



“How to Succeed in International Assignments While Being G, L, B or T”  
By Fauzia Zaman-Malik, Rochelle Weitzner, Suzy Deffeyes, Rob Shook, Sarah Siegel

## Top Tips for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Prospective International Assignees

1. Expect the best; you will attract what you focus on.
2. International assignments will test you personally and professionally and will provide tremendous opportunities for you to learn, stretch, and grow.
3. Safety is paramount; if you're in a place where being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is illegal, you have to be careful and respect the laws of your host country. These laws do apply to you.
4. If appropriate -- based on laws and cultural norms -- consider sharing your story about your sexuality; you will be amazed as to how many people have incorrect and skewed notions about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
5. Review your code of business ethics and ensure that others around you are aware of your firm's policies on discrimination or harassment based on a person's actual or perceived sexuality or gender identity.
6. Remember to review and reconsider the various stereotypes and assumptions you might hold as well, for example, in India, same-sex friends can be quite affectionate to each other in public; this affection, however, is not necessarily indicative of a sexual or “more than a friend” relationship.
7. Get some cultural training about your host country before your assignment – the more you know about the cultural norms, the better off you will be.
8. Be culturally adaptable: Learn as much as you can, don't be afraid to make mistakes, and be prepared to explain what it's like for you “back home” if you're asked. A couple of coffee table books or (better yet) photo albums of your families will help break the ice (and are a nice connection back to home).
9. If you are partnered, make sure that the timing is right for both of you and that your relationship is rock-solid: You will be faced with tremendous opportunities, and perhaps some changes and adversity; if you're going to a country where you don't speak the language, even the simplest things can become challenges, and they can take a toll on you. Ensure you and your partner enroll in language training.
10. When picking a place to live, collaborate not only for convenience to your work, but also for the partner who may have many hours and days on his or her own.
11. When planning the move, be patient, but firm, with any relocation assistance company and its personnel; at times, they may simply not understand the nature of your relationship.
12. Be prepared to be share details about your and your partner's personal finances with accounting vendors who will be completing your tax returns. Clearly understand the financial impacts and decisions made at the beginning of your assignment, and how the impact of any significant exchange-rate fluctuations would affect you.

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13. Even if your partner isn't granted permission to work under his or her visa, there are myriad volunteer opportunities, including teaching English at local community centers; it can prove to be a great link to other expat communities.
14. Connect with other expats; it can be great to share experiences, ideas of places to go, and pitfalls to avoid. Consider joining a social group (or even creating one) of expats or of locals who share the same interests as you; also, Craigslist (though bogged with some scandalous material) might be a good tool to find out about local events and groups or to simply connect with others.
15. Connect with locals. Understand that they often may be as self-conscious of their English skills as you are of your skills in their language; smiles, humor, and relaxation go a long way to making everyone more comfortable.
16. Allow yourself some creature-comforts, e.g., download favorite TV shows and watch them with your partner, or not...if he or she downloads sports matches that don't interest you(!); listen to music you love during your commute. Have family members send or bring you some favorites from home when they come to visit.
17. Encourage friends and family to make the trek to see you after you've been settled in for a few weeks – they'll have a great opportunity to see the places “locals” go, and it's always nice to see people from home.
18. Accept invitations from the local team to go for a drink after work, to join them for lunch, or even just to go for a coffee.
19. Have fun and make new friends! Try new things, new foods, ask for advice on favorite places to eat or have fun. People will mirror your comfort level and willingness to experience their culture, and welcome you with open arms. Understand that some cultures are naturally more “reserved” than yours back home, and don't take that as reluctance to get to know you. It may just take longer.
20. Bring gifts from home; have things for the relocation agent, the movers, people who help you get settled in, and for new friends when you're invited around for dinner. It's one thing to bring someone something from their country; bringing something favorite from your country makes a huge impact. It can be something simple from a local craft market in your hometown to something more elaborate if you're invited to a wedding or other celebration; you can move a box of “prezzies” over with you and it should prove very useful.
21. Stay connected – to your company, to your family, to your friends: The re-entry can be as much of an adjustment as leaving for the assignment. Voice-over-IP and internet connections can help; accept that you may have large phone bills. Allow yourself that luxury guilt-free.
22. Stay in control of your career; don't fall off the fast track or radar screen. Stay in touch with mentors in your home country and have a “career manager” back in your home country or location.