

# Research Your Host Country

Before you depart for your program, it is useful to learn a bit about the new place you will call home. Research the information below for your future host country using the [CIA World Factbook](#) and other web or print sources of information.

## Geography

- Continent
- Capital
- Size in sq. km/sq. miles
- Neighboring countries
- Climate
- Natural disasters
- Natural resources

## Social Dimensions

- Population
- Life expectancy
- Fertility rate (# children being born per woman)
- Mortality rate
- Ethnic groups and percentage of each
- Religious groups and percentages
- Languages spoken in order of prevalence
- Literacy rate (% over age 15 who can read and write)
- Percentage that goes to university
- Average income

## Politics

- Independence/National Day
- Constitution Day
- Country from which they gained independence
- Year of independence
- Key events in political history and years they occurred
- Leader/president
- Political parties
- Current political situation

## Other Issues of Interest

- **Military Conflicts, Defense, Terrorism, Border Issues**
  - Does your host country have conflicts with other countries? If so, what kind of struggle is taking place? What (or who) is your host country's biggest safety threat?
- **Children/Family Issues**
  - How are children regarded in your host country? Are there child labor laws?
- **Gender Issues**
  - How are women treated in your host country? Are they treated equally compared to men? Do they earn as much as men?
- **Educational Achievement**

## Economics

- GDP (gross domestic product)
- Number of people of working age
- Unemployment rate
- Poverty line
- Percentage living below poverty line
- Average family income
- Percentage of workforce in
  - Agriculture
  - Manufacturing
  - White collar
  - Service/tourist
- Main industries
- Main imports
- Main exports
- Currency
- Exchange rate
- Prevalence of modern communication devices
  - Television
  - Cell phones
  - Internet users

## Sports, Music, and Entertainment

- Country's favorite sport
- Other sports played
- Favorite musicians
- Traditional forms of music
- Popular games
- Favorite foods
- Other forms of entertainment

- How does your host country's educational achievement compare to other countries? What do you think some of your host country's biggest educational problems are?
  - **Racial/Class/Ethnicity Issues**
    - Are race issues a problem in your host country? What about issues concerning ethnicity? If so, what are the problems and how are they managed? Are all minorities and their cultures recognized?
  - **Religious Issues**
    - Are people in your host country treated differently according to their religion? Does the public calendar recognize holidays of minority religions?
  - **Human Rights/Legal Issues**
    - How are human rights in your host country? Are all citizens treated equally? Are there any human rights abuses that have happened or happen regularly? What legal issues are different in your host country versus the U.S. in terms of how citizens are treated?
  - **The Environment**
    - What are some of the environmental issues in your host country? What are the causes?
  - **Health Issues**
    - What are the biggest health issues facing your host country? Do people have access to clean water and sanitation?
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**Here are fifty basic questions you might ask about your host country and culture. Though this is in no way a comprehensive list, when you can answer all fifty, you may consider yourself well beyond the beginning stage of knowing your host country.**

1. How many people who are prominent in the affairs (politics, athletics, religion, the arts, etc.) of your host country can you name?
2. Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?
3. Can you recognize the national anthem of the host country?
4. Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language? What are the social and political implications of language usage?
5. What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion? Have you read any of its sacred writings?
6. What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies? How regularly do people participate in them?
7. How do members of the predominant religion feel about other religions?
8. What are the most common forms of marriage ceremonies and celebrations?
9. What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Plural marriage?
10. What is the attitude toward gambling?
11. What is the attitude toward drinking?
12. Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain? How the bargaining is conducted?
13. If, as a customer, you touch or handle merchandise for sale, will the storekeeper think you are knowledgeable, inconsiderate, within your rights, completely outside your rights? Other?
14. How do people organize their daily activities? What is the normal meal schedule? Is there a daytime rest period? What is the customary time for visiting friends?
15. What foods are the most popular and how are they prepared?
16. What things are taboos in this society?
17. What is the usual dress for women? For men? Are slacks or shorts worn? If so, on what occasions? Do teenagers wear jeans?

18. Do hairdressers use techniques similar to those used by hairdressers in the United States? How much time do you need to allow for an appointment at the hairdresser?
19. What are the special privileges of age and or sex?
20. If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early? On time? Late? If late, how late?
21. On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts from people in the country? What kind of gifts would you exchange?
22. Do some flowers have a particular significance?
23. How do people greet one another? Shake hands? Embrace or kiss? How do they leave one another? What does any variation from the usual greeting or leave-taking signify?
24. What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities of adults? Teenagers?
25. What sports are popular?
26. What kinds of television programs are shown? What social purposes do they serve?
27. What is the normal work schedule? How does it accommodate environmental or other conditions?
28. How will your financial position and living conditions compare with those of the majority of people living in the host country?
29. What games do children play? Where do children congregate?
30. How are children disciplined at home?
31. Are children usually present at social occasions? At ceremonial occasions? If they are not present, how are they cared for in the absence of their parents?
32. How does this society observe a child's "coming of age"?
33. What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
34. Who has the right of way in traffic: vehicles, animals, pedestrians?
35. Is military training compulsory?
36. Are the largest circulation newspapers generally friendly in their attitude towards the United States?
37. What is the history of the relationships between this country and the United States?
38. How many people have emigrated from this country to the United States? Other countries? Are many doing so at present?
39. Are there many American expatriates living in this country?
40. What kinds of options do foreigners have in choosing a place to live?
41. What kinds of health services are available? Where are they located?
42. What are the common home remedies for minor ailments? Where can medicines be purchased?
43. Is education free? Compulsory?
44. In schools are children segregated by race? By caste? By Class? By sex?
45. What kinds of schools are considered best: Public? Private? Parochial?
46. In schools, how important is learning by rote?
47. How are children disciplined in school?
48. Where are the important universities of the country? If university education is sought abroad, to what countries and universities do students go?