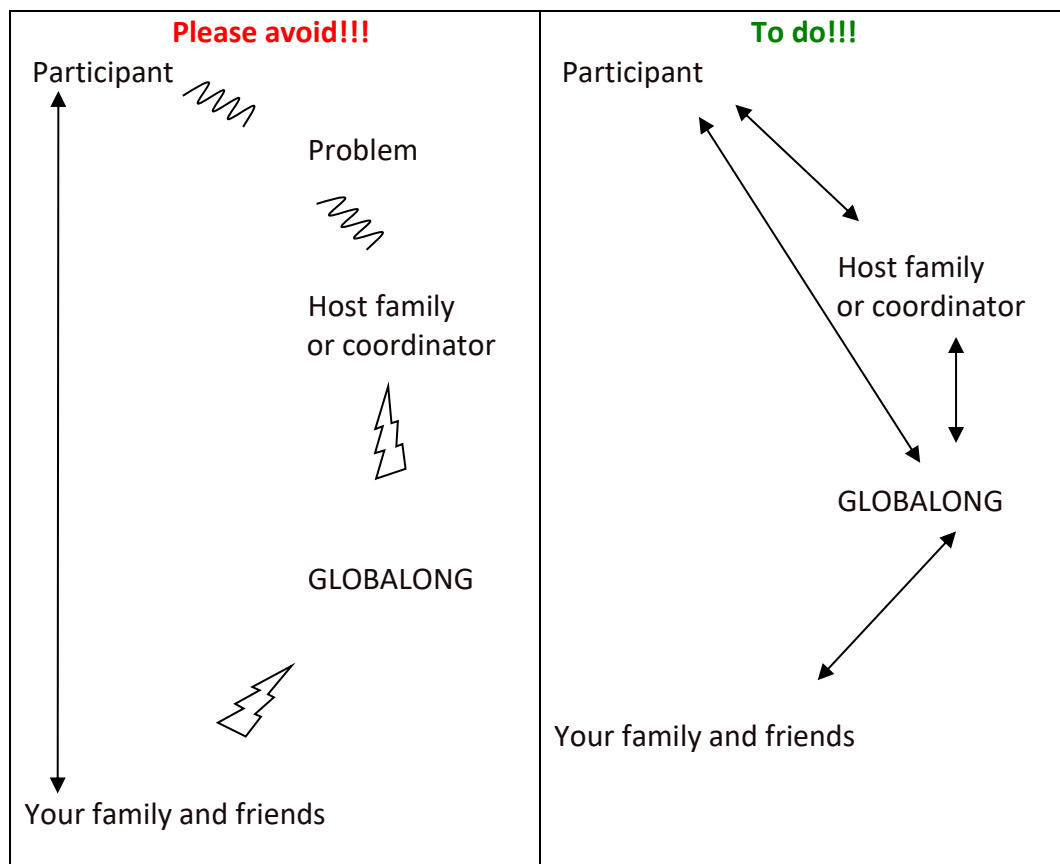
If problems occur

If a problem occurs while you are on your mission, you must first talk to the person concerned. Most of the time, cultural differences and language difficulties are to blame for any misunderstanding. Discussing the problem you are facing with people around you can help solve it efficiently. It can be hard for you to address a problem directly however, please trust that some problems can be dealt with very easily thanks to communication.

If you and your host family or colleagues cannot find a solution to your problem together, ask your local coordinator and his/her team for assistance. They are here to guide you and may act as a third party, who can remain objective and help sort things out.

If - in spite of all your efforts - your problem is still not solved, don't expect your family back home to come up with a the solution for you! There is no need for you to have your friends and family worry when they are miles and miles away from you and cannot understand the situations you are facing! Your parents may book your return flight, but this should definitely be the last step and not the first one! Our team is here for you and will do everything they can to make your stay the best experience possible!

Communication can follow either of these two paths :



How to deal with homesickness

Keep yourself busy

When you are feeling bored or lonely, try and be proactive about it: meet somebody or do something – don't just sit and cry! Call a fellow volunteer and go out to a cinema, to cafes or concerts. Watch out for local events and activities – take part actively or as an observer. In doing this you will foster your cultural knowledge of the community you live in. This could be a carnival, a religious rite or any local festivity. Yet travellers should never forget that they are foreigners and will be treated as such to a certain extent. Try to keep a positive attitude : this is your personal experience abroad. Make the most of it!



Focus on the Here and Now

Be aware that everything you recall from your life at home when you are feeling homesick is just the good things! The bad things are usually forgotten. But there is always a mix of good and bad things in any experience. Look around and try to see the good things! Stay positive!

Talk to your coordinator, friends or host family

Please do share your feelings, otherwise tensions might accumulate and negative feelings will all bottle up inside of you. You will certainly feel much better after talking. By letting your feelings bottle up, you will only isolate yourself from your surroundings. Instead, talk to people and enable them to understand what you are going through.

Make new friends

The world is so largely populated that you are never really alone if you don't want to be! Try and make friends with fellow volunteers or try and meet people who share the same interests as you (music, cinema, sports, etc.) Contact local organisations. Don't wait for people to befriend you, take the first step!

Stress

In order to be efficient, whether you are taking part in a language course or in a humanitarian project, try not to succumb to stress. It would be such a shame for you not to enjoy your stay or to be in a bad mood because of stress or fear. You are about to leave home, your routine and find yourself in an unknown environment, often in conditions that do not meet the standards of a luxury hotel. Our partners do their best to guarantee largely acceptable hosting conditions, but you are about to live with local communities and experience their reality. All this could cause stress, which could in turn lead to culture shock. We all react to stress each in our own way: some of us bury themselves in their work or their studies, others withdraw and isolate themselves, others still seek conflict or arguments. The best way to avoid stress is to listen to yourself and be aware of what might be causing it. Feel free to talk to fellow participants or to your coordinator about it. The simple fact of talking about it will already make you feel better.

Prejudice

Even the most open-minded inevitably have prejudice. We all have different cultures so prejudice is part of life, of everyday life. We can pass judgment within minutes of meeting someone because of prejudice. This phenomenon could be compared to looking through a pair of binoculars (more or less well adjusted).

As time passes and you get to know someone, our prejudice can either be confirmed or abandoned. You could say that the binoculars have adjusted to your sight.

Prejudice is based on myth or stories which you may have heard and which forms a generalisation on a topic that you do not know or do not know well. This is quite normal and is the starting point of learning or acquiring knowledge. Stereotypes are a good example of prejudice. Have you ever heard any of the following statements ?

- Women can't drive
- People who wear glasses are intellectuals
- Etc. ...

We all have prejudice and if we choose to go abroad, we have to be aware of this in order to get over our misconceptions and not to focus on first impressions. The way you will discover your host country will depend on your ability to adjust your binoculars and to see clearly. Be aware that your hosts also have their own binoculars and prejudice.

A successful integration into society requires you to have adaptability and a good understanding of cultural codes. How do people greet each other in your new culture ? If someone says: "I'm on my way!" and shows up two hours later, should you feel offended?

How can you know? Observe your surroundings, ask people about common civilities and tell them what it is like for you at home. Please do not take initiative regarding greetings: if people do not come closer to you, do not hug them. Remember that you are a foreigner in your host country so it is your responsibility to adapt to local customs and social rules.

For further information, please check the following website:
<https://www.boredpanda.com/mapping-stereotypes/>

Health while travelling:

Vaccinations

Before going abroad, we recommend that you see your GP. Tell him/her about your travel destination and ask him/her for advice on vaccinations. You may have to get a booster shot for vaccinations that you have already had in the past, on top of any destination-specific vaccinations.

For further information, please check the following websites:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations/>
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>

Medication

If you suffer from any chronic illness, it is advised that you bring enough medication with you, that will last throughout your stay abroad. If you are going abroad for a long period of time, you may ask your GP/health insurance fund for an authorisation form for prescription drugs.

It is preferable for you to keep your medication with you while travelling, in your hand luggage rather than in your checked luggage, in case the latter gets lost or delayed. If you need to carry syringes or needles with you however, you must have a certificate (in English) stipulating that injections are essential for your health. If you need to carry any medication that requires to be kept at a low temperature, please contact your airline for further information. Keep your prescriptions and package leaflets with you at all times.

Please be careful with medication you may purchase while travelling as, in many countries, you could come across counterfeit medications.

Hygiene

Hygiene conditions may not be the same in your host country as they are at home. You will stay with local communities, in complete immersion, and will share their everyday life. Our local partners do their best to provide volunteers with acceptable living conditions however do not expect to find Western standards of comfort. Cleanliness is very subjective and in developing countries, you can't expect people to have a cupboard full of household products.

Bed bugs

For the past few years, bed bugs have returned on the five continents. As small as a pin head despite pictures you may see online, these home invaders hide behind baseboards, pipes, linen, etc. Bed bugs spread extremely rapidly so much so that a place can be infested in no time. There exist various ways of getting rid of them however please opt for a natural method.

Lice

Ever since the dawn of time, these blood-feeding parasites have been living on the heads of humans - especially children or people with long hair. There is no preventive treatment to avoid lice infestation, however you may limit risks by keeping your hair tied up and by applying lavender oil on your temples, behind your ears or on your neck hairline. Lice infestation is quite common, especially in orphanages/daycare centres, schools or any facility where children stay in groups because when children play in close contact with each other, lice may walk from head to head. Besides, lice infestation is not linked to hygiene but rather to financial matters. People in developing countries do not have the same financial means as people in Western countries so it is harder for the former to treat and get rid of these parasites.

Rodents and other pests

Small rodents may infiltrate kitchens, especially in Vietnam. Our local teams regularly try and eradicate the problem but nothing works and pests may return. Rodents infiltrate all homes, regardless of cleanliness.

My travel pharmacy

We highly recommend our participants to prepare a small travel pharmacy. Common medication you may find in Western countries is not always available abroad and sometimes, ingredients may differ. Bring anything you may need according to your habits, your destination and the length of your stay. Talk to your GP about it : he/she can help you set up a list and provide you with a personalised prescription.

First aid kit

Bring any personal medication with you in your hand luggage (please make sure you have enough for the duration of your stay and keep the package leaflet) :

- Analgesic/antipyretic drug (pain killers)
- Antibiotics
- Oral rehydration salts, anti-diarrhoea drug or antisecretory drugs
- Antiemetics (or antinauseants) for motion sickness
- Antihistamines for allergies

- Antiseptic eye drops (single-dose units)
- Saline solution (single-dose units)
- Burn relief cream
- Sterile dressings
- Compression bandages
- Alcohol-based handrub gel or solution
- Unbreakable thermometer
- Antiseptic cream
- Tweezers
- Injection material if necessary (if you have diabetes) along with a medical certificate

You may prepare this first aid kit yourself or purchase one from a supermarket or chemist's.

Advice to female travellers : depending on your destination, please bring tampons or pads. In some developing countries, feminine hygiene products may be hard to get and their price, quite expensive.

Before leaving

Remember to see your GP, your dentist, your gynaecologist, your ophtalmologist or any other medical professional you would regularly see. It is best to treat a small cavity before leaving rather than suffer from a toothache while you are abroad...

Health advice

If you are travelling to a developing country, especially to a tropical environment, please follow the recommendations below:

- **Drinking water:** if you are not sure whether water is safe for you to drink, please ask your local coordinator. Depending on the destination, tap water may not be safe to drink, even while brushing your teeth. Only drink bottled or boiled water (water needs to be boiled for at least 10 minutes). You may also purchase water purification tablets from your chemist's, in order to make tap water safe for drinking.
- **Mosquitoes:** avoid mosquito bites as much as possible as, apart from the unpleasant itching, some mosquitoes may carry diseases, like malaria. You may limit the risks of catching malaria thanks to preventive medication however, there is no preventive treatment for other illnesses, like dengue fever. As a consequence, it is important for you to avoid mosquito bites by using a tropical strength mosquito repellent. Wear long sleeves and trousers, especially after night fall as mosquitoes are especially aggressive then.
- **Common aches:** the main health problem volunteers may face are stomach aches, diarrhea and vomiting. In most cases, a change in food habits is to blame. You may have diarrhoea at some point during your stay. It could last 2 to 3 days. In this case, you should drink plenty of water and avoid spicy food. If you feel very ill, have difficulty to stand up or if you have diarrhoea for more than 3 days, please see a doctor or call your insurance company for advice.

In order to avoid any stomach aches and fight the heat, we recommend that you drink plenty of water throughout the day to remain hydrated.

After returning home

If you have stayed in a tropical region, pay particular attention to any unusual sign, even after returning home, such as:

- a high fever
- diarrhea
- headaches
- skin rashes

If in doubt, please see a doctor immediately.

Safety

Your safety is our priority. Most incidents can be avoided if you use your common sense however, in the next chapter, we have decided to warn you against the common problems that you could face while volunteering abroad, in order for you to prepare for them. Many people are scared of travelling because of safety reasons but most travellers will tell you this: travelling is not dangerous! Just like anywhere else (including at home), you must be careful. Poverty and criminality are often linked but you will realise that you are more likely to feel unsafe in a big European or American cities than in a village in India or Ecuador!

Moreover, you will have company throughout your mission but if you wish to visit the country after your stay or during your free time, please follow the advice provided below:

Alcohol and drugs

Do not take any drugs throughout your stay: this could lead to serious consequences, you may even risk a life sentence in some countries.

As far as alcohol is concerned, check local regulations on alcohol consumption and abide by them. Do not bring any alcoholic drinks into your accommodation or on your project site.

Abiding by the law

When you are abroad, you must abide by the law of the country that you are visiting. Being a foreigner will not give you a privileged status or a get out of jail free card if you have broken the law. Please pay particular attention to:

- traffic rules and road safety rules, as they differ in many countries
- alcohol consumption – there may be restrictions
- photographs – in some countries, taking photographs of some monuments, military equipments, air fields, bridges, religious buildings, etc., is strictly forbidden. If in doubt, feel free to ask...
- drug consumption – it is strictly forbidden
- religious, cultural objects or artifacts
- the fauna and the flora

Please note that exporting goods is regulated on an international level. Do not try and hide any animal species (whether alive or not), art or any regulated objects in your luggage. You may risk a jail sentence. You are allowed to bring a few local objects back home for personal

use only however, if customs officers feel that there are so many that they may be intended for sale, you may have to pay duty on them. Customs officers are very vigilant regarding counterfeit goods so try not to bring any back home. You may face a big fine!

Legal age

Legal age is not the same in every country. Please check that people you may want to share a drink with are of legal age. Be especially careful with potential sexual partners: you must check that they have reached the age of consent in your host country!

Freedom of speech

Please respect customs in your host country! In some countries, criticising the royal family or the government may lead to imprisonment or a fine. Even if you are only making these comments as a joke, an inappropriate comment may have consequences.

Respecting local customs

Try to adapt and respect local customs. The best way for you to do so is to observe the locals and imitate them. This goes for clothing, smoking or not smoking on the street, greetings, the way to address the elders, etc... Local communities are usually understanding towards foreigners however you may hurt people's feelings if you are tactless.

Theft

Most thefts are non violent: indeed, on most occasions, people don't even realise right away that their wallet is missing or that a street vendor has not given them the correct amount of change back. Tourists are easy targets for thieves: as they are discovering their new environment, all their attention is focused on buildings, monuments, shops so they are not really paying attention to the people around them. The best way not to be targeted is to avoid wearing an expensive-looking watch or jewellery. We advise you to hide your money in a pocket that is out of reach and to never carry a lot of cash on you. If you want to carry a bag, opt for a sling bag.

Scams

In developing countries, even though you are a volunteer, you will be considered as a tourist because you're a Westerner. Tourists are easy targets for scam artists as they may not be vigilant enough. Please always keep an eye on your belongings. Do not accept any food or drinks from a stranger.

The most common scam consists in charging tourists triple the price. This is part of the game, so you must try and negotiate the price of things before purchasing them. If you do realise that a vendor may have overcharged you, please think twice before reacting: while most of the time the amount is no more than a few cents of euros (ie not very much to you), this can make a big difference to the vendor.

Corruption

Throughout your stay abroad, you may face corruption. If you have left a document in an administrative service (not your coordinator's or any of our partners') or at the airport, or if you are stopped by the police for not wearing your seatbelt, for instance, you may be requested to pay an "administrative fee" in order to settle the situation. You then have two options: you can either wait for the person to give up and let you go – you will need a lot of patience in this case - or pay, after negotiating the price. Even though this practise may be questionable, it is understandable that officials who earn a very low wage (sometimes just about a dozen euros per month) may want to earn a little bit extra by doing this.

Safety advice

To remain safe, you must take safety precautions - just like you would at home. The following advice are common sense, however they are important enough for us to mention them:

- Avoid any ostentatious displays of wealth
- Pay attention to your bags, even to the small pockets on the side. Opt for a sling bag and keep your important documents out of reach.
- Never leave your wallet in your backpack. Keep it in an out of reach front pocket.
- Keep your important documents, credit cards and money in a safety pocket. Wear it underneath your clothes so it goes unnoticed.
- Always check your change right away, in front of the vendor right away.
- Never exchange money on the street as this is a scam! Either the exchange rate is too high or you will not get the full amount as someone will make a diversion and, by the time you realise what is going on, the person you were supposed to exchange money with will have vanished.
- Staged theft: thieves have developed more and more sophisticated methods. They make a diversion before stealing from you. Do not let someone on the street distract you: they may draw your attention to your shoes, claiming that they are stained or drop a bag at your feet. Always wear your bag/wallet close to your body and keep a hand on your it. Please be aware that thieves may work in a team: while one of them makes a diversion, another one steals.
- Thieves are not always dodgy-looking men! They can be women, children or other tourists too. Be careful.

The best advice of all is to follow your instinct. Never take anything from someone suspicious, do not follow strangers into their hotel rooms, never let someone else handle your money and never leave any important document with a stranger.

Natural disasters

Some risks cannot be controlled by anyone. The following advice will help you deal with:

- **An earthquake:** some areas are more exposed than others, but major earthquakes are rare. In case of an earthquake, take shelter underneath a solid piece of furniture (a bed, a table, a desk...) or in a door corner. Keep away from windows and mirrors. If the building collapses around you, do not try and escape by your own means. Instead, make your presence known and wait for rescue teams.
- **A tsunami:** tsunamis remain extremely rare natural phenomena. If you ever see the sea retreat in front of you, beyond the low tide line, run as fast as you can in the opposite direction and reach high ground.
- **A storm:** hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones are the exact same phenomena on different continents. They can often be predicated by the weather forecast and in rare cases, whole cities can be evacuated. If a storm is brewing, take shelter and try and go as far away as possible inland or on high grounds, and wait for the storm to pass.
- **Floods:** floods may cause landslides, which can be very dangerous. In case of a flood, take shelter and wait for the water to drain away before going outside.

Important documents

Just like any traveller, you must make sure that all of your travel documents are in order. It is your responsibility to:

- Check that your IDs are still valid
- Obtain a visa if necessary
- Subscribe to travel insurance
- Purchase a plane/train ticket, depending on your destination

Below are a few pieces of advice, for information only. Please check this information with your embassy. Indeed, diplomatic agreements may change without notice!

National ID card, passport, visa?

As an EU national, you don't need a passport to travel to another European country. Your National ID card will be enough.

In order to travel outside Europe, however, you will need a passport. Your council will provide you with a list of documents you will need to apply for a passport. This could take a few weeks.

In order to know whether you need to apply for a visa, please refer to your departure guide, which will provide you with information that is specific to your destination. If you do need a visa, this could take a few weeks, depending on your destination.

In any case, remember to check the validity date on your ID (National ID card or passport): National ID cards must be valid throughout your stay while passports must be valid at least 6 months after the final day of travel.

Plane tickets

GlobAlong does not organise the selection of your plane tickets. You will find a plane ticket easily via online travel sites or in a travel agency. In doubt, feel free to [contact us](#).

Insurance

Please check with your health insurance fund and your complementary health insurance about medical cover abroad.

Subscription to a travel insurance covering (at least) medical expenses and repatriation is compulsory. Travel and cancellation insurance is optional as some participants may already be insured. Travel insurance is compulsory for:

- any destination outside the EU (for EU nationals)
- any destination (for non-EU nationals)

Your insurance policy must be valid throughout your humanitarian mission or your language course abroad.

While cancellation insurance is optional, GlobAlong highly recommends that you contract one. Health issues, a death in the family, redundancy.... No one wants to cancel their trip, especially when it has been planned for a long time, but sometimes, circumstances are unsurmountable! A travel and cancellation insurance will efficiently cover the most common situations.

For further information re GlobAlong's insurance partner, [click here!](#)

A driver's licence

If you wish to drive while you're abroad, please check whether your driver's licence allows you to drive while on a temporary stay in your host country. If it does not, you will have to request an international driver's licence.

ID photos

Please remember to bring two or three ID photos with you. You may need them to get a membership card or any other certificate.

Documents to scan and save

In order to minimise problems in case of a loss or theft of your important documents, remember to scan them and send them to your own e-mail address. This way, you only need Internet access to find a copy of your ID and to have your identity certified by your embassy, the police or insurance company. Below is a list of documents for you to scan and save:

- National ID card
- Passport
- Proof of address
- Plane ticket
- Insurance contract
- Health insurance card
- Complementary health insurance card
- Contact numbers in case of an emergency
- Contact numbers in case of a loss or theft of your credit card
- Prescriptions for your medication

In case of a loss or theft

If you lose your ID documents before departure, you will have to make a loss or theft report at your local police station. This report will allow you to have your ID documents renewed quickly. Remember to renew your visa as well.

Same process if you lose your ID documents while you are abroad: go to the local police station, make a loss or theft report then go to your nearest embassy or consulate in order to request new ID documents.

Please note that if you have kept a photocopy of your ID, it will be much easier and quicker for you to make an urgent request from abroad. Remember to scan these documents and send them to your own e-mail address before departure! You can also e-mail them to your family or to us, at info@globalong.com, to be on the safe side.

Money

As far as money is concerned, opt for the payment method which you find the safest. Each of us has their own way of dealing with this question and of feeling safe.

If you wish to learn more about the price of common items around the world, [click here!](#)

Cash

Do not bring a lot of cash with you. If you travel within Europe, please note that euros are accepted in most countries. If you travel to a destination with a different currency from yours, you may request foreign currency at your bank. If you travel to a developing country, we recommend that you bring a few dollars with you as this currency is accepted in most

countries. Keep them in reserve in case you run out of cash and the nearest ATM is not in service. Please note that exporting and importing local currency is not allowed in some countries. If this is the case in your host country, bring dollars or euros in cash and exchange them directly once you arrive in your host country.

Debit/credit cards

In most countries, you can withdraw money from ATMs or pay directly with your debit/credit card in shops or hotels.

Before leaving, see your bank adviser and ask him/her about:

- the possibility of using your debit/credit card in your host country
- payment and withdrawal ceilings while you're abroad
- the details of possible partners or contacts abroad

Be aware that payment and withdrawal ceilings may not be the same at home and abroad. You may ask for a new debit/credit card in order to increase the amount.

Please remember to take a note of the emergency number you can call to block your cards in case of a loss or theft. You can send it to your own e-mail address to keep it handy.

Traveller's Cheques

This means of payment may be overlooked however it is quite practical. Traveller's Cheques are widely accepted and reimbursed in case of a loss or theft. Check the main pros and cons of using Traveller's Cheques with your bank.

Reducing risk

Reduce the risk of loss and theft by separating your means of payment and never carry too much cash with you. Do not leave any means of payment or travel documents unattended at any time.

Responsible travel

You are both a volunteer and a traveller. The state our world is in depends on all of us, including you! Anybody who travels abroad can and must travel responsibly. By staying and eating locally, you will be an integrated traveller but you can do much more!

What is a responsible traveller like ?

There exist good practice and behaviours which will make you a responsible traveller. Travelling has many pros but also consequences which we may often disregard:

- Financial means that allow Westerners to purchase things without bartering too much, which unbalances the local economy (vendors thus prefer selling to foreigners, neglecting local buyers).
- National and international trips contributing to global warming.
- Demands regarding the access to a certain level of comfort, resources or equipment (water, electricity, air conditioning, etc.), which do not correspond to the local standards.

A responsible traveller realises that, while abroad, he/she must not act the way he/she does at home but also that he/she can do better, because he/she is not at home. He/she uses common sense and logic.

Respecting the environment

We all have our part to play in the conservation of our planet. Even when travelling. Eating local food, avoiding to waste gas and to pollute (which are the direct consequences of importing foreign goods), the decisions you make daily can contribute to improving the state our planet is in.

Please be aware of the difficulties people in your host country may face: water shortages, power cuts, pollution, waste... and act responsibly. Bring rechargeable batteries with you for your electrical appliances – in any case, batteries you will find in developing countries usually don't last very long. Do not throw any waste on the ground, even though the locals do it: indeed, in many developing countries, people focus on the consumption of resources (which are limited) but are not aware of the time it takes for a piece of paper or a plastic wrapping to be recycled. Do not force your opinions on people however do not contribute to making the current situation worse either.

Top 10 rules of good practice:

- **Look for information:** before leaving, learn about the reality of your host country and its resources.
- **Reduce your carbon footprint:** flying to your host country is what pollutes most, which comes into contradiction with travelling responsibly. But should you stop travelling altogether? What you could do, if you wish to make an ecological gesture, is to calculate your carbon footprint and to willingly compensate flying abroad with using public transport rather a car, especially when you are on your own.
- **Travel light:** do you really need to bring a hairdryer and a laptop with you ? These non essentials will take up space in your luggage and contribute to global warming. Leave them at home if you do not need them for your project!
- **Limit waste:** avoid using electrical appliances working with batteries or opt for rechargeable batteries, purchase water purification tablets instead of buying water in multiple plastic bottles.
- **Save energy:** remember to switch the lights off when leaving a room, to limit your time spent in the shower - the way you would at home!
- **Eat local :** it is better to travel light and purchase local food.
- **Respect both the environment and the locals:** photograph plants and flowers instead of picking them and ask permission before taking photos of people (only take a photo if they agree).
- **Bring back responsible souvenirs:** try and understand your host country. Respecting the local culture and traditions is basic decency when travelling abroad! Please do not purchase any souvenir made from turtle or tortoise shells, coffee tables covered in corals or any object that could be part of your host country's national heritage.
- **Sexual tourism** is obviously forbidden and severely punishable.

NOTE : You may notice actions that come into contradiction with the protection of the environment in your host country. While resources may be scarce, the locals naturally save them by not wasting water, simply because as most people do not have running water at home, it is considered rare so precious. You may be surprised however when you notice the locals casually throwing their waste on the ground, because they do not realise the consequences this may have on the environment. It is important for you to understand before passing any judgement....

There you go, you are ready for adventure!

Remember to write down your memories, to take a lot of pictures and to share your experience with friends and family via your blog on your member account at www.globalong.com.

If you have any questions, please contact us: info@globalong.com

BON VOYAGE!!!

