

How to Prepare for Interning Abroad

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Internships. One of the most stress-inducing, yet necessary ingredients in any young person's career. Trying to get a stellar job post-graduation without an internship on the resume is like baking a cake without the flour. They've become a staple for every imaginable major and field. Not into flat cakes? Yeah, employers aren't into clueless, fresh grads either.

If you've landed on this handy article with eager eyes, you're probably more into the exotic variation of real-world professional experience known as "the internship *abroad*." Ooooh yes. It has a nice ring to it.



You've found the perfect internship. Now it's time to get ready for it!

Maybe you've already secured a position as the newest hospitality intern at a Spanish hotel, or just discovered the fascinating concept that will let you gain sought-after experience abroad. If you're a working professional seeking new career opportunities, there's a treasure trove of international programs open to anyone who fits the bill—not just degree-seeking students. Whatever the case may be, **there are a few steps you ought to know before boarding the plane to your new home** filled with sparkling opportunity and unlimited possibilities.

Pre-departure internship advice to help you succeed

Preparing for interning abroad doesn't have to be terrifying. We've collected some great interning abroad advice that will not only make the transition easier, but will help you hit that foreign ground running. Grab a pen and take some notes, because we're going to calm those pre-departure jitters and show you how to prepare for an internship abroad!

1. Polish off your resume

The journey to prepare for an internship abroad begins by prepping yourself to be the greatest candidate you can be. A resume or CV is often the very first impression of you that potential employers or internship abroad organizers receive. That single page needs to speak volumes

about who you are, what you've done, and what you hope to achieve through an internship overseas. There are plenty of [resume tips to help secure an international internship](#), so don't freak!

2. Determine career goals

An internship abroad is an incredibly valuable experience that shouldn't be chosen thoughtlessly! Especially if you're still a student, the one or two internships you take on will substantially shape your future career and determine your job trajectory. Spending a summer leading fitness classes at a resort in Greece could be a blast, but what will that do for your skill set in the grand scheme of things (unless you're a fitness major)?

Of course not everyone has a perfect dream job sketched out with exact job requirements to match. Interning abroad is a great opportunity to explore options, just as much as it is a chance to explore new surroundings. Think about what types of jobs you're most curious about, and try to find intern positions that fit.

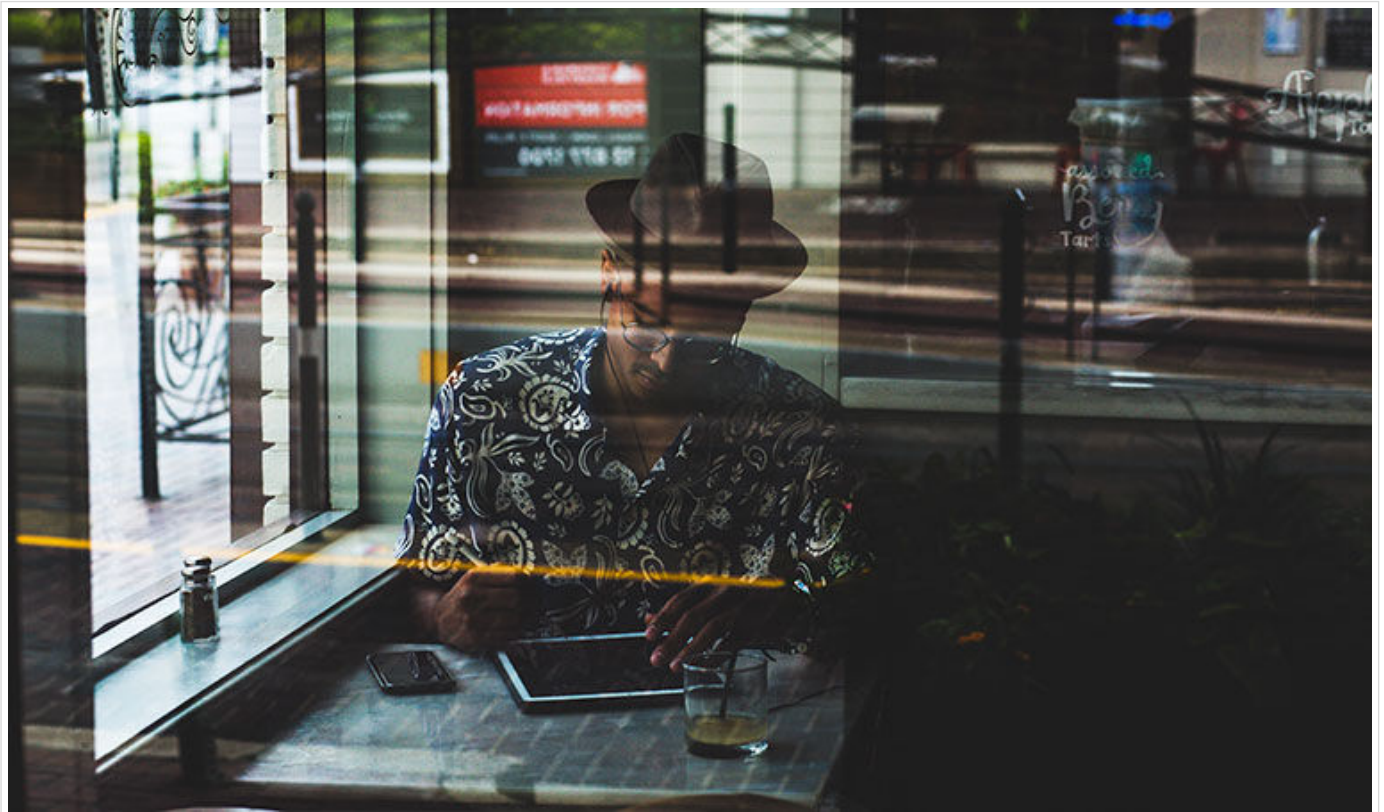


Figure out your NEEDS before you travel—especially if specific equipment is necessary to do your internship functions.

3. Find the right country to match

Already have your sights on the perfect internship? Well, hold your horses, because country choice can be just as important! If you've already honed in on a language or have significant experience with a particular culture, then choosing a country will be a no-brainer. However, certain aspects such as living cost, safety, and industry can influence your time abroad and internship outcome.

Even if you've landed a paid internship abroad, pay special attention to housing costs (if not included in a program cost) and accessibility by public transportation. You probably won't be too keen on taking a taxi to the office every day! [Paid internships abroad](#) require a bit more legwork to find, but are a great option to relieve financial stress. They also make interning abroad in the pricier destinations, like London or Singapore, more feasible.

4. Secure the perfect internship

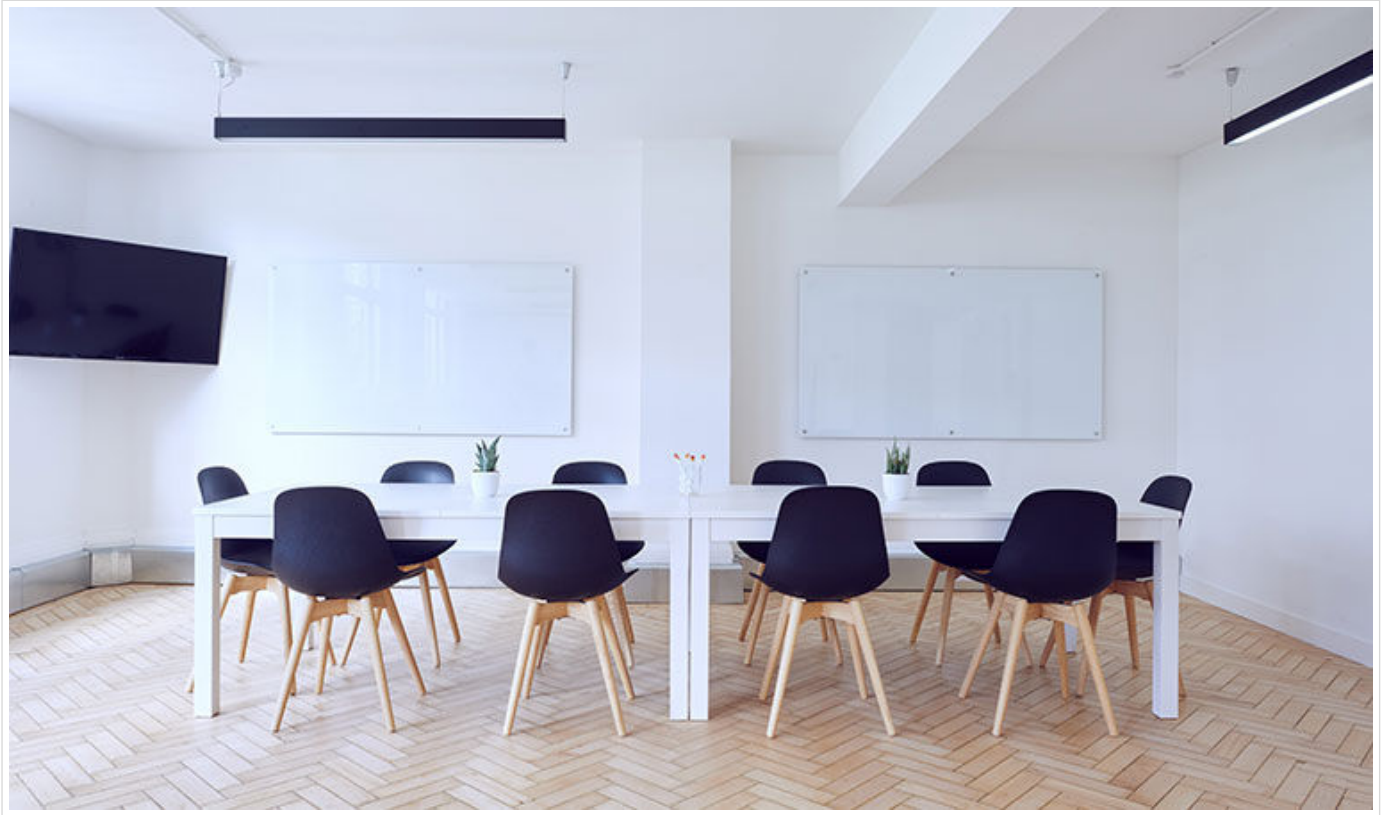
With career goals, country preferences, and a brilliant resume in hand, you're ready to hunt down that perfect internship! [Getting an internship abroad](#) shouldn't be an intimidating and seemingly impossible task, either. There are countless matchmaking programs out there that do all the dirty work, like networking and logistics, to match candidates with the perfect internship. No foreign language skills or personally knowing the CEO of a company required.

5. Wrap things up at home

Make sure your goldfish has a temporary guardian, your bank knows you'll be out-of-country, and that your institution knows you're taking off for a bit (if the internship overlaps with classes). Some universities offer credit for completed internships, while others may be a bit pickier about letting you take a semester off. Compile as much interning abroad advice from past participants, the internet, and even your internship provider to get a feel for what clothes to pack and what you may need to prepare.

Because internships typically last just a few months, it's probably not necessary to close bank accounts and sell your belongings back home. However, cutting out unnecessary subscription fees like gym memberships and maybe even cell phone service if you're gone long enough will help you financially prepare for interning abroad.

[Ready to become the best version of yourself? Download our free E-Book on tips for first-time interns abroad!]



Will your new work environment be ultra-profesh? Pack the right clothing to match company expectations.

6. Tackle bureaucratic matters

A common hurdle to jump while you prepare for interning abroad is the nitty-gritty legal matters. Finding an internship is only half the battle —securing that sweet residency permit is another. Depending on the country, you may be able to get away with [interning for three months](#) or less on a tourist visa. Some other countries require a sponsorship or work visa, especially if you plan on doing a semester or year-long internship abroad. Speak with your internship sponsor or company to learn about the legal process for interns!

7. Set aside funds for extra costs

At the very least, you can bet your bottom dollar that airfare costs will be on you. Compensation will of course depend on your internship provider or company, but even if you're raking in the cash, it's best to plan on preparing a cushy backup fund. Interning abroad is a great double whammy for traveling on the weekend, trying new foods with coworker pals, and wanting to experience every single novel thing in sight. Planning for how to intern abroad without getting paid just takes a bit of preparation and organized budgeting!

8. Research your destination country

In addition to helping you know what to expect for curiosity's sake, researching your destination country ahead of time will give helpful insight into work culture. Simple nuances, such as who to contact with feedback and what your body language reveals can significantly influence what your new coworkers think. Office hierarchies, encouraging smiles (or lack thereof), and work ethic can be drastically different than back home.

Familiarizing yourself with the destination outside the office helps understand medical accessibility, common foods, and safety, so you can prepare accordingly. Special diets like vegetarianism or veganism may be foreign concepts in some cultures, and you can't expect locals to know exactly what they entail. An innocent-looking vegetarian ramen in Japan can still contain fish stock in the broth, despite the chef insisting it has no meat!



Planning for a more hands on internship abroad? Mentally prepare yourself for the work ahead.

9. Build up professional skills to thrive in your internship

Does the internship require advance written Spanish to write emails? Even if you squeezed through the selection process and know deep, deep down that your business correspondence in Spanish can use a little work, improve! The time you have to prepare for an internship abroad is a great opportunity to fine tune those skills that can use a bit more confidence, so you're ready to blow everyone away on day one!

10. Find reasonable housing

One of biggest faux-pas when moving abroad is to sign a lease based purely off apartment photos you see online. Growing up in the Internet age, we've always been told the web is a dark, deceptive place full of scam artists. While that's not always true, housing scams happen all too often around the world, especially where the housing market is super hot. A good rule of thumb is to arrive a few days before your internship abroad, stay at a hostel or hotel, and tour a few accommodations *in-person* before throwing down a deposit.

Some intern abroad programs offer housing as part of the package, so you don't even have to lift a finger to find a clean bed where to rest! If given the choice, pay close attention to hidden fees, such as utilities, proximity to work and other conveniences, and roommates.

11. Obtain international insurance

Not all insurances are made equal! AKA your health insurance from home may not cover extended international stays. But don't fret, for there are loads of international insurances out there at a reasonable price to cover you in any country imaginable for a few weeks to months (and longer). If you have a pre-existing medical condition that requires doctor visits or medication, make sure to find an insurance policy that covers all your needs and more.

12. Learn some of the language and cultural norms

Sometimes culture and language go hand-in-hand, and learning a few basic phrases in your host country's native language can show off your cultural savviness. Interning abroad is an excellent way to learn cross-cultural communication and international business norms on the ground. Both are increasingly important skills to gain for today's globalized marketplace!



Get ready for the big city life! It's more fun than a college campus, we promise.

Putting in a bit of effort to develop your language skills also helps connect with coworkers and locals. Anyone can be the foreign intern who stampedes in expecting everyone to speak English and not have a clue about local customs, but it certainly shows if you've put in some time to be mindful of the people who are hosting you.

[Download this checklist to keep track of everything else you need to cover!](#)

A few tips for while you're abroad

Make yourself a mental action-plan to accomplish the following during your internship abroad. This will help you stay focused and make the most of all the potential learning you can do—both personally and professionally—while participating in your international internship.

Connect with your coworkers

...and they don't have to be only interns either. Reach out to young, old, execs, and supervisors as well, because you never know who you'll click with. There may be a kind soul that will invite you to their summer home for a traditional Midsummer celebration with their family. As the visiting intern, it's not creepy to want to chat with everyone. There will be plenty of people curious about your home country and culture as well. Remember, international exchange is a two-way street!

Network the heck out of your company

Some of the most potent interning abroad advice is to work your connections *while* you're overseas. There's a good chance you may not return to your host destination to work after interning abroad, so latch onto every opportunity that floats by while you're there. Naturally, putting yourself out there in your own company, giving 110% effort, and schmoozing your boss are a great place to begin.

Networking events and post-meetings are also ideal sneaky ways to chat with other companies and make an impression. Striking up new professional relationships can lead to additional internships or even job opportunities down the road if you find yourself in the right place, at the right time! It's a lot tougher for managers to remember the quiet intern, who worked diligently, but never said a word.

Mingle outside of work

You didn't think internships overseas were all work and no fun, did you? There's quite literally a whole world outside your cubicle to explore, and there's absolutely no reason why you shouldn't be soaking it all in after work hours. Take weekend trips, hang out with fellow interns, or meet some your neighbors. Interning abroad is an opportunity to learn about new people and cultures, taste delicious new foods, and make lasting memories! (Just as long as you show up to work on time every day.)

So go on, step outside. It's okay!



You'll be kicking back on happy hour with your new coworkers in no time.

Get letters of rec before your internship ends

Even if recommendation letters aren't the norm in your host country, they most certainly are a coveted asset in yours! If you know you're killing it at your internships and all is well with the boss, **ask for a recommendation letter before you leave**. Most likely you're not the first, nor last intern at the company or organization. It's easiest for managers to write their hearts into a letter when they still know who you are. What's in it for you? An amazing *international* professional letter about why everyone should hire you!

Crown your resume with your sparkly new accomplishment

BAM! A wonderful internship abroad experience later, and you've equipped yourself with a brand new international mindset, professional skills, and confidence to carry on and grab that dream job by the horns. Interning abroad is a breed of its own, so putting the whole experience into a few words on a resume can take a bit more thought than your average work experience. Increased adaptability and international contacts are just a few [beautiful gems to add to your resume](#).

Go show off your talent on the global stage!

With these general tips, you're equipped to face your new internship overseas and deliver. As always with international experiences, remember to keep your mind open to changes and the unexpected. Every intern, company, country, and industry has its unique characteristics. After wrapping up some awesome professional experience, you're ready to dish out some pro interning abroad advice to all your friends and get them on the international work bandwagon.

Our newsletter promises even *more* helpful internship advice

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