

# WHY STUDY ABROAD?

## HIGHLIGHTING REASONS FOR NON-TRADITIONAL DESTINATIONS

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### ADDRESSING DIVERSIFICATION OF DESTINATION IN EDUCATION ABROAD NAFSA 2006 ONLINE EXPO

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Over 50% of US university students choose to study in just five countries: the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and Australia (Open Doors, 2004). Though the number of U.S. students studying abroad has increased dramatically in the last, growth in popularity of non-traditional regions of the world – Asia, Africa, the Middle East, East Europe and Latin America/Caribbean – has been less significant. While Western Europe will likely remain the most conventional destination for US students studying abroad in the foreseeable future, greater emphasis should be placed on encouraging diversification of destination.

Students choose non-traditional destinations for various reasons.

- Study abroad in non-traditional destinations offers unparalleled opportunities for students to pursue a variety of personal, academic, linguistic, cultural, and professional goals that will serve them for a lifetime.
- Non-traditional destinations provide unique opportunities for meaningful cultural integration and intercultural learning. Students engage within the local community, meet local leaders, visit culturally important institutions, and develop meaningful relationships.
- Having studied in non-traditional destinations helps distance students from the average study abroad program participant. Potential employers recognize that a different set of skills is developed when living in non-traditional locations.
- Living in many non-western areas of the world requires changes in attitude, flexibility and the development of complex problem solving skills.

Compiled from several on-line resources, the following is an at-a-glance survey of the reasons used to promote study in various regions of the world. Consider expanding on this listing and using it for your institution's region-specific promotional materials.

#### WHY STUDY ABROAD IN AFRICA OR THE MIDDLE EAST?

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- There is considerable financial aid available for study abroad opportunities in Africa and the Middle East.
- Africa and the Middle East are of growing importance to America's economic well-being and global security, making knowledge of these areas increasingly vital to this country's future success.
- There are not enough Americans who can communicate in the less commonly taught languages of Africa and the Middle East. Only through first-hand experience can one acquire the level of language fluency necessary to communicate effectively in a global environment.
- American business is increasingly involved in this region of the world yet few American professionals are knowledgeable or able to successfully navigate the cultural intricacies of the region.
- The Middle East is the center of the world's only monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Few Americans learn first-hand the imminent issues of the region such as Middle Eastern peace and conflict resolution, sustainable development, and religious diversity.
- Africa, recognized as the cradle of humanity, is one of the most cultural and environmentally diverse places on the planet; yet it remains largely unknown to people outside its borders.

List other reasons:

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#### WHY STUDY ABROAD IN ASIA?

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- There is considerable financial aid available for study abroad opportunities in Asia.
- Asia is of growing importance to America's economic well-being and global security, making knowledge of Asia increasingly vital.
- There are not enough Americans who can communicate effectively in the less commonly taught languages of East and Southeast Asia. Only through first-hand experience can one acquire the level of language fluency necessary to communicate effectively in a global environment.
- American business is deeply involved in Asia yet there are not enough American professionals who are knowledgeable about Asia.
- The twenty-first century has been called the "Pacific Century," demonstrating how vital Asian and Pacific communities have become to the health of the international economy and world peace.

- The diverse societies of this vast and vibrant region are undergoing phenomenal change as they adapt to an interconnected world influenced by rapid development of technology and communication.

List other reasons:

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### WHY STUDY ABROAD IN EASTERN EUROPE?

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- There is financial aid available for study abroad opportunities in these regions.
- An understanding of Central and Eastern European history as well as the current political/economic climate in these emerging democracies is crucial for students in many liberal arts and business disciplines.
- Explore interests in political, social, and economic transformation from state control to democratic market-based systems.
- Eastern Europe offers rich and often overlooked cultures, not easily accessible from the "outside."
- American business is increasingly involved in Eastern Europe yet there are not enough American professionals who are knowledgeable about Eastern Europe and its languages.

List other reasons:

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### WHY STUDY ABROAD IN LATIN AMERICA OR THE CARIBBEAN?

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- Latin America offers fascinating and incredibly diverse landscapes, cultures, and traditions in a region known for its hospitality and friendliness.
- Spanish has become one of the most important languages in American domestic and international affairs. Only through first-hand experience can one acquire the level of language fluency necessary to communicate effectively in a global environment.
- American business is becoming more involved in Latin America, yet there are not enough American professionals knowledgeable about the region.
- No word better describes Latin American and Caribbean realities than "transformation," as the region grapples with questions of cultural identity, globalization, urbanization, and environmental degradation.
- The Spanish language and culture pervasive in the United States is influenced to a large extent by Latin American and the Caribbean cultures and societies.

List other reasons:

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### WHY STUDY ABROAD IN A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY?

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- Studying and living in a non-English-speaking country allows students to engage with a culture which is different from the United States.
- Programs in non-English speaking countries often offer courses in English, providing access to unique topics without a language barrier.
- Students can pursue opportunities to develop language skills (often in unique languages) that can set one apart in the job market.
- The 21st century will demand that Americans have international experience and expertise in order to advance in the workplace.
- Understanding the differences between other cultures and American culture helps us understand our own with greater clarity.

List other reasons:

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The **Whole World Committee** of NAFSA: Association of International Educators actively promotes study in non-traditional parts of the world and developed the useful resource, [Underrepresented Destinations: A Guide to Whole World Study](#) to encourage students, parents, faculty, study abroad advisers and career development advisers to consider study abroad programs in non-traditional destinations. For more information, please see the Education Abroad Knowledge Community at [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org).

