

# Learn before you go...

Congratulations! You are on your way to an experience of a lifetime. You will be able to learn so much from living in a different culture, from the people you'll be working with and for, from the host community and from the country as a whole.

However...this will be limited if you do not **prepare well**. As a good **guest** it is important to **find out** about the history, culture, religion, political situation and current issues **before you arrive**.

This will help you to be more **sensitive to local culture** (hopefully avoiding huge cultural blunders such hugging an Indian woman on first meeting or wearing inappropriately revealing clothing in a Muslim country) and greatly **deepen your learning** experience. In addition you will probably find that you are able to work more effectively if you **understand** people's **attitudes**.

Good sources of information include:

- **People**

Is there anybody from that country in your parish/place of work or study/local area? Can you get in contact with others who have traveled/volunteered there?

- **Places of worship**

Many temples/churches/mosques etc. allow visitors and would be happy to give you information.

- **Books**

Lonely Planet and Rough Guide are good but try to go beyond this. The 'CultureShock!' series are excellent - searching Amazon.co.uk should give you some more ideas.

- **Internet**

[news.bbc.co.uk/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/) Especially World News and the in-depth country profiles.

[google.co.uk/](http://google.co.uk/) Try searching for national/local newspapers online.

[web.amnesty.org/library/engindex](http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex) Amnesty International's on-line library.

[world-faiths.com/index.htm](http://world-faiths.com/index.htm) A good starting point for info about world faiths.

[bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/](http://bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/) In-depth articles about world faiths.

If you find other good resources please inform BOVA so we can pass them on.

## ...and keep learning while you're away

- If possible read a local/national newspaper and try local/national radio and TV channels. If language is a problem try the BBC World Service ([bbc.co.uk/worldservice/](http://bbc.co.uk/worldservice/)).
- Talk with local people about the news, local and national issues and their perception of the world.