Unpack Yourself!



Take a moment to reflect about your time abroad as more than just a "good' or "bad" experience. Think back on your time and answer the following questions, we promise it will get you thinking...

A. The academic experience

- Describe your study abroad program. What courses did you take? What did you study? How did you study it? Was it different from what your used too? Was it similar? Probe for experiential learning and differences in cultural perspectives.
- What was challenging about taking courses abroad?
- How did your experience abroad add to your major, discipline or career field? What did you learn that you couldn't have learned by studying on campus?

B. Adjusting to life in-country

- When confronted with challenges or problems you may have encountered abroad, how did you work through them?
 - 1. Living arrangements, food, language/communication issues
 - 2. Getting around, navigating public transportation
 - 3. Managing time
 - 4. Most challenging thing...
- How did you go about learning about your destination country's culture (strategies you used to learn about the culture)?
 - 1. Talking with home stay family, locals, others
 - 2. Observations
 - 3. Internship experiences
 - 4. Personal travel
- What didn't you expect to encounter on your study abroad? Was there a time when you thought you were in over your head? How did you work through it?
- Where there aspects of the country's culture(s) that you found difficult to deal with/adjust to? How did you deal with them?

C. Making connections

- How did you come to understand the culture/country you were in? How are things different? What would someone in your field need to know about the culture if they were to study/work there?
- What were some of the issues the people in your program culture were concerned about- how are these issues the same or different to what people in the U.S. are concerned about?
- Did your thoughts or impressions about the culture/country you were visiting change during your experiences abroad? How?
- What was the most significant/surprising thing you learned about yourself from your experiences abroad?

Source: Michigan State University (2003)