

*The World Is In
Your Hands
Student Guide:
African Americans
Speak Out and Share
Their International
Experiences.*



Introduction

Over the past several years, the Study Abroad Office and the University Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh have placed increased emphasis on making international education opportunities more accessible to students from all backgrounds. It has focused on creating new types of flexible study abroad programs, recruiting more students (including those from underrepresented groups) for study abroad and certificate programs, and enhancing informational resources for international education.

After much discussion with African American students who studied abroad, it was decided that this booklet should be created. It will become a valuable tool for staff and students to use when promoting the study abroad experience to African American students.

The student population participating in study abroad programs has lacked the desired diversity. The lack of diversity can be clearly demonstrated by the low numbers of African American students who participate in international study. We felt there was a need to produce a recruitment tool for future African American students which would improve their experience once they have committed to international studies.

This booklet was produced by African American students who studied abroad and interned in the Study Abroad Office at the University of Pittsburgh. African American students who have studied abroad were asked to express their honest views of their experiences. The survey, given to returning students, consisted of open-ended questions seeking information on the students' experience in the host country and also survey questions which rated the students' perceptions of social and cultural issues. It is their hope that the information in this booklet will be used as an informative guide to committed study abroad students.

The project was made possible by a grant from the Cooperative Grants Program of the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA), the University of Pittsburgh Study Abroad Office, and the University Center for International Studies. We hope to have this as an on-going, ever-increasing resource for African American students.

Carol Larson, Outreach Coordinator
University of Pittsburgh,
University Center for International Studies
Study Abroad Office
larson@ucis.pitt.edu



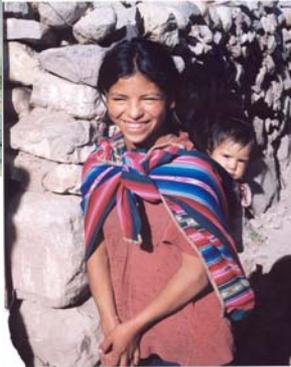
This booklet comes from the interns at the University of Pittsburgh's Study Abroad Office. These are the honest responses, both positive and negative, from students who have studied between 1999 and 2003. We hope these responses will answer some of your questions about study abroad and give you some real advice about preparing for your journey....

Adey Woldeamanuel
*Proponent, Intern, and former participant of
Study Abroad*

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Student Responses to Questions.....	5
1) How were African Americans viewed in your host country.....	6
2) Were there major differences between people of African decent in your host country and African Americans? If so, please share the experiences you feel are the most important.....	8
3) Were there any cultural events that took place that left you feeling uncomfortable as an African American? What were they?.....	10
4) What information regarding the culture of your host country do you feel is important for an African American student that was not provided prior to your departure?.....	13
5) Is there any advice you would like to give to future African American study abroad students studying in this country?.....	16
Rated Survey Questions	21
Additional Comments	28
Closing Note	33
Acknowledgments.....	34

Student Responses



How were African Americans viewed in your host country?

“African-Americans were seen as beautiful people.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“I was on Semester At Sea, and therefore had several host countries. I feel that once it was found we were Americans, there was no longer a race issue. I feel in countries such as Cuba, Brazil, and South Africa, I was treated as if I was a native. I was received rather well, and entertained more questions about Black life in the United States and life in general in the United States than anything else.”

- Male, Semester at Sea

“By basic stereotypes from movies, etc, loud, saying what they think all the time, and also because there aren't a lot of Black people on campus, automatically you know every single Black person who goes to the school. (which is mostly true, because there are so few of us, but it still isn't right for them to assume).”

-Female, England

“For the most part we were treated like celebrities! Most people did not associate us with the American people, therefore we were not as susceptible to anti-American sentiment.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“We were viewed with stereotypes, e.g. African Americans love fried chicken, African Americans are lazy...etc...”

-Male, South Africa

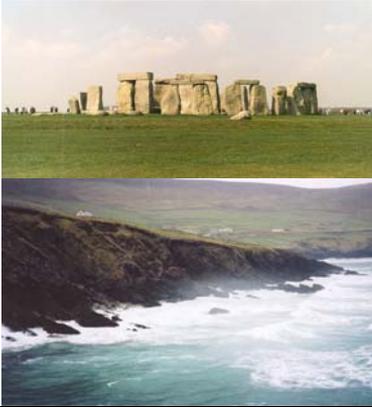
“Natives of African descent seemed to admire African Americans and have accepted many things from the African American culture.”

-Female, Africa

“Most people only knew African Americans from what the media portrayed (which is very unfortunate). So, I think some were surprised to see that profanity and slang were not a regular part of my vocabulary. Then again, I get that even when I'm at home in the States.”

-Male, Japan

Sights of England and Ireland.



“I can’t speak for other African Americans, but the people of Jamaica showed me a warm welcoming. The majority of the population is Black, so I was able to blend right in. The only real difference between me and them was my "American accent." Other than that, we shared the same interests, concerns, and lifestyles. The guys treated me like any one of my pals back home, and the gals showed me love. Many of the people there, however, did assume that I was a rich kid simply because I was from America. In all fairness, however, they assumed this about the other students in my group, too (both Black and White).”

-Male, Jamaica

“During Semester at Sea, we received attitudes as Americans first, then African Americans, which in most countries became a positive experience. In the first few countries we meshed with the people of the country well. The majority population from our ship was white, and in the countries where the most people were of African descent, the whites were somewhat treated as a commodity. Just an observation, but nonetheless we all had wonderful unique experiences.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“I don’t know if most of the Brazilians we encountered understood the concept of somebody being both African *and* American. It seemed like their perception of American was white and their perception of African was black.”

- Male, Brazil

“I studied abroad in Japan and there is a very small percentage of African Americans there. Most of the African Americans there are in some branch of the military and are stationed on bases. Outside of that, the Japanese impression of African Americans seemed to be largely based on images from television and films (both positive and negative),. This was reflected on numerous occasions when people asked me if I played basketball or rapped, and--because I wore my hair in dreadlocks--if I was from Jamaica.”

-Male, Japan

“African Americans were viewed in a very stereotypical manner. They expected me to fit into the character that they have seen on TV and when I didn't, they were surprised. “

Female, Spain

“African Americans were viewed mostly with curiosity and excitement. For the Czechs, the idea of an African American in the Czech Republic, speaking the Czech Language comes as a shock. While older people might not have an opinion, or might not know America has a large Black population, the youth are extremely positive. It 's not uncommon for young people to yell from car windows ‘hip-hop!’ or meet you in a bar and want to talk about what they call, ‘Black music’.”

- Male, Czech Republic

Were there major differences between people of African descent in your host country and African Americans? If so, please share the experiences you feel are the most important.

“The major differences with those of African descent and myself was that I live in the United States and others I met along my voyage were trying to get to the United States. Most people of African decent are still subjugated to mistreatment by those in power and continually treated like second-class citizens. They are simply a few decades behind what the United States used to do to African Americans from the 1930s through the 1960s.”

- Male, Semester at Sea

“A lot more reserved, but very friendly to see a fellow brown face. Just because we were both black we instantly had something in common.”

-Female, England

“No, the only difference I noticed was skin complexion and perhaps hair texture. I remember being questioned about my ethnic composition, because of my skin complexion; however, I was never uncomfortable.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“There is some difference. The people of African descent in the host country were very trusting.”

-Male, South Africa

“All of my responses were based on my experience in Japan. I didn't encounter very much African anything, so it's really difficult to answer this question.”

-Male, Japan

“Again, I can't speak for everyone, but I didn't observe any major differences between Jamaican Blacks and American Blacks. They listen to reggae, we listen to r & b. They listen to dancehall, we listen to rap. But those kinds of differences are trivial, in my opinion. There weren't any drastic differences between my predominantly Black community back home and the Black community I stayed with in Westmoreland, Jamaica.”

-Male, Jamaica

“There weren't any major differences where we did not find a common ground.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“I didn't get the chance to interact with people of African descent in Brazil.”

- Male, Brazil

“I did not have the opportunity to come into contact with a lot of people from African descent in Japan, but I did not find striking differences between them and myself. I found that a lot of the African Americans in Japan (though not all) had military ties, and most people of African descent there (many coming from Ghana) lived and worked jobs there.”

- Male, Japan

“There weren't many people of African descent in Spain. The few that were there were selling different goods in the plazas.”
-Female, Spain

“Yes. There is a growing African population in the Czech Republic. While black people everywhere seem excited when they see a black person in an all-white country, there are still huge differences. Most Africans I have met seem confused at the idea that African Americans might feel kinship solely on the basis of skin-color, as they don't feel they are 'black' but rather Nigerian, South African, Namibian, etc. Not black, but rather totally different peoples.”

- Male, Czech Republic

Were there any cultural events that took place that left you feeling uncomfortable as an African American? What were they?

“There were only a handful of blacks on the ship. On many occasions, my friends and I did not participate because we did not feel welcome.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“There were no events that made me feel uncomfortable being African American, but there were instances in which I felt uncomfortable being from the United States, and being a human being in general.”

-Male, Semester at Sea

“No, but I did go to Scotland and felt uncomfortable because I thought there was nothing interesting about Scottish culture, and I thought it was all the same.”

-Female, England

“No”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“No not at all.”

-Male, South Africa

“Honestly... no. I think if you go into the situation with a chip on your shoulder and look to be singled out because you're an African American, then it will happen. It will be like a self-fulfilling prophecy. I did have a number of uncomfortable situations, but I attribute them to the fact that I was a foreigner. At first it was a little strange to have complete strangers walk up to you and talk about Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton. But, they just wanted to practice their English.

“Naturally, being a foreigner and probably almost a foot taller than the average Japanese, I always encountered stares. But, that should be expected. It was uncomfortable at first, but eventually I started having fun with it.”

-Male, Japan

“There was one, but I'm not sure if you could call it a cultural event. Our trip was divided into three parts. For the first week, we studied in Kingston at the University of the West Indies. For the next two weeks, we studied and did community service in Westmoreland. During the last week, we studied the tourist sector of the Jamaican economy at an actual tourist resort in Negril. While in Negril I felt as if I were back home all over again. We were all given bracelets to allow us into and out of the hotel. The White students didn't really have to worry about keeping theirs on at all times, and they didn't. But, the minute I took mine off (even after being there long enough for the workers to know that I was a part of the group), the workers would specifically single me out. "Are you supposed to be here?"

"You have to wear your bracelet if you want to stay here." "Where's your bracelet?" "Show me your room key!" "No trespassing!" So, in a way, I was reminded of the racism that exists back here. What made it sad was the fact that this type of harassment came from Black people! It was as if the Black workers treated the White tourists better than the Black tourists almost. But, who knows? Perhaps I'm looking too deeply into things. There's always the possibility that I'm completely wrong.”

-Male, Jamaica

“Going to see the indigenous bush people in South Africa (Kagga Kamma) was confusing and uncomfortable.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“Not really. I tried to go into everything with an open mind, but we really didn’t take part in anything that would be considered racially questionable.”

-Male, Brazil

“I did not find that there were any cultural events that made me feel uncomfortable as an African American.”

-Male, Japan

“Yes. There was an event called Carnival in which everyone dressed up in costumes and walked around the different plazas stopping by every bar and restaurant. I would say about 40% of the people in costumes were in black face. I found it very offensive. A Spanish friend of mine told me that they were dressed up as "niggers." The funny thing was that the people that were dressed in black face still came up and spoke with me and tried to make friendly conversation. They did not think that their costume would be offensive to me.”

-Female, Spain

“It’s important to mention that in Eastern Europe, no one considers you an African American. Try as you might to explain, the name doesn’t really make sense to them. Not white? Then you’re



Sights from Semester at Sea.

black. Outside of Skin-heads and Neo-Nazis, who really make you feel uncomfortable, being seen as black in an all white society is just something you deal with. You're a foreigner, and if you're going to get singled out, it will happen regardless of skin color. For me, being black when everyone was white was liberating. I remember snowboarding with friends along the border of Poland where absolutely everyone on the slope would stop and stare as I went down with my puffy afro-hanging out. Honestly, I think it made their day.”

- Male, Czech Republic

What information regarding the culture of your host country do you feel is important for an African American student that was not provided prior to your departure?

“Bring lots of movies and music. There were many times when the entertainment on the ship was not conducive to African Americans. At times, it was very discouraging.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“Once again, traveling to so many different countries around the world, the most important thing is to do some research on the country: demographics, economic, health, social, political, and sociological research. The more you learn about a country, the more intelligibly you can discuss it with the locals of the country. It is also important to learn as much about your own country and their interactions with the host country you are visiting so you can defend your point of view.”

-Male, Semester at Sea

“A lot of the common terms that they use for different races may seem offending at first but they’re not, “Half-caste” for mixed raced people for example. Also, you’re viewed first as American and then as a black American, so most of the stereotypes are based on all sorts of Americans, black or white.”

-Female, England

“Nothing was said on the presence and influence of Africans and African Americans in my host countries.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“The history of the country is a very important prerequisite. I was unaware of the struggles that plagued the country prior to being over there. In America we are told so many untruths about Africa and its people that when we go over there we are looking for those images that were placed in our heads.”

-Male, South Africa

“We were told this, but I think it is especially true for African Americans. When you study abroad you cannot expect for things to be the same as in America. Everything is different so you have to have that mindset before you leave.”

-Female, Africa

“There are a lot of fascinating aspects of Japanese culture. Some are very distinct, some borrowed, and others are simply mind-boggling. One cultural aspect that I didn’t really know about and I later struggled with was... Internal vs. External: In Japanese culture this is a fact of life. You see it in the language, in the art of gift-giving, self-expression, and decision-making. There’s always a struggle between personal feelings vs. community obligation. As an outsider looking in, it truly seemed like a struggle, but the Japanese find a way to balance it. And I guarantee, at least once, you’ll wonder which side of the line you’re on. I know it sounds harsh, but Japan is still a very closed society. And no matter how hard you try, you will always be a gaijin (foreigner).

“... You would think Japan is a homogenous society; at least I did. Even though the Japanese may look the same to you and I, there is still discrimination; something with which I think all African Americans can relate. These topics are not talked about much, but if you get a chance, learn about Burakumin (“lower class”) and Returnees (Japanese who grew up in other countries, but eventually came back to Japan).”

-Male, Japan

“The Black people of Jamaica have been through the middle passage, slavery, racism, and the ugly aftermaths of all these setbacks. They’re just like the Black people here; “just trying to get by.”

-Male, Jamaica

“Many of the Brazilians that we met had never seen African Americans before so I think they should be prepared to get a little more attention than their cohorts will. I don’t know if some Brazilians understand the concept of “African American.” It seemed

as if their perception of an American could be only white. “

-Male, Brazil

“Hmmm... this is a good question. Due to the overwhelming number of Japanese people in Japan (in addition to people of Korean and Chinese descent) foreigners such as myself really stand out. The Japanese have a tendency to stare at foreigners, no matter which country they come from. However, during my studies there I ran into a lot more white Americans than African Americans. Given this fact, I think I attracted more stares than they, and it did make me feel uncomfortable at times. One of the things that was a bit surprising for me in Japan was that--in the big cities, at least--I found a lot of young Japanese kids (and some not so young) heavily into hip-hop culture. They were dressed in the latest styles from FUBU, Phat Farm, and others. A few that I met had afros which were the result of an expensive perm process; and a couple even had cornrows (which were even more expensive). While a similar case is apparent in the States, I really did not expect to see it halfway across the world. Due to my "authentic" dreadlocks, I got a lot of questions from these kids; the most common being "do you wash your hair". As ridiculous as it sounded to me at first, I gradually understood that my study abroad experience wasn't a one-way street. As I was learning about them, they were learning about me. And I think that they were just as curious about me (maybe more so) as I was about them.”

-Male, Japan

“In Spain, it is not rude for people to stare at you. You are supposed to take it as a compliment. I found that hard to deal with at first. In the end, what I had to do was get used to the natives getting used to me.”

-Female, Spain

“An in-depth explanation of how Eastern Europeans have no historical tradition with black people what-so-ever. The stereotypes you might expect from living in America do not exist, and it's unfair to place stereotypes you might have about white people onto them. If you get into a real discussion with a Czech about the differences between whites and blacks, and you try to generalize, they will politely, but firmly remind you that they aren't just white, but that they're Czech. Their identity and society is defined by much more than skin color.”

- Male, Czech Republic

Is there any advice you would like to give to future African American study abroad students studying in this country?

“Semester at Sea is a wonderful opportunity to view the world and to analyze how you fit in this large world, as a person. Come with an open mind, ready to embrace whatever may come your way. Be flexible. Live in the moment. Take in all of the sights, sounds, people and experiences around you because it may just very well be a once in a lifetime opportunity.”

-Female, Semester at Sea

“Plan, make lists, and check the lists as many times as you can. Apply for scholarships (as many as you can possibly find). It is an experience that is second to none in your life. Don’t let the price tag deter you from going. Ask questions (to those who have gone before you, to those who organize the program).”

-Male, Semester at Sea

“Studying in England is a great place to be an African American student if you appreciate meeting people who in many cases have not been friends with an American, especially an African American. It is easier to get away with saying a lot of things and have it be dismissed as an American trait. But I found that my personality, which a lot of African Americans have, “strong” aka loud, intimidates a lot of people at first, but its not common to a lot of people.”

-Female, England

“Traveling with other minorities is often a bonus, because often you will not be directly confronted w/ anti-American sentiments. I found that I was exposed to more and welcomed more when I traveled with minorities who did not look like typical



Beautiful South Africa

Americans. Further, it is important to stay open-minded and don't be afraid to meet people. The people in your host country are ready to embrace you with open arms...get ready for the time of your life!"
-Female, Semester at Sea

"Be open and cautious at the same time."
-Male, South Africa

"Not just studying abroad in Japan, but anywhere... you have to go into the situation with an open-mind. And you have to remember you're not in "Kansas" anymore. People in other cultures speak differently, think differently, and live life differently. And you have to understand that someone's culture isn't going to change for you. You'll have to be flexible and learn to adapt to the environment – this may mean doing things that you don't necessarily agree with (which brings me to my next point).

If something really offends you or upsets you, take some time to reflect on it. Try to figure out why it had such an effect on you and you'll be surprised what you may find. Those are the times when you learn more about yourself or your own culture than you've ever known. And just remember, it's not good or bad, just different.

I think the title "Goodwill Ambassador" is a little cheesy, but the meaning behind it is true. When you travel abroad as an African American, that's what you are. You represent a lot. There are people who have never had contact with an African American and whatever impression that you leave will stay with them for a long time. So, don't forget that. It may seem insignificant, but good or bad, whatever you do will make a lasting impression.

Also, try to learn at least a few basic phrases of the local language. It will make a world of difference. People generally appreciate when you try to speak their language, even if it's brutal.

And now for the one-liners...

- Do your research ahead of time. Find out about customs, beliefs, etc. before you arrive.
- Remember that a smile can go a long way.
- Keep a journal because names and dates eventually fade and you'll be amazed at how you grow and change.

- And try it... at least once – things that are legal and within reason of course!

And enjoy yourself!”

-Male, Japan

“Pay attention to the similarities between us and them; not just in Jamaica, but wherever your travels take you. The more you travel, the more you realize that people all across the globe share the same basic needs, concerns, and interests. We all want food, we all like to have fun, guys like gals, gals like guys. We might dress different, eat different foods, pray to different gods, but in the end your blood is red and so is theirs.

Well, in Jamaica you can relax. Again, the history of your great-great grandparents isn't too different from theirs. You share many similarities with the people of Jamaica. Use this to strengthen your ties with their culture. Then you can come back and help fight against negative images and stereotypes we have of Jamaican people in the US.”

-Male, Jamaica

“Go into the experience with an open mind and be willing to learn and interact with the culture. I think I had such a great experience because I tried to participate in every activity, interact with the people, and tried to understand what was going on. Also, don't let the language be a barrier to your communication with the locals. Our group was really good at using hand and facial gestures and body language in order to communicate in addition to the Portuguese that we picked up.

Take your camera everywhere. You never know when you will be asked to take part in a new experience or go on a surprise field trip. Always be prepared to take pictures because you never know when the opportunity will arise to participate in an event that you will want to remember.”

-Male, Brazil

“The first thing I would suggest is probably one of the most practical: learn to do/cut your own hair. In Japan you WILL be hard-pressed to find a place that can (or will) cut your hair. I don't know how to cut my own hair, and so I figured that wearing my hair in dreadlocks would be the easiest way to go about it. I will say that

there are a number of Africans in Japan, and a friend of mine studying in Tokyo got his hair cut by a guy from Ghana. However, this is probably only applicable in the larger cities. As I've said before: People are going to stare at you. A lot. No matter what you do. People are going to have assumptions about you, just as you undoubtedly will have some assumptions about the Japanese. They will ask you if you can play basketball, rap, dance, or whatever, and they will likely be surprised if you answer "no". A lot of these assumptions come from what they've seen on television and in movies. It is important to understand that a lot of the Japanese perception of people of African descent is derived from the European perception of people of African descent. As a result, you should make a conscious effort (and an unconscious one) to try to break the stereotypes and assumptions they may have about you. I'm not saying don't play basketball or dance or rap if you enjoy doing them, but that you should show the Japanese that there is much more to you (and to us) than just these things. I guess the last thing I want to say is that whether you want to be or not, you will be a representative of ALL African Americans while you are abroad."

-Male, Japan

"The advice that I would give to a future African American study abroad student is to completely research the place where they



Architectural Marvels

want to travel to. By doing this, they will be able to at least prepare themselves for cultural events that could possibly be offensive. Also, realize that this experience is up to you. If you want to make this experience the time of your life, you will. It's all a matter of how you look at things. Realize that some people you come in contact with may actually have never met an African American. While you know that you do not represent the entire race, some people expect you to. Although it feels like a burden to take on such a responsibility, understand that you are actually teaching the natives of your host country a very important cultural lesson. You are teaching them that you do not fit into these stereotypes and hopefully your stay with them will help them realize that people can't be easily labeled since in actuality, we are all so different.”

-Female, Spain

“For black students I think it would be — expect to judge them more for being white, than they will judge you for being black. You will never blend in, nor would they ever want you to. That's what makes the experience so exciting.”

- Male, Czech Republic



Spain's Architectural Beauty

Survey Questions



The many faces of Kenya

I was treated differently than other American students.

Strongly Agree -

Male, Jamaica
Male, Japan

Agree -

Female, England
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, Brazil
Male, Czech Republic

Somewhat Agree -

Male, Semester at Sea

Disagree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Female, England
Male Japan
Male, South Africa

Strongly Disagree -

Female, Dominican Republic

Unsure -

Female, Semester at Sea

Marvels of Brazil



I was regularly dispelling myths about African Americans.

Strongly Agree -	Female, Semester at Sea
Agree -	Female, Semester at Sea Female, Ecuador Male, South Africa Male, Japan Male, Brazil Male, Japan Male, Czech Republic
Disagree -	Female, England Female, Semester at Sea Male, Semester at Sea
Strongly Disagree -	Female, Dominican Republic Male, Jamaica
Unsure -	Female, England

I found it easy to find a hair salon/barbershop that could meet my needs.

Strongly Agree -	Female, Dominican Republic Male, Jamaica
Agree -	Male, South Africa
Disagree -	Female, Semester at Sea Female, England Male, Semester at Sea Male, Czech Republic
Strongly Disagree -	Female, England Female, Ecuador Male, Japan Male, Japan
Unsure -	Female, Semester at Sea Female, Semester at Sea Male, Brazil

People of African descent from my host country made me feel more comfortable than other natives.

Strongly Agree - Female, Dominican Republic

Agree - Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, England
Male, Jamaica
Male, Semester at Sea

Disagree - Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, South Africa
Male, Japan
Male, Czech Republic

Unsure - Female, England
Male, Japan
Male, Brazil

I felt discriminated against.

Strongly Agree - Male, Jamaica

Agree - Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, Japan

Disagree - Male, Semester at Sea
Male, South Africa
Male, Brazil

Strongly Disagree - Female, England
Female, Dominican Republic
Female, England
Male, Czech Republic

There were few people of African descent in my program and/or university.

Strongly Agree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, South Africa
Male, Japan
Male, Brazil
Male, Japan
Male, Czech Republic

Agree -

Female, England
Female, Semester at Sea
Male, Jamaica

Strongly Disagree -

Female, England
Female, Dominican Republic

Natives treated me better than other American students because of my racial composition.

Strongly Agree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Male, Jamaica
Male, Czech Republic

Agree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Female, England
Male, Japan

Disagree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Male, South Africa
Male, Japan
Male, Semester at Sea

Strongly Disagree -

Female, Dominican Republic
Female, England

Unsure -

Female, Ecuador
Male, Brazil

**I found the social atmosphere
to be inviting.**

Strongly Agree - Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Dominican Republic
Female, England
Male, Brazil
Male, Japan
Male, Jamaica
Male, Czech Republic
Male, Semester at Sea

Agree - Female, England
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, Japan
Male, South Africa

Disagree - Female, Semester at Sea

**My race played little or no part in my
educational experience.**

Strongly Agree - Female, England
Male, Japan

Agree - Female, England
Male, Brazil

Disagree - Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, South Africa

Strongly Disagree - Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Dominican Republic
Male, Jamaica
Male, Semester at Sea
Male, Japan
Male, Czech Republic

Overall I had a positive experience.

Strongly Agree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Female, England
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Dominican Republic
Female, England
Male, Japan
Male, Jamaica
Male, Semester at Sea
Male, Brazil
Male, Japan
Male, Czech Republic
Male, South Africa

Agree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador

If possible I would study abroad again.

Strongly Agree -

Female, Semester at Sea
Female, England
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Dominican Republic
Female, England
Female, Semester at Sea
Female, Ecuador
Male, Japan
Male, Jamaica
Male, Brazil
Male, Japan
Male, Semester at Sea
Male, Czech Republic
Male, South Africa

Conclusion

As seen above, 100% of the students would study abroad again. It is not as important where a student goes, but that he/she goes and experiences the different, unique cultures of the world.

Additional Comments



Explore Mexico

“Because of the handful of minorities that were on the ship, we became a close family. We could relate to each other's experiences. I appreciated that and I'm still in contact with my friends from the voyage. As a whole, we decided to come together and celebrate Black History Month. Many of the people on the ship had little contact, if any, with minority students and so we wanted to help share our contribution to society. When we approached the dean with our proposal, he was very impressed that we were so detail-oriented, unified, and organized. He also made the statement that he was embarrassed no one else on the ship thought of it. Here is a brief synopsis of what we put together on the ship: Every morning before Core, we presented a snippet of a genre of African American music and a brief description of its significance. Ex: Motown, reggae, gospel. We also placed a quote from an African American in the daily Dean's Memo.

We showed the film Bamboozled and had a discussion afterwards about the movie and racial matters. The film and discussion had such a good turnout that the people who worked the mic system had to close up because they had to go to bed. The discussion continued on for an additional hour and a half until 1 or 1:30 am. People were so open and willing and wanting to discuss the very important subject matter-race relations.

We put together a Black History Program that we were all so very proud of. The theme was the Progression: Past, present and future. There was a collection of poems, song and dance. We had a brief history of the black national anthem and black history month. Each student put together a slide presentation and presented their area of concentration or major. Ex: business, education, medicine, etc. They spoke of someone from the past and the present and spoke of themselves as the future and their career aspirations. The program ended with a compilation of dances. The progression was hip hop, reggae, Motown, and ended with an African dance performance. We grew united in this because we had practice every night.

It was very discouraging at times on the ship because the program encourages diversity, yet it did not reflect that. I believe there were 15 Blacks on the ship. There was one African American professor and one African American male librarian.”

- Female, Semester at Sea

“There were 20 students in our group. Of the 20, I think there were 5 Black students. There was myself and 4 girls. The teacher of the class and the facilitator said that this was the largest group they ever had, and that 5 Black students was a higher turnout than normally.

Going into the trip, my main hope was that the Black students and White students didn't separate themselves from each other, but towards the end of the trip that's what ended up happening. The Blacks stuck together and the Whites stuck together. We weren't ready to slit each others' throats - we actually got along pretty nice with each other - but it was just unfortunate that it had to be that way, with the cliques and all. Four Jamaican students joined our group upon our arrival at Montego Bay bringing the total of Black students to 9.

The group would hold "reflection sessions" to openly discuss our journal entries, talk about the assigned readings, and make general suggestions about the course. They were "intelligent" discussions, you could say. In any case, for the first two weeks I struggled with getting the White students to treat me as their intellectual equal. It was almost as if every time I had something to say, they'd dismiss it.

While staying in Westmoreland, we did volunteer work with a NGO (The Association of Clubs). The AOC would periodically hold town meetings. This group had a thing for videotaping all of their gatherings and would often ask members of our group to stand and speak in front of a crowd of maybe 30 to 50 people. Every time they asked someone to speak, the group members would always push me to say something. This made me feel almost like a puppet. I mean, whenever we had to talk about something academic, they didn't want to hear a word I had to say. But, when the time came for someone to get out in front of a large crowd and "put on a show," I was the first person they'd come to as if I were some uneducated entertainer and what not. "Oh, you speak so nicely in front of a camera!" "Oh, you should be a communications major." Oh, please...I just felt as if the White students didn't respect my ability to talk with them on an intellectual level. The last two weeks of the course were different, and they started actually listening to what I had to say, but this was only after continually struggling with them. It shouldn't have to be that way.

. . . I don't know if I worded the aforementioned situation to the best of my ability. It may seem petty, but for some reason it just made me feel like a pawn.

In the end, I began acting out my own fear. I only hung out with my good friend, and one of the most beautiful young ladies I've ever laid eyes on. Both were Black (they were 2 of the 4 Jamaican students that joined our group). They listened to me, and I listened to them.”
- Male, Jamaica

“I was the only person of color on our trip so of course I stood out. In terms of treatment from the Brazilians, I wouldn't say I was treated *differently* from other American students; I just received a lot more attention. Many of the Brazilians (especially the children) were curious about me, (maybe because they had never seen someone so dark or that I was the only one who didn't look like anyone else in our group). But in general, most of the adults (who probably had already met and interacted with African Americans before) treated the members of our group equally.

Some of the members of our group came from small towns and probably hadn't had close interactions with African Americans before. They might have had some preconceived notions as to what we do or what we believe. Luckily, no one in our group was so close-minded as to not want to learn more about me. They asked me questions and I answered them. Although there may be a group of people who share common cultural characteristics doesn't mean that they all share the same philosophies, do the same exact things, or participate in the same activities.

They gave me a little more attention because I was so different from everyone else in our group but I wouldn't call it *better* treatment.

Their culture overall is very inviting. They always wanted our group to dance, play sports, listen to their music, play games, try their foods, and take part in different cultural activities from dancing to “voodoo.” Our group really didn't let the language barrier inhibit us from interacting and socializing with the natives who didn't speak English. We tried to learn Portuguese and we tried to teach them some English. Of course, it was a lot easier to speak to the Brazilians that were bilingual.

This has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Going to Brazil was my first trip abroad (outside of the North America) and I had a great time. It was cool to be able to participate in a completely different culture, eat exotic foods, interact with different people, and attempt to learn a new language. I'm glad that I took advantage of this wonderful opportunity to learn about the Brazilian culture by studying abroad. I also got the opportunity to meet some really cool and interesting people.”

- Male, Brazil

CLOSING NOTE

Study Abroad is one of the most life-altering experiences that takes place in college. When you are studying in another country and culture, you are continually learning from the nation and the people...at least that was the case for me.

Now that I have had the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program, I realize how my perspective on life has changed. My outlook on culture has been broadened and has expanded. Now I am a true advocate of all aspects of internationalizing your education. The key to my study abroad sojourn was to understand that no matter where you go, whatever you do, you may encounter a combination of both positive and negative experiences. But after it's all said and done, the important factor was how much I matured and learned from the experience. My study abroad sojourn opened up my eyes to the world around me. The scales were lifted and the blinders removed from my eyes so that I could experience and learn from the multicultural nature of the world. This experience truly enlightened me and allowed for me to be a more well-rounded individual.

What will your end result be? How will you change and develop from your study abroad journey?



Keiha R. Peck, M.Ed.
*International Administrator and
former Study Abroad participant*

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank three incredible Interns in the Study Abroad Office for their patience, their hard work, their knowledge and their devotion to this project. Without them this project would never have come to fruition. Thank you to Tiffany Williams, Adey Woldeamanuel and Jeff Whitehead. Many thanks also to my colleague, Keiha Peck, for sharing the vision.

Carol Larson



Tiffany Williams



Jeff Whitehead



Adey Woldeamanuel





University of Pittsburgh

Study Abroad Office
802 William Pitt Union
Phone: 412-648-7413
Email: abroad@pitt.edu
www.ucis.pitt.edu