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Bliss Abroad: Exploring the World Beyond the Classroom

Open your mind to adventure and discovery by exploring different countries, cultures, and customs

By Capriccia Thomas
HEALTH EDITOR

Take a seat and let the world be your teacher. Breaking out of your comfort zone, going on an adventure, and discovering new things about yourself are the most important lessons learned while traveling.

The world looks different outside of Zoom sessions and four walls decorated with desks and whiteboards. Going abroad helps people appreciate and develop a new perspective on the different cultures and how people live in other parts of the world.

Empathy, resilience, cultural competence, budget management, and goal setting are just a few of the many skill sets acquired through traveling.

It's also a great escape to deep dive into new worlds. "Think about what you want to accomplish from the experience. You learn so much about yourself and understanding of your place in the world," said Kelly Moran, CSUEB Director of the Center for International Education.

Traveling gives students an opportunity to meet others and learn new life skills to understand themselves and geography better.

"I met my girlfriend [at Haifa University in Israel]. We've seen each other since. I still have a piece of study abroad with me. I have friends that I met there I keep in contact with. I had a good six months; that's more than some students that came to the second semester can say, and I can always go back," said Evan Kelly, a CSUEB alumni.

Learning abroad is a great way to be im-

mersed in another culture and get educated simultaneously. "Traveling abroad as a student is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You gain skills of independence and set yourself apart from other students," continued Moran.

Make the world your playground. Keep an open mind and expand your horizons. Adapting to new environments broadens your mind to other points of view and challenges your own opinions.

"I still keep in contact with my close friends since they all live in California. My roommate in Korea lives 20 minutes away. She's my best friend for life. And those who aren't close, in the East Coast or the Netherlands, I still talk to every so often. I still keep in touch with friends from Korea," said Gloria Mejia, a Sonoma State University alumni.

You can read textbooks about exotic lands and far away places. But, you can't taste, smell, hear or touch the facts or illustrations through the pages. Traveling allows you to go on a journey that enriches your life and enhances your self-awareness.

Spread your wings and take flight. There's a whole world out there to seek and explore. Discover new lands and people. There's so much to see with over 195 countries spread throughout the seven continents.

Although traveling the world is different due to COVID-19, there are safety precautions and measures in place. Follow standard protocols when traveling abroad, whether you're on a solo or group adventure. For more information on studying abroad, visit East Bay's study abroad website.

GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE: The Unseen Effects On Young Girls

By Scarlet Schwenk
MANAGING EDITOR

In the age of technology, the internet exacerbates a gender divide of digital access, placing girls and gender-expansive youth at a disadvantage for their personal and professional lives.

Alliance for Girls, based in San Francisco, the largest regional alliance of girl-serving organizations serving more than 300,000 girls across six Bay Area counties, conducted surveys to unveil the divide. Sixty-six percent of girls and gender-expansive

youth identified their stress and anxiety increased during the pandemic, a Uniting Isolated Voices: Girls & Gender Expansive Youth During COVID-19 report found.

"Girls' refers to gender-expansive youth (cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any girl-identified youth)," the organization notes.

Technology was a lifeline for many during the pandemic, whether used for social connection, work, or educational purposes; almost all Americans said the internet was essential to them during the pandemic, a Pew Research survey found.

"Girls who lack reliable internet connectivity are encountering a systemic barrier to fully engaging with their education, healthcare, support networks, and other key aspects of their lives during COVID-19," said Cynthia Nimmo, Communications Manager for Alliance for Girls.

Access to the internet became a crucial point of access to find jobs, expand research, engage in education, and other key aspects of life. During the height of the pandemic, students were forced to quarantine at home and transition to remote learning.

In 2016 the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution declaring "internet access as a human right," yet one in four U.S. households do not have access to the internet.

In the Bay Area, about "one in three (30% of girls) reported being unable to get the learning support that they needed" with

"Black and African American girls, girls with previous suspension of school expulsion" twice as likely to report not having regular access to the internet, explained Nimmo.

The lack of internet access impacts girls' ability to succeed academically, and they experience higher rates of isolation, stress regarding their futures, lack of structure around school and extracurricular activities, loss of motivation, and a loss of access to healthcare, according to Nimmo.

Rates of access to the internet fluctuates regarding one's socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender. For African American and Latino households, only 20% had access to a desktop or laptop, a Public Policy Institute of California study by Niu Gao and Joseph Hayes found. The digital divide issue is "deeply rooted in poverty and disinvestment in communities of color," said Nimmo.



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