The more aware individuals are about the culture in which they are living, the more rewarding their experience will be. This is also true for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students embarking upon an international adventure. Chico State Study Abroad is committed to providing a safe place for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender students and their allies. Our goal is to provide exceptional and personalized advising for all students in order to create an incredible Study Abroad experience which fits their needs.

You will find that attitudes and tolerance toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered issues vary from country to country, and even within the U.S. Some countries are more welcoming and legally protective than the U.S. while others may be less accepting or more restrictive. All students need to be aware of the legal issues related to sexuality in other countries of where they plan to travel.

While the Study Abroad Office at Chico State serves as a safe zone for the LGBTQ community, your new host country and its citizens may represent a different cultural climate. Depending on this climate, you may need to look outside of the office for support related to LGBTQ community information.

The first step in preparing for your journey is to thoroughly research your host country and region. Take the time to learn about:

- Laws of the host culture
- Norms/styles of behavior in the host culture
- LGBTQ media
- General attitudes toward LGBTQ persons
- Meeting places

It is important for students to recognize how behavioral signals which mean one thing in the U.S. may mean something completely different in a foreign culture. Depending upon the situation, the consequences could potentially be dangerous. Physical harassment, assault, and even rape are issues both women and men have to consider when interacting with various cultures due to chance of misinterpretations of behavior or speech.

Furthermore, the legal system in the country may not offer protection for the victims when issues of sexual orientation or other behavior are involved. You are encouraged to explore and research the cultural, legal, and social issues relevant to the country where you plan to study and travel.
**Homestay & Housing**

Often programs place students in homestay or housing situations so individuals may be more immersed into the local host culture. It is important that all students are aware of and consider the implications of being identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender in the host culture and how coming out might affect one’s host family relationship.

**Personal Development & Awareness**

Many transformations occur in students prompted by the fact they are no longer restricted by their home culture. Affecting the "coming out" process can be one of these transformations.

**In-Country Resources**

It is important that students are aware that cultures vary in terms of what is considered appropriate behavior when interacting with someone from another culture. Cultures also vary in terms of how sexual identities are defined and understood. Country-specific information on meeting places, organizations, laws, norms/styles of behavior and general attitudes will be helpful. Additionally, materials and reading lists provided should include gay, lesbian, bisexual authors and commentary.

**Program Specific Information**

Students need to be aware that, while the study abroad office in the U.S. may be inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual perspectives, the in-country staff and faculty may represent another office and culture that will present a different climate. Students may have to look outside the program for support.

**Relationships**

The international educator can recommend that students learn as much as possible before they leave the U.S. about the culture-specific norm of friendship and dating for relationships between people of any sexual orientation.

**Returning to the U.S.A.**

Before you return to the United States it may be helpful to consider how the changes you have experienced or new perspectives may affect your relationship with families and friends back home.

**Resources**

- **U.S.-based LGBTQ rights organizations**
  - Human Rights Campaign: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)
  - National Center for Transgender Equality: [www.transequality.org/](http://www.transequality.org/)
  - U.S. State Department: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
  - OutRight Action International: [www.iglhrc.org](http://www.iglhrc.org)

- **National & International Ed LGBTQ networks**
  - Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals: [www.lgbtcampus.org](http://www.lgbtcampus.org)
  - Diversity Abroad: [www.diversityabroad.com](http://www.diversityabroad.com)
  - NAFSA Rainbow SIG: [www.rainbowsig.org](http://www.rainbowsig.org)
  - Gay Cities: [www.gaycities.com](http://www.gaycities.com)
  - Departments, on-campus and local LGBTQ Community Centers

**Notes**

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